

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

CAIRNS AQUATIC FACILITIES STRATEGY

FINAL REPORT - AUGUST 2025





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Otium Planning Group acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and to Elders, past, present and emerging.

Otium is committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.

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1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

The provision of aquatic facilities, programs and services is extremely important for the community of Cairns. Council has identified the need to address the following challenges through the development of this Cairns Aquatic Facilities Strategy (Strategy):



A high number of diverse aquatic opportunities are not aligned to population catchments, resulting in ad hoc provision of facilities in some locations and cannibalisation in others.



Lack of decision-making framework and established standards to guide current or future service provision decisions.



Balancing the 'needs' versus the 'wants' of the community and managing expectations.



Consolidating aging assets and managing the expectations of the community.



Lack of an asset management plan in place for Council aquatic facilities.



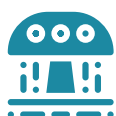
The Strategy considers the role, impact, opportunities and implications of the following aquatic leisure facilities on the network of aquatic facilities, including:



Council-owned Aquatic Centres

A Council-owned aquatic centre is defined as a formal, controlled, and supervised aquatic centre in which the Council is the asset owner.

A payment of entry fees or a membership is required to access these facilities.



Aquatic Leisure Facility

Aquatic leisure facilities may be natural or artificial. Typically, aquatic leisure facilities are not used for formal programs or activities. Entry fees are only charged for artificial aquatic leisure facilities.

Aquatic leisure facilities include:

- « Patrolled beaches.
- « Artificial lagoons.
- « Informal or nature-based recreation facilities, such as Babinda Boulders.
- « Water play/ splash pad/ zero-depth water play.
- « Water Parks.



School Pools

School pools are defined as aquatic facilities located within a public or private school premises. School pools also provide some level of community access.



Private Pools and Learn-to-swim

Private pools are aquatic facilities provided within premises such as hotels or private residences.

Learn-to-swim facilities are defined as the aquatic venue provision to which the public is admitted on payment of fees or membership. Learn-to-swim can be provided within a Council-owned or private-owned facility.

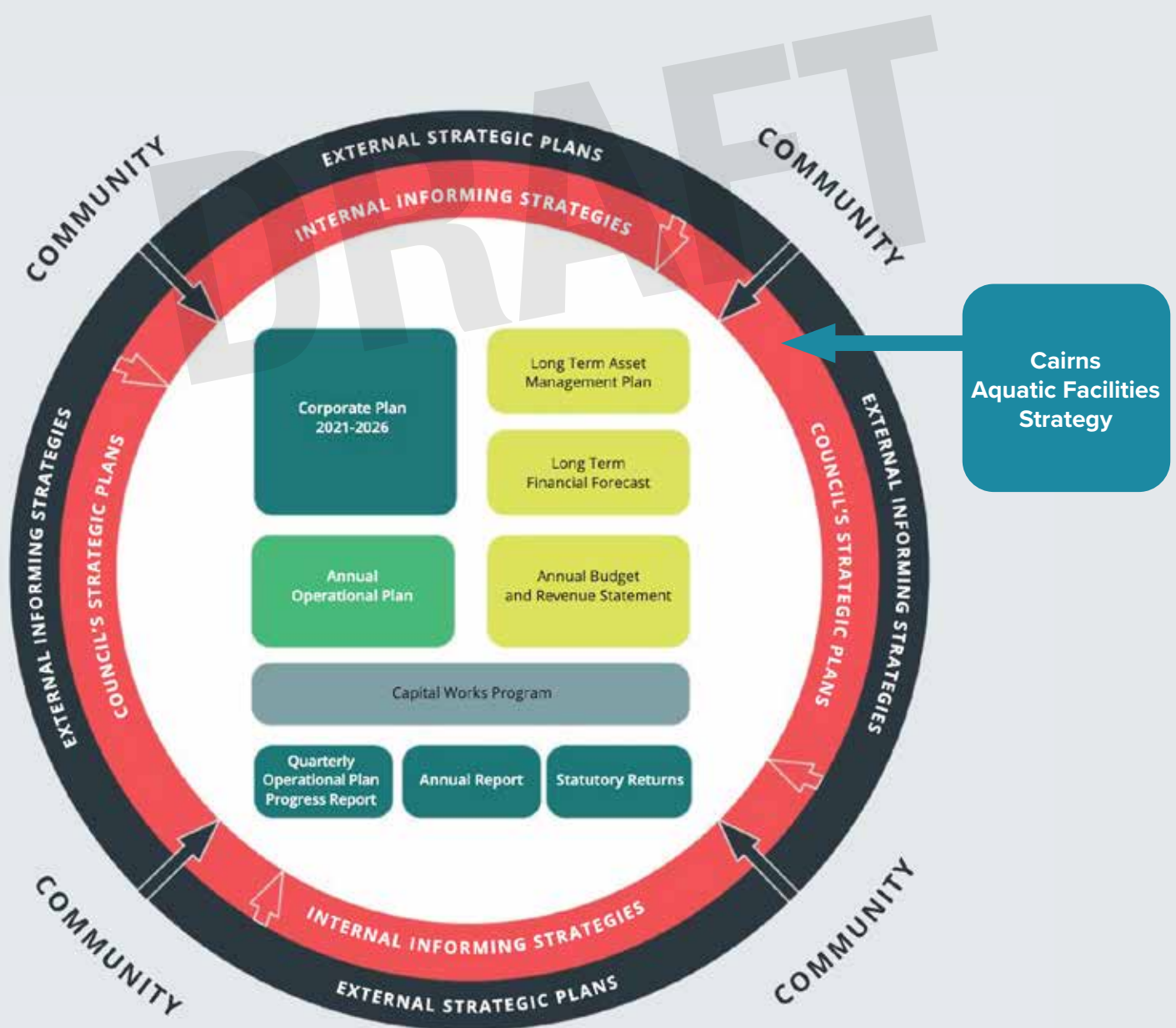


2. PLANNING CONTEXT

Cairns Regional Council's five-year Corporate Plan (2021 – 2026) provides a blueprint for Council to achieve a sustainable future for the Region. The Corporate Plan also provides the basis from which specific Council strategies, plans and policies are developed.

The image below summarises Council's planning framework, including how the Cairns Aquatic Facilities Strategy assists Council in setting its strategic direction, informs funding considerations and considers the broad range of Council responsibilities and investment decisions:

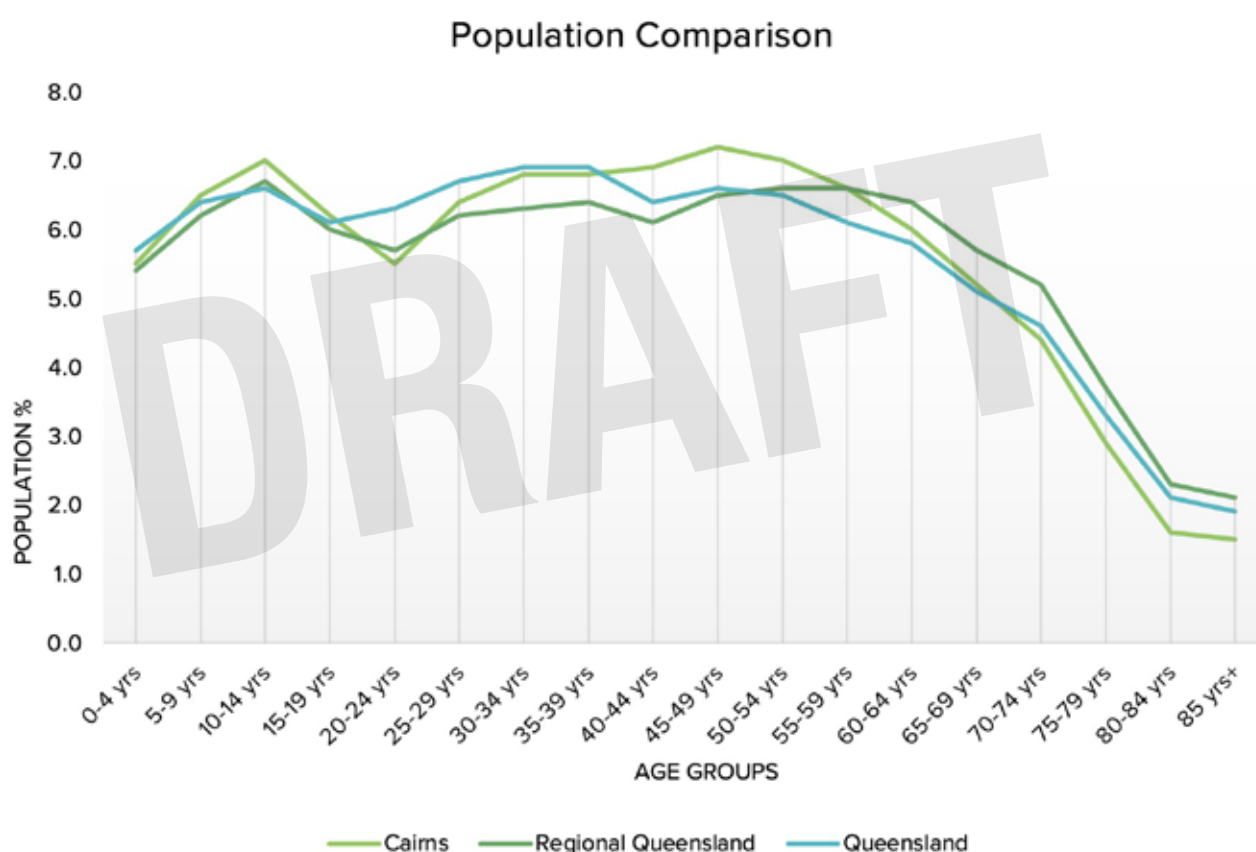
Figure 1: Cairns Regional Council Planning Context



3. CAIRNS POPULATION CATCHMENT

The Cairns Region has a relatively consistent proportion of children, youth and young adults compared to regional Queensland. However, these proportions are forecast to further decrease by 2046. There is a higher proportion of people aged 30 – 54 years, however, the proportion of 45 – 64 years is estimated to decrease by 2046. A lower proportion of older adults 60+ years in the Region exists compared to regional Queensland. This population profile suggests that the demand for aquatic facilities, programs and services will be relatively consistent with other localities in regional Queensland for children through to young adults, higher for adults aged 30-54 and lower for older adults.

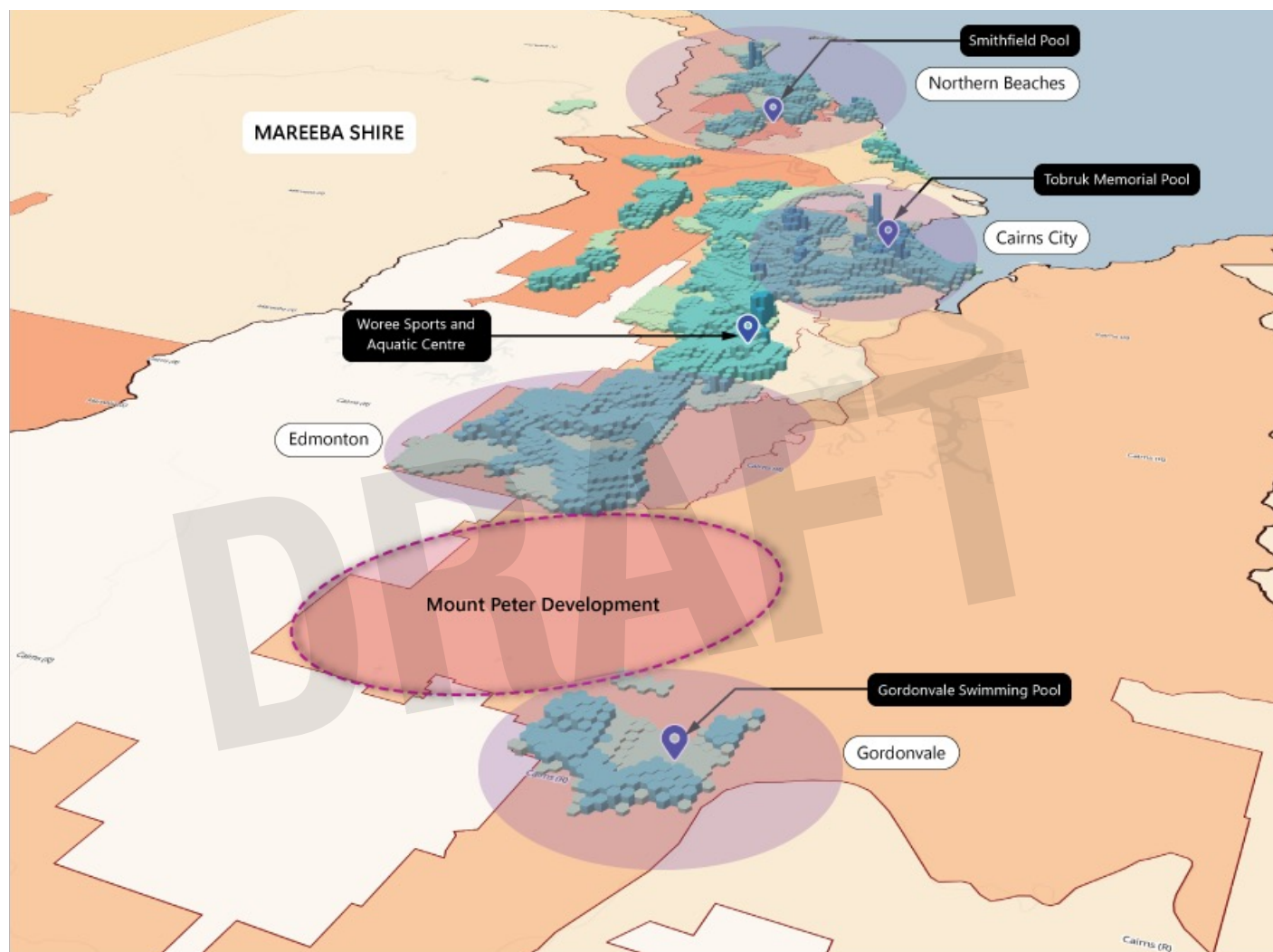
Figure 2: Comparison of Cairns Region Population with Regional Queensland and Queensland State



Whilst there will remain a demand for aquatic facilities for all potential aquatic markets, there is likely to be higher than typical demand for those elements attractive to working-aged adults. These facilities are likely to include those that support fitness, health and wellness and hospitality opportunities.

The higher-density localities within the Cairns Region are within the Northern Beaches, Cairns City, Woree and Edmonton aquatic planning catchments. The highest population growth between 2016 and 2021 has predominantly been within the Northern Beaches, Cairns City and Edmonton catchments.

Figure 3: SA1 2016 Population Overlayed with 2021 Population Growth Hexbins



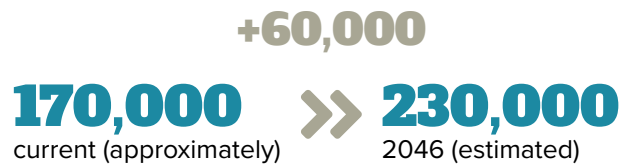
Aquatic activities are pivotal to the lifestyle of Australian Indigenous peoples. The historical connection Australian Indigenous peoples have with rivers, streams and beaches is evident. For this reason, it is important that Australian Indigenous peoples have opportunities to improve their water safety through education. With a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Cairns Region compared to regional Queensland, the need to provide learn-to-swim facilities, programs and services for indigenous members of the community is heightened.

Notionally, the Tobruk Memorial Pool in Cairns City services a larger 15km catchment, Gordonvale and Babinda pools service district rural 10km catchments and Smithfield and Woree pools service district urban 5km catchments. On this basis, the large majority of Cairns Region residents have access to a Council-owned aquatic centre. There is some gap in the very northeastern boundary of the Region, Edmonton and the low-density area between the south of Gordonvale and north of Babinda.



Population

With a large current catchment of approximately 170,000 people and a further 60,000 people estimated by 2046, demand for aquatic facilities, programs and services will clearly increase.

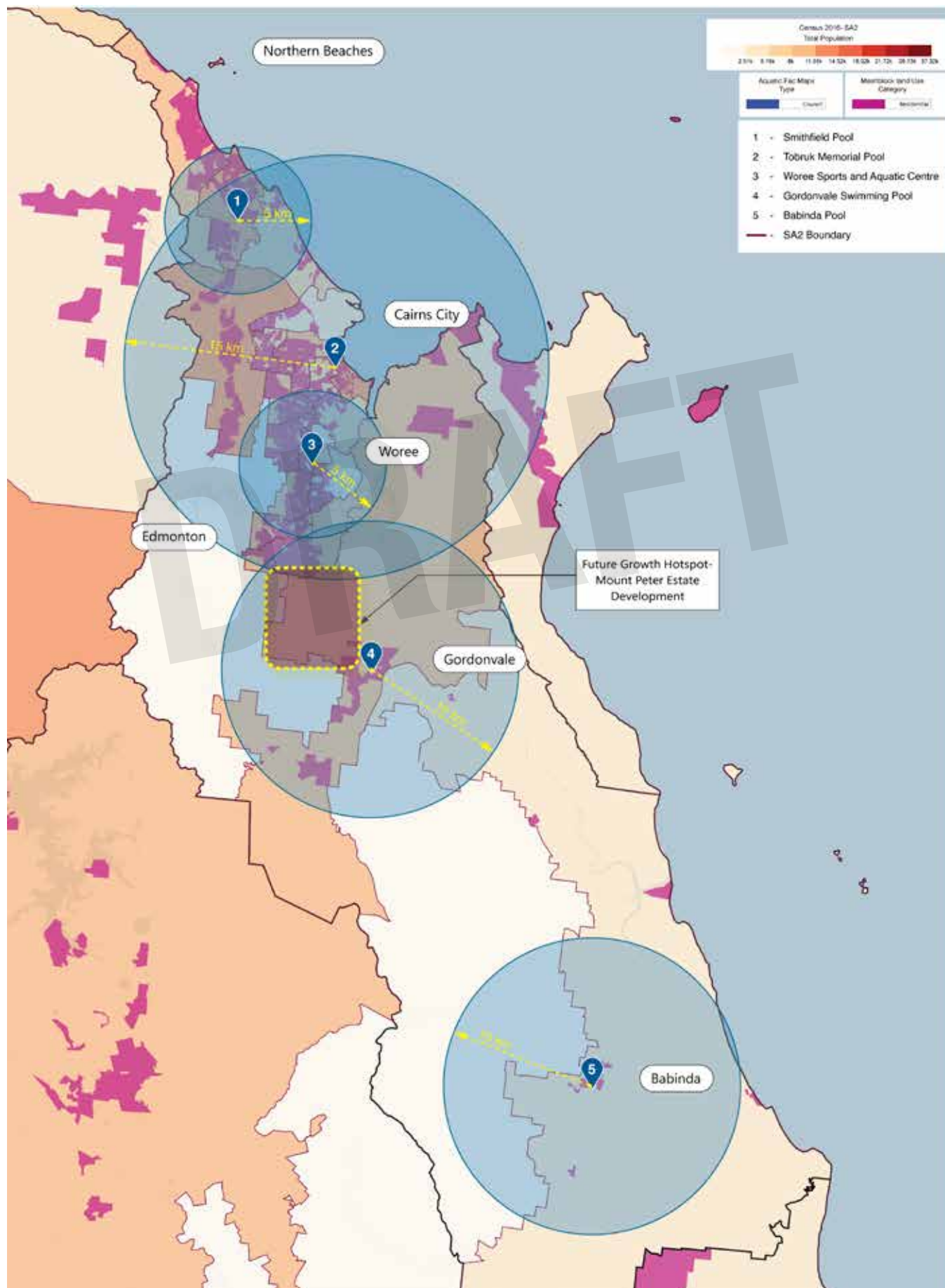


Population hotspots

The largest population growth hotspots in the Cairns Region are estimated to be within Gordonvale - Trinity (encompassing Mount Peter), with a further 19,000 people by 2046. The Mount Peter Master Planned Area is one of the fastest-growing regional urban areas in FNQ. The next highest growth is estimated to be in the Trinity Beach – Smithfield SA2, with a further 8,000 people by 2046.

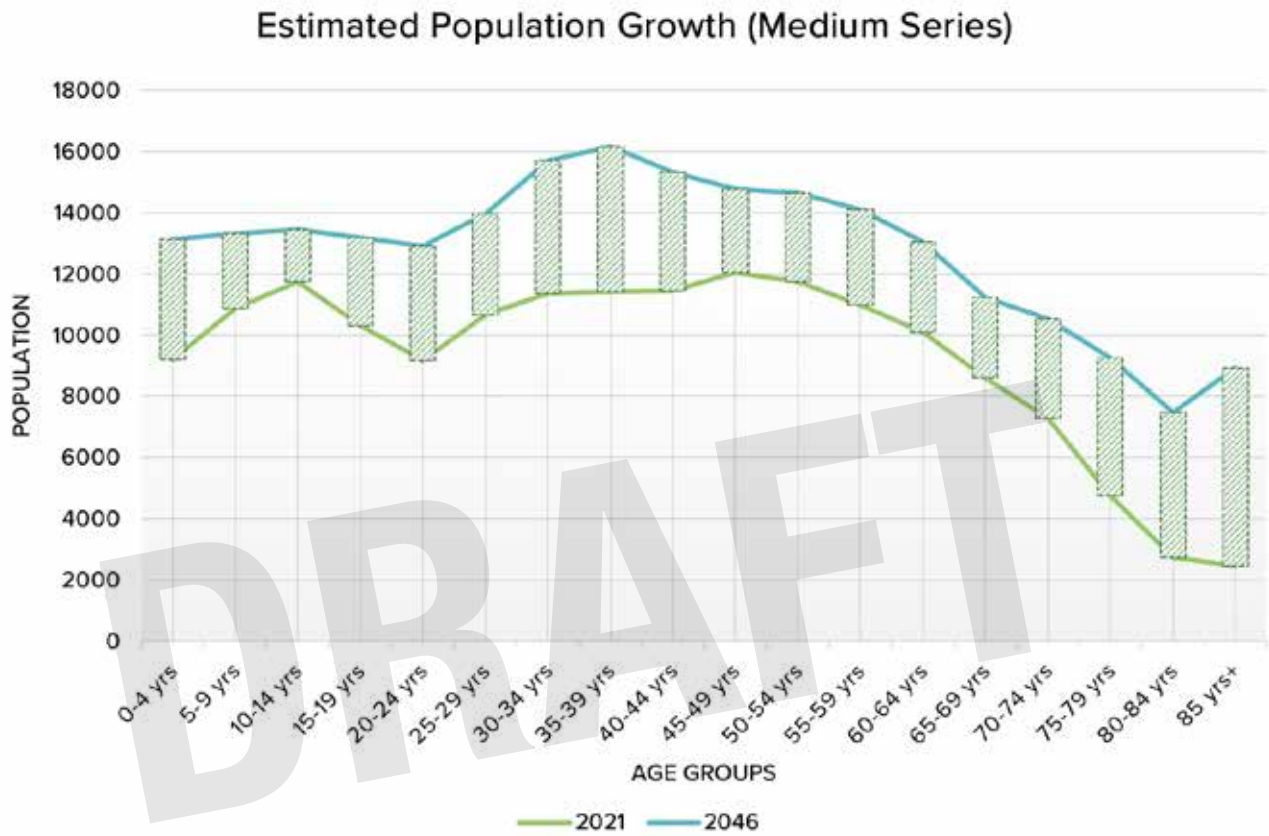


Figure 4: Cairns Region Population Density with Residential Locations (2016)



As a proportion to the total population, the Babinda Pool catchment has a much higher proportion of older adults (55-84 years) and a lower proportion of persons youth and adults (15 – 54 years). The remaining Council-owned aquatic centres have relatively similar age profiles.

Figure 5: Estimated Population Growth Comparison- 2021 and 2046

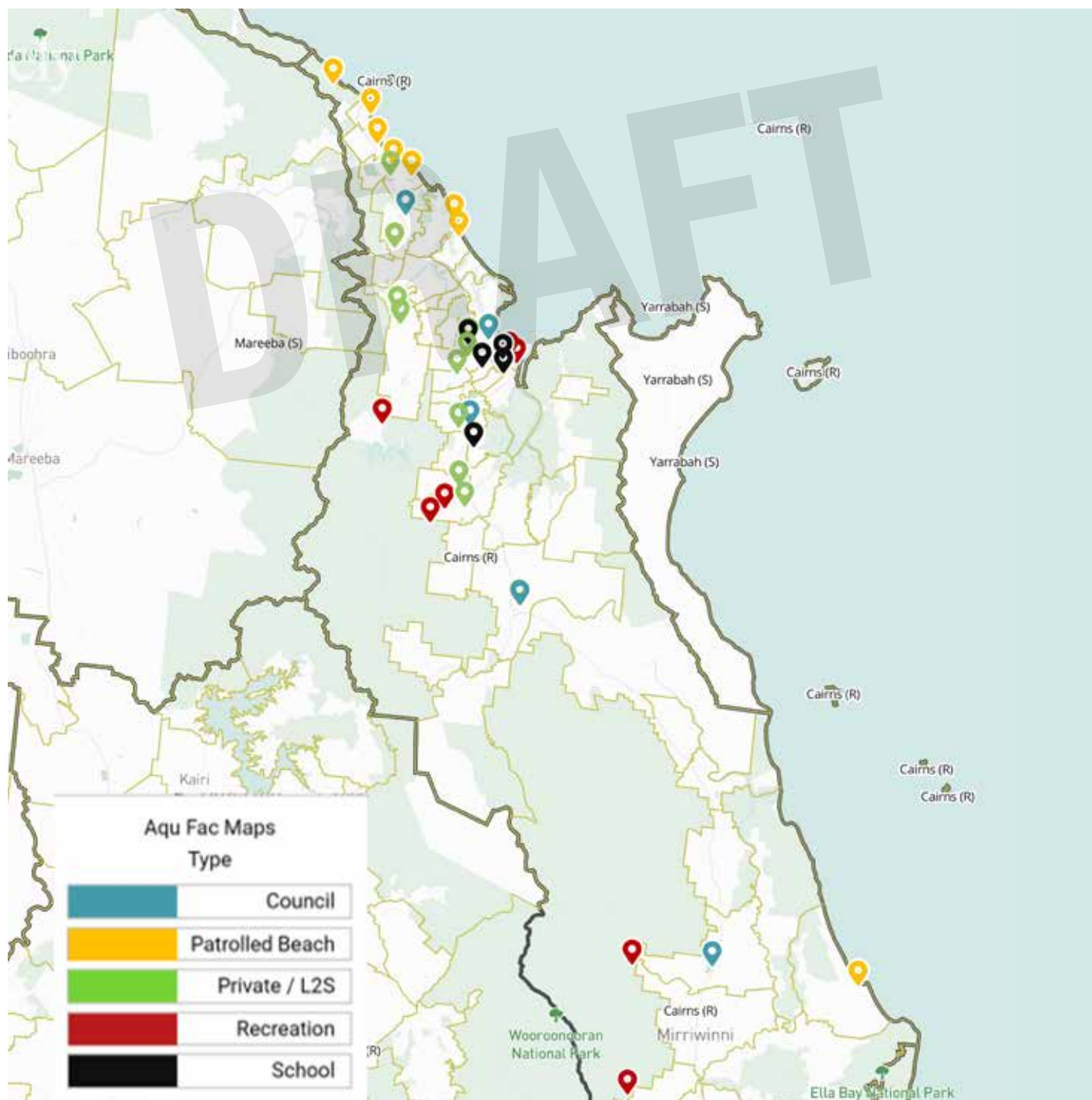


4. CAIRNS AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

The Figure below summarises the current network of 41 aquatic facilities and their overall distribution within the Region, including the following facility types:

- « Council-owned aquatic centres
- « Aquatic leisure facilities
 - Patrolled Beaches
 - Recreation Water
- « School pools
- « Private pools and learn-to-swim.

Figure 6: Aquatic Venue Network Across the Cairns Region



4.1. COUNCIL-OWNED AQUATIC FACILITIES

Cairns Regional Council owns five aquatic facilities within their Local Government Area. Each aquatic facility has provided diversified facilities, programs and services and asset condition of varying standards.



BABINDA POOL



SMITHFIELD POOL/ MARLIN COAST
BICENTENNIAL POOL



TOBRUK MEMORIAL POOL



GORDONVALE AQUATIC CENTRE



WOREE SPORTS AND AQUATIC CENTRE

Across the network of Council-owned aquatic centres, the operating performance for 2022/23 resulted in:



65,081

Average annual visitations of 65,081 (CERM¹ industry benchmark catchment multiple annual visitations for outdoor pools are 41,229).



\$266,527

Average total annual cost to Council \$266,527 (CERM industry benchmark operating deficit for outdoor pools is -\$231,962)



1.6

Average catchment multiple (visits per head of population of 1.6 (median CERM catchment multiple (visits per head of population) for outdoor pools was 1.2)



\$18.26

Average cost per visit (operational only – excludes capital costs) of \$18.26 (CERM industry benchmark cost per visit for outdoor pools is -\$5.73).



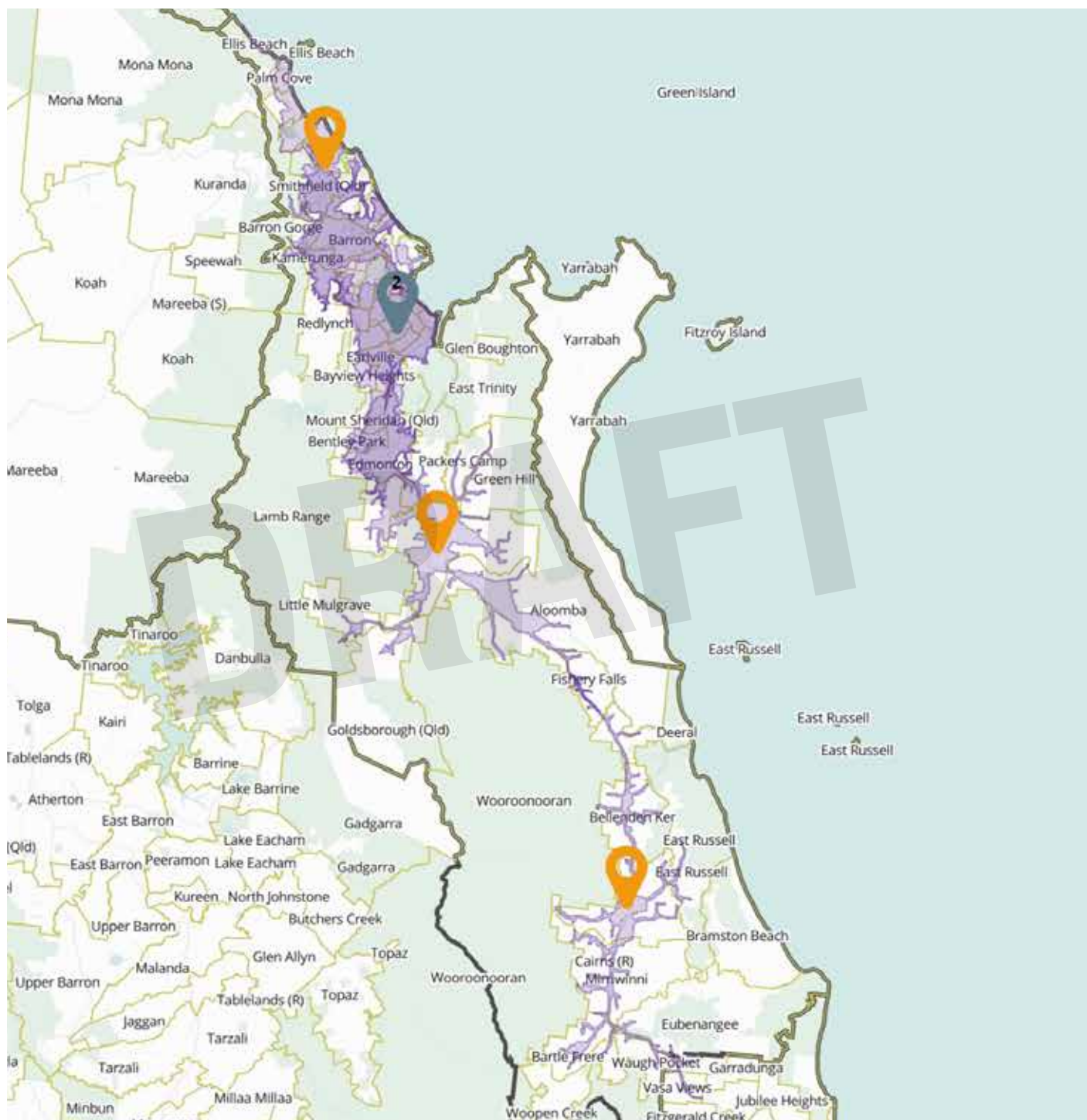
Council has invested over **\$4.3 million** in capital funding over the previous five years to 2022/23 towards improvements to its network of aquatic centres. Within its forward capital works program, a further **\$11,971,000** in capital improvements is budgeted.



¹ Operational Benchmarks for Australian Public Aquatic Centres, University of South Australia provides median industry benchmarks. This data is generally referred to as CERM performance indicators. There are three categories of aquatic facilities analysed. For the purpose of this report, Group 5 – Outdoor Pool/s (n=55 centres) from the most recent 2023 report has been used for comparative purposes.

The Figure² below summarises the 15-minute drive time catchment for Council-owned aquatic centres in the Region:

Figure 7: Gap Analysis of Council-owned Pools



Woree Sports and Aquatic Centre and Tobruk Memorial Pool boast the largest travel catchment populations, 89,380 and 85,225 people respectively. Babinda Pool has the lowest catchment within the network with 1,509 people. There is some overlap between the catchments of Smithfield Pool, Tobruk Memorial Pool and Woree Sports and Aquatic Centre. However, these three centres also have the largest and most densified population within the network. The drive time catchment of Gordonvale Swimming Pool partially flows into Edmonton, Gordonvale, through to the northern to central area of Babinda SA2.

² The darker shade represents where there is a greater crossover of catchment between one or more centres. Due to the lineal geographic nature of the network, the map represents Woree Sports and Aquatic Centre and Tobruk Memorial Pool off the same plot point.

Key Future Considerations

Babinda Pool

- « Asset at end of life.
- « Non-contemporary design limiting participation opportunities.
- « Extremely small catchment not conducive to supporting the viability of an aquatic centre.
- « Minimal visitor-draw to the area from outside of Babinda.
- « Relatively close proximity to Babinda Boulders, which provides recreational aquatic opportunities for the community.
- « Extremely low visitation and significantly the lowest of the network.
- « Significantly higher cost per visit compared to other facilities in the network and national benchmarking for outdoor pools.

Smithfield Pool/ Marlin Coast Bicentennial Pool

- « Well-maintained.
- « Leisure water in need of modernisation.
- « Opportunity to improve cover and amenities for the program pool.
- « Mid-range catchment.
- « Visitor-draw is diverse, with the area attracting visitors from Redlynch and the northern beaches.
- « Generating the highest catchment multiple performance of all aquatic centres in the network, with the exception of Babinda (noting Babinda only generates 3,922 annual visits).
- « After Tobruk, Smithfield has the lowest cost per visit within the network.

Tobruk Memorial Pool

- « Contemporary and high-standard facility, given its relatively recent redevelopment.
- « Lacking in leisure water opportunities for young children and families.
- « Opportunity to enhance and expand fitness and allied health opportunities, in keeping with its major regional aquatic centre status.
- « Along with Woree, the centre has the largest catchment compared to other aquatic centres in the network.
- « Visitor draw is diverse.
- « Attracts the highest visitation within the network, however, at a lower catchment multiple compared to the Smithfield Pool.
- « Lowest cost to Council of all facilities within the Council-owned aquatic centres network.
- « Lowest cost per visit of all facilities within the Council-owned aquatic centres network.

Gordonvale Aquatic Centre

- « Well-maintained facility.
- « Covered, warm water pool provides multiple activity opportunities. However, the conflicting water temperature between lap swimming and program activities limits full optimisation. This will be rectified following Council's planned investment into a new, separate learn-to-swim pool.
- « Toddlers pool is non-contemporary and not overly inviting. This will be rectified following Council's planned investment into a new Splash Pad.
- « Good physical location in close proximity to the CBD and adjacent to school and major sports park.
- « Mid-range catchment.
- « The largest visitor draw comes from Edmonton, followed directly from within Gordonvale.
- « Below average annual visitation and catchment multiple.
- « Highest cost per visit, with the exception of Babinda.

Woree Sports and Aquatic Centre

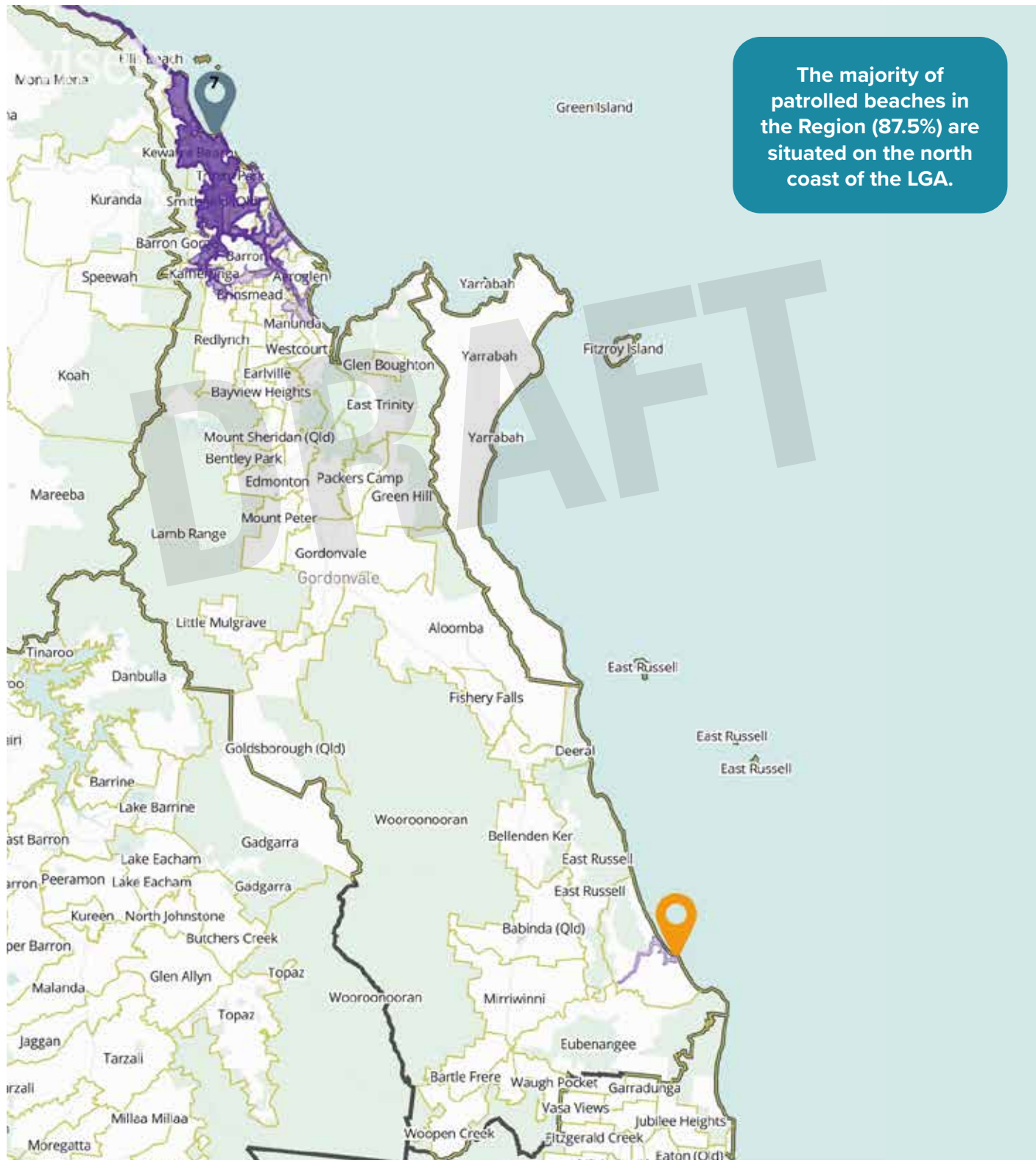
- « Very well-maintained facilities.
- « Leisure water in need of modernisation.
- « Mid-range catchment.
- « Visitor draw is diverse, including 6.3% of visitors coming from the Edmonton area.
- « Above average annual visitation, however, catchment multiple is lower than the majority of other pools in the network.
- « Below average annual visitation and catchment multiple.

4.2. AQUATIC LEISURE FACILITIES

4.2.1. Patrolled Beaches

Cairns Regional Council facilitates the patrolling of lifeguards at various beaches in the Region to provide a safer swimming experience outside of their aquatic centres. The figure below summarises the 15-minute drive time catchment for the patrolled beaches in the Region:

Figure 8: Gap Analysis of the Patrolled Beaches in the Cairns Region



³ The darker shade represents where there is a greater crossover of catchment between one or more beaches. Due to the lined geographic nature of the network, the map represents the seven patrolled northern beaches off the same plot point.

4.2.2. Recreation Facilities

The Cairns Region is home to several recreational water facilities that offer aquatic opportunities outside of the traditional pool format. Natural reserves and waterfalls play a further role in providing recreational aquatic opportunities for the community and tourists.

Muddy’s, the Lagoon and Sugarworld, are examples of built environments designed for water play and recreation. These environments are safe and monitored. In contrast, the natural reserves and waterfalls are not monitored and can have higher safety risks due to the unpredictable nature of water.

A summary of the recreational aquatic facilities in the Region and their immediate travel catchment have been provided below:

Table 1: Recreational Aquatic Facilities in the Cairns Region

BABINDA BOULDERS		
	Facility Components The Babinda Boulders are a popular swimming and picnic area in the tropical rainforest, in the foothills of Bartle Frere, named after the huge outcrops of granite boulders amongst the water. The area provides access to: « Toilets « Cold showers « Gas BBQ’s « Picnic tables « Swing set.	1,426 Population within a 15-minute Drive Time Catchment (2021)⁴
SUGARWORLD		
 Photo credit: The Cairns Post  Photo credit: Sugarworld	Facility Components Sugarworld Adventure Park contains: « Splash Town: a children’s water zone featuring a giant water bucket and waterjets. « Three Super Slides called the Tandem Tube, Superjet and Mat Racer. « Putt Putt Island with a 9-hole mini golf course. « Swimming pools. Sugarworld is a user-pay facility. The park is managed by Belgravia Health and Leisure Group, valid until February 2027, with an existing option to extend a further 10 years.	61,720 Population within a 15-minute Drive Time Catchment (2021) ⁴

4 -

THE ESPLANADE LAGOON



Photo credit: Cairns Regional Council

Facility Components

The Esplanade Lagoon is a 4,800m² saltwater swimming facility monitored by lifeguards year-round, to provide a safe swimming facility along the esplanade. There is no charge to use the Lagoon. The Lagoon is managed and supervised by Council.

The esplanade also offers additional recreational facilities.

 **69,117**

Population within a 15-minute Drive Time Catchment (2021) ⁴

MUDDY'S PLAYGROUND



Photo credit: Cairns Regional Council

Facility Components

The playground is free to use and adjacent to Muddy's Café along the Esplanade. Muddy's is a splash playground with the following components:

- « Water play areas
- « A flying fox Rope bridge
- « Puzzle games
- « Mouse wheel
- « Sound chimes
- « See-saw
- « Trick track
- « Slides.

 **78,224**

Population within a 15-minute Drive Time Catchment (2021) ⁴

CRYSTAL CASCADES



Photo credit: Hiking the World

Facility Components

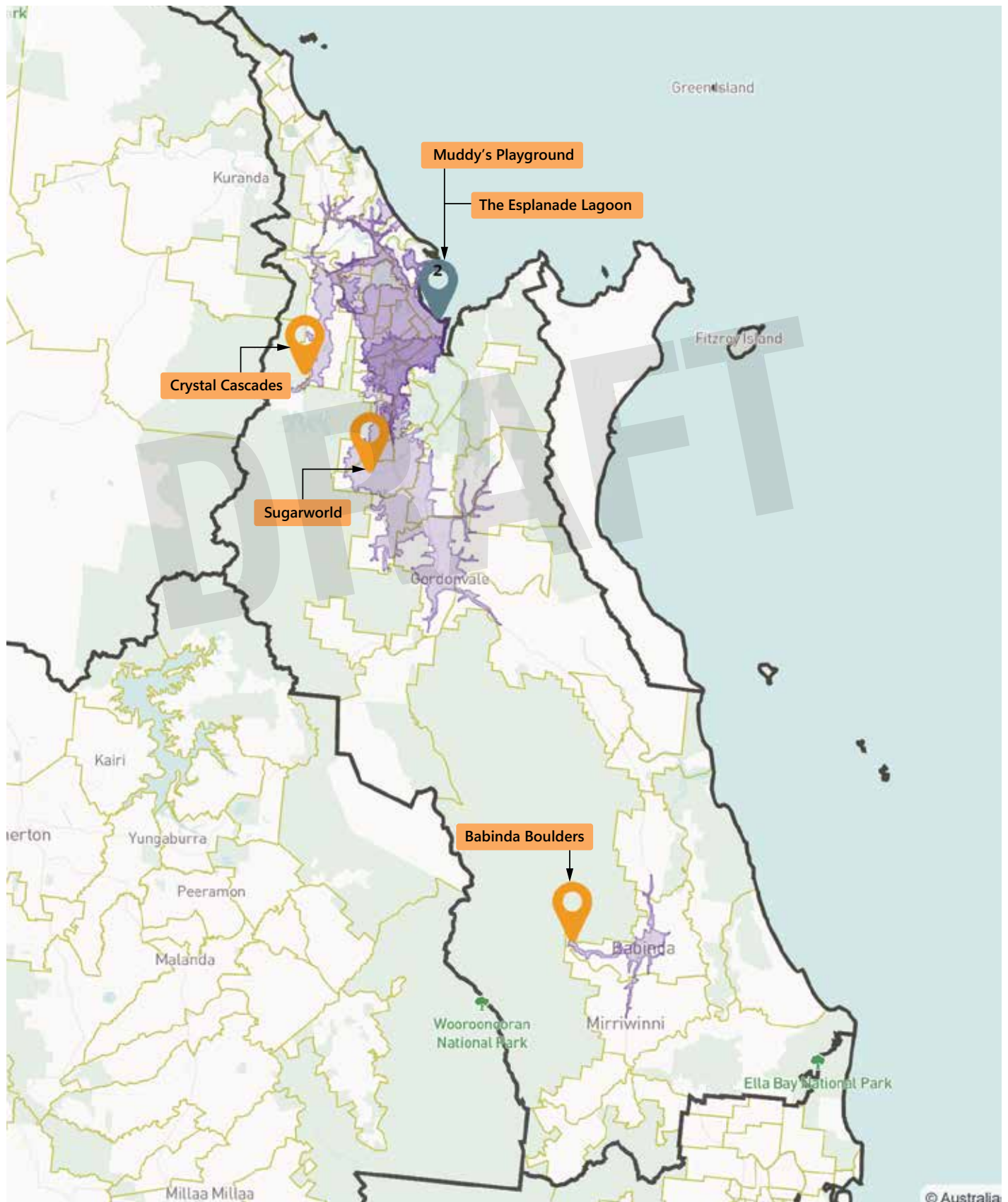
The Crystal Cascades are a secluded, rainforest freshwater swimming hole approximately 30 minutes from the Cairns CBD. A series of small waterfalls flow into large pools with many granite boulders.

 **10,332**

Population within a 15-minute Drive Time Catchment (2021) ⁴

The Figure⁵ below summarises the 15-minute drive time catchment for the recreational aquatic facilities in the Region.

Figure 9: Recreation Water Sites within the Cairns Region



⁵ The darker shade represents where there is a greater crossover of catchment between one or more beaches. Muddy's and the Lagoon, and Sugarworld are represented off the same plot points.

Within its forward capital works program, \$5,440,392 is budgeted for Sugarworld, Muddies and the Lagoon. The majority of investment items relate to updating existing infrastructure and equipment. Whilst necessary to ensure facilities remain safe and fit for purpose, the majority of investment will have minimal impact on user experience and enhancing visitation. The exception is the budgeted major upgrade to Muddy's Playground.



It is noted that at the time of this report, Council has engaged the Royal Life Society of Australia to undertake a Risk Assessment for informal or nature-based recreation facilities.

When comparing the location of the recreation facilities, to the aquatic centre network within the Region, the Esplanade Lagoon and Muddy's are within close proximity to Tobruk Memorial Pool. From an inner-southern regional perspective, Sugarworld is conveniently located near the Edmonton and Gordonvale communities, while Crystal Cascades is easily accessible to residents in the western suburbs.

The Babinda Boulders provides recreational opportunities to the southernmost localities of the Region.

Whilst there is a recreation aquatic facility accessibility gap between the south of Gordonvale and north of Babinda, these areas have low levels of population. Further natural reserves and waterfalls are located within the Region, however not formally recognised as aquatic facilities.



Key Future Considerations



There are eight controlled beaches, three artificial recreational water facilities and four major natural recreational aquatic facilities within the Region. It is noted that at the time of this report, Council has engaged the Royal Life Society of Australia to undertake a Risk Assessment for informal or nature-based recreation facilities.



Patrolled beaches provide safe, supervised recreational aquatic facilities for the community. With the exception of Bramston Beach, all other patrolled beaches within the Region are located within the northern beaches.



Natural recreation water facilities are dispersed across the Region. They provide recreational aquatic opportunities for the community. However, given the uncertainty of natural swimming environments, participation can be a higher risk to users.



The most heavily populated areas within the Region have accessibility to either a patrolled beach, or a natural recreation water facility. Babinda and Mirriwinni in the south, also have access to Bramston Beach and Babinda Boulders.



Muddy's Playground is local and a tourist attractor to the esplanade. The Playground could benefit from modernisation, however, the functional, lineal layout and its proximity to the adjacent café is considered effective. Increased area for water treatment plant is required, including exploration of opportunities to separate from the café back of house area. Council has budgeted approximately \$2 million to undertake a major upgrade of Muddy's Playground.



The Esplanade Lagoon is an effective tourist visitor attractor for the Region. The Lagoon plays an important role in providing an accessible, safe and enjoyable aquatic experience to users. Further enhancement of shaded picnic and BBQ areas could heighten the user experience, as there is strong competition for access to these facilities currently. The planned First Nations Cultural Centre, to be located near the Lagoon, may further enhance the user experience and visitation.



Sugarworld has the opportunity to provide aquatic leisure and adventure opportunities to the community. It also has the capacity to attract, as a tourist destination within the Region. However, the current facility is ageing, appears tired and unattractive. Modernisation of food and beverage options, leisure pools and play areas should be considered. Other emerging adventure water facilities, such as wet zipline obstacle courses, could also be considered. Future investment in facility enhancements should focus on point-of-difference opportunities to those offered at the Council-owned aquatic centres, to avoid unnecessary competition. Facility maintenance is challenging due to overland flow impacts in large rain events. As a result, Sugarworld appears poorly maintained. This is most evident when considering the poor presentation of the relatively new mini-golf course. Sugarworld experiences a significant number of break-ins and vandalism. Future facility design needs to incorporate security measures to limit accessibility. Another consideration should be housing a caretaker on site, to ensure 24/7 site presence and surveillance.

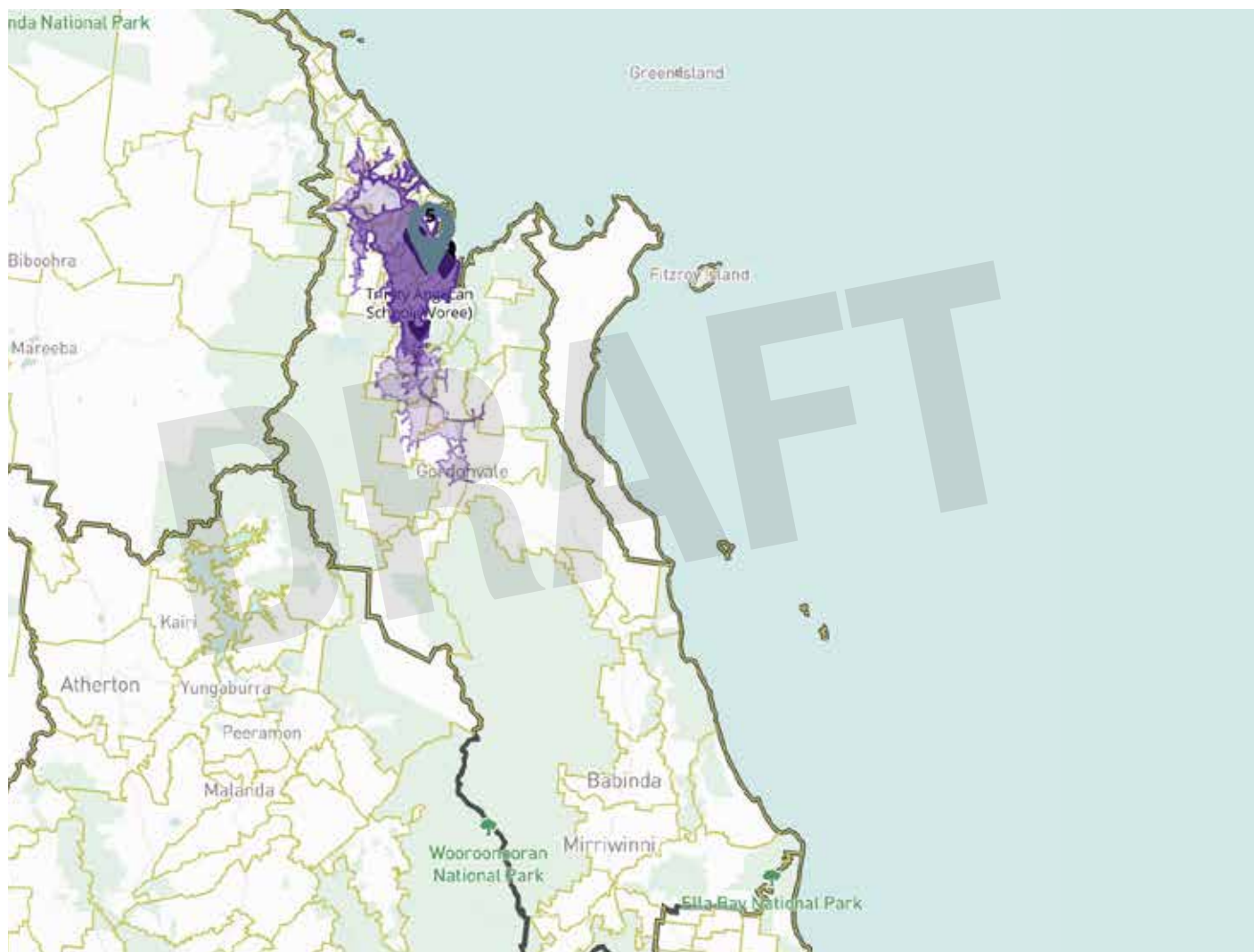
4.3. SCHOOL POOL

There are five school pools within the Cairns Region, including:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| « Trinity Anglican School (Woree)/
TAS Aquatic Centre | « Trinity Bay State High School
« St Augustine's College | « Cairns State High School
« Edge Hill State High School. |
|--|---|--|

The Figure⁶ below summarises the 15-minute drive time catchment for school pools in the Region. All school pools are within close proximity to Cairns City.

Figure 10: Time Travel Catchment Analysis of School Pools



Key Future Considerations



School pools play an important role in reducing the burden of provision as the sole responsibility of Council. Whilst community access is limited in comparison to Council-owned aquatic centres, the school pools in the Region provide opportunities to ease the demand for learn-to-swim, squad and carnival activities. School pools have a limited impact on the demand for aquatic fitness, recreation and leisure demand.



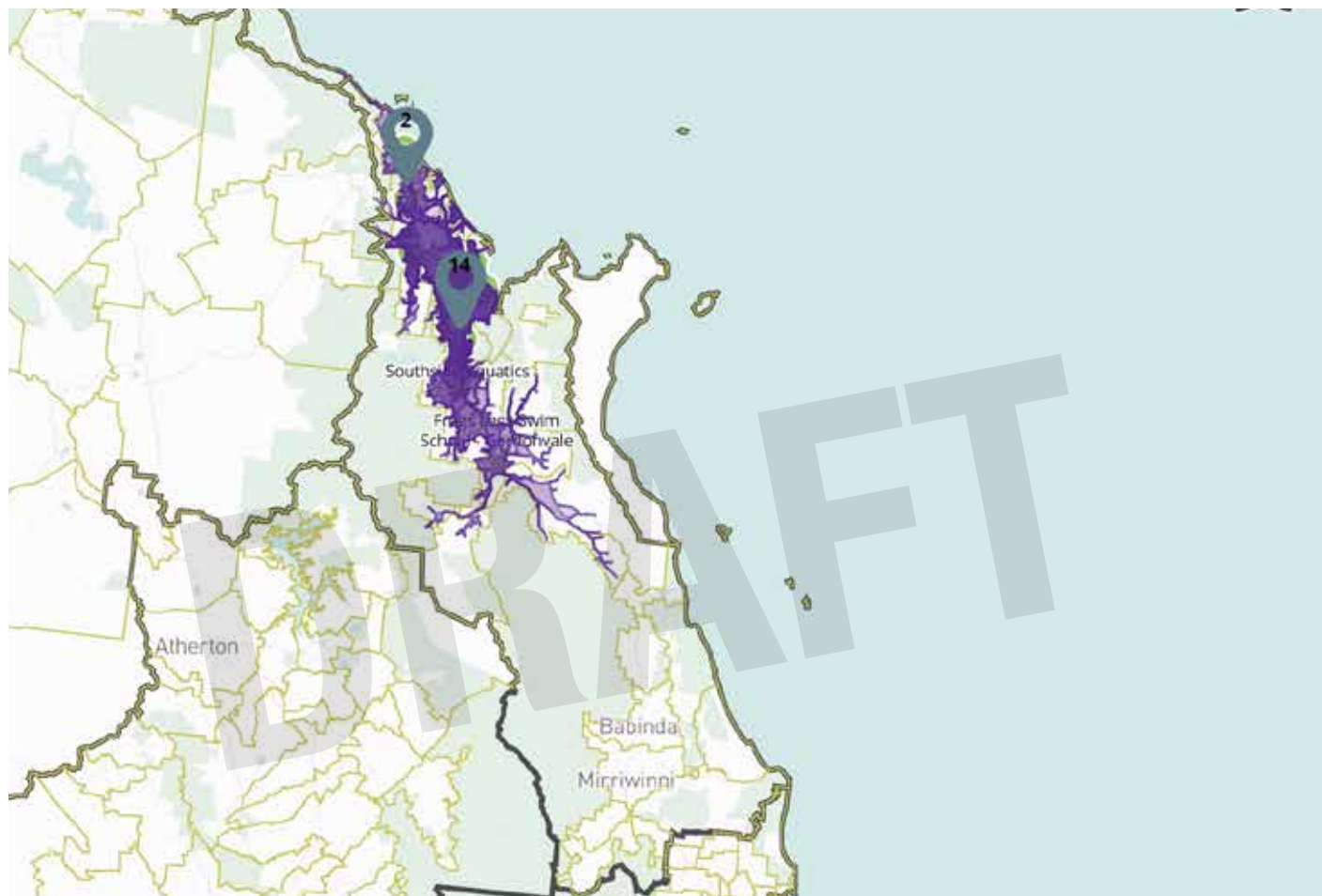
There are no known plans to develop new and/ or expand, the aquatic opportunities at schools within the Region. The current network of school pools services the highest population areas to the north and south of Cairns City.

⁶ The darker shade represents where there is a greater crossover of catchments between one or more beaches. The map illustrates a significant cross-over of catchments for school pools.

4.4. PRIVATE POOLS AND LEARN-TO-SWIM

There are 19 private and learn-to-swim pools in the Region. The figure⁷ below summarises the 15-minute drive time catchment of private and learn-to-swim pools in the Region.

Figure 11: Gap Analysis, Program/ L2S Pools in Cairns



Key Future Considerations



There are a large number of private pools and learn-to-swim opportunities across the Region, with 18 programs offered at either private facilities/ residences, schools or Council-owned aquatic centres. These opportunities are located within the central to northern corridor of the Region. Programs offered are predominately learn-to-swim orientated, however, some programs incorporate squad activities.



Given the large number of predominately learn-to-swim opportunities in the Region, there is likely to be a lesser need to incorporate separate learn-to-swim from warm water program pools within the Council-owned aquatic centre's network.

⁷ The darker shade represents where there is a greater crossover of catchments between one or more beaches. The map illustrates a significant cross-over of catchments in the localities with the highest population densities to the north and south of and including Cairns City.

5. TRENDS ANALYSIS

5.1. IMPORTANCE OF AQUATIC FACILITIES

Royal Life Saving Australia's 'The Social Impact of the National Aquatic Industry' identifies five major categories of social impact:



As articulated in the recent Royal Life Saving Report 'Towards a water-loving nation free from drowning: The role of learn to swim', learning to swim is critical for all Australians to be safe around water. Drowning prevention is a significant consideration for governments, industry and the community.

Swimming and water safety education is a key component to promoting safe use of aquatic environments and drowning prevention. A lack of swimming skills and water safety knowledge is found to be a major risk factor in drowning.

The report illustrates the learn-to-swim ecosystem. This study focuses on the infrastructure that facilitates the access pathways and delivery of learn-to-swim content, which in turn contributes to the achievement of the National Swimming and Water Safety Benchmarks.

The Royal Life Saving National Summer Drowning Report 2022/23 identified the following drowning trends:

- « **Swimming pool closures** during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns are continuing to impact children's and adults' swimming skills and fitness.
- « Seven male adults lost their lives during an attempted rescue of children at beach and lake locations. This reinforces the importance for adults and children to continue building on their swimming and water safety skills, as well as their swimming fitness levels. Our research has shown that up to 40% of children are leaving primary school unable to achieve the minimum National Benchmark for swimming and water safety skills. Overestimation of swimming ability and an underestimation of the risk often leads to inaccurate risk perception by adults, which may have also been a factor in these drownings.
- « More people swimming and recreating at **unpatrolled locations** has led to an increase in coastal drownings.
- « **Extreme heat** across the country on the weekend of 15-19 February 2023 led to 15 drowning deaths, in inland and coastal locations.
- « During the month of December, **people aged 0 – 17 years** were at the highest risk of drowning. The locations where people in this age group were most at risk of drowning were lakes and swimming pools.
- « During the months of January and February, **people aged 35 – 64 years** were at the highest risk of drowning. The locations where people in this age group were most at risk of drowning were beaches and rivers/creeks.

⁸ https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/56605/RLSSA-Social-Impacts-Report-Final-November-2021-Web-and-Print.pdf



5.2. AQUATIC CENTRES

Over the past decade, there has been a greater emphasis on the development of a variety of water space within aquatic centres, including:

- « Program pools, designed for learn-to-swim and a variety of aquatics programs.
- « Warm water pools, used for rehabilitation and therapy, one of the highest use spaces within public aquatic and leisure centres.
- « Water play including large, enclosed slides, water jets and other leisure play opportunities.

Health and fitness programming have also advanced with a greater emphasis on programs for older adults and a much broader range of opportunities, including Pilates, Yoga and Boot Camp.

Components that contribute to successful contemporary aquatic and leisure facilities are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 12: Successful Aquatic and Leisure Facility Model



The most successful facilities attract all user markets, draw users from a large catchment and allow people to participate in a range of activities at one site.

The education market requires hot water pools and water depths with some straight edges and easy water access.

The health and therapy market requires hot water pools and associated health relaxation areas, such as spas and saunas. As such, the addition of health and fitness facilities (many centres returning 125% to 180% of expenditure), spas and saunas, wellness centres/ day spas, sports medicine, health, therapeutic and beauty services, social areas and cafés, have been very successful at many aquatic and leisure facilities. They add to the user experience and attract people to these facilities more often.

Facility trends indicate several common success factors for aquatic centres:



One-stop-shop: A large range of activity areas at one site to maximise use/ help share the costs.



Reduce operating losses: A mix of community and commercial activities are needed at the one site; however, the location also needs to be right to make this viable.



Programmable spaces: Programs and memberships to keep users coming back.



Community/ social hub: Offer quality food, beverage, social and entertainment spaces. This could also provide a range of other services like community and cultural services, health and allied services and/ or commercial precincts.

Successful and sustainable contemporary aquatics and leisure facilities are also community destinations and meeting points for various physical and social activities.

A review of more than 500 aquatic leisure centres undertaken by Otium highlights four distinct key user markets that need to be attracted to a facility if it is to achieve high use and sustainable operations. These are:

- « Recreation, Leisure, and Adventure
- « Fitness and Training
- « Education
- « Therapy.

Facilities designed to include these elements will attract the four key user markets outlined in the Figure below.

Figure 13: The Four Key User Markets for Aquatic Centres

Recreation, Leisure and Adventure

- « Generally 60% to 70% of pool users
- « Families, friends, social groups
- « Coming for fun, relaxation and play

Fitness and Training

- « Generally 20% to 25% of pool users
- « Competitive swimmers
- « Club association users
- « Structured fitness and competition

**AQUATIC
FACILITY USER
ATTRACTION
SUBJECT TO
DEMOGRAPHIC
PROFILE**

Education

- « 10% to 15% of users
- « Learn to swim and schools
- « Special needs users

Therapy

- « 10% to 15% of users
- « Hydrotherapy and rehabilitation
- « Exercise classes in warm water

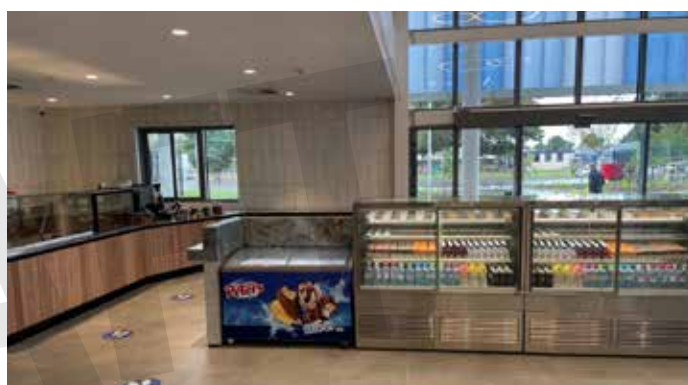
Exemplars of contemporary aquatic facilities are illustrated below:



Warm Water Program Pool with Spa



Café and Seating Area



Grab n Go Food and Beverage



50m Pool with Moveable Bulkhead



Health and Fitness Lockers and Waiting Area



Multi-purpose Fitness Room



Learn-to-Swim Pool



Café and Lounge Area



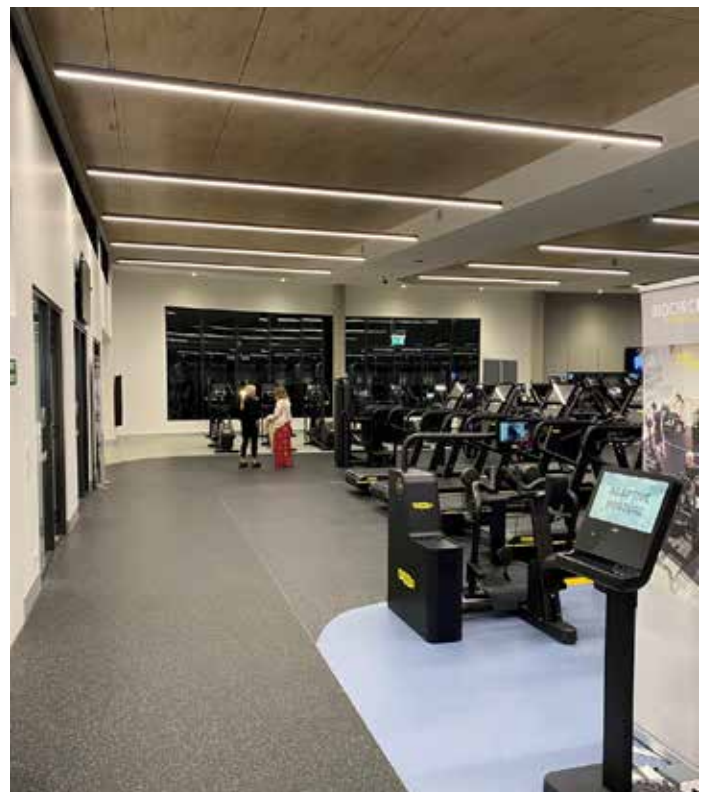
Adventure Slides



Entry/ Reception Area



Warm Water Program Room with Ramp Entry



Health and Fitness Centre



5.3. AQUATIC LEISURE FACILITIES

Natural recreational water facilities offer a range of benefits that can enhance physical and mental well-being. They provide a range of benefits⁹, including:



Physical benefits through exercise, heat reduction and enhanced water quality.



Mental health benefits through connection with nature and stress reduction.



Protection, awareness and connection with culturally significant areas.



Accessibility to areas for adventure, discovery and excitement.

Figure 14: Booloulamba Falls, Conondale National Park



Whilst there are many benefits to natural recreational water facilities, so too are the potential risks¹⁰ to users, including:

- « Unpredictable water conditions
- « Water pollution, particularly after large rain events
- « Potential for slips and falls
- « Drowning risks
- « Isolation should an incident occur requiring treatment or evacuation.

On this basis, government agencies responsible for natural recreational water facilities have to mitigate risk through closures (short and long-term), signage, enhanced maintenance and in extreme conditions, supervision.

⁹ tripstodiscover.com; queensland.com; world-of-waterfalls.com; peekpools.com

¹⁰ weareexplorers.co; dpanz.org.nz

5.4. SCHOOL POOLS

Royal Life Saving Australia, in partnership with PWC, developed a report to map, understand and assess the learn-to-swim ecosystem. This report identified access pathways, delivery providers and infrastructure to support the delivery of swimming and water safety education. School-based programs are identified as the top two access pathways to the learn-to-swim ecosystem.

Queensland Schools Environment

The Queensland Government is committed to providing a high-quality water safety and swimming education program and has developed the:

- « Water Safety Action Statement.
- « Water Safety Action Plan.
- « Pledge of Commitment to Water Safety.
- « Water Safety and Swimming Education Program.

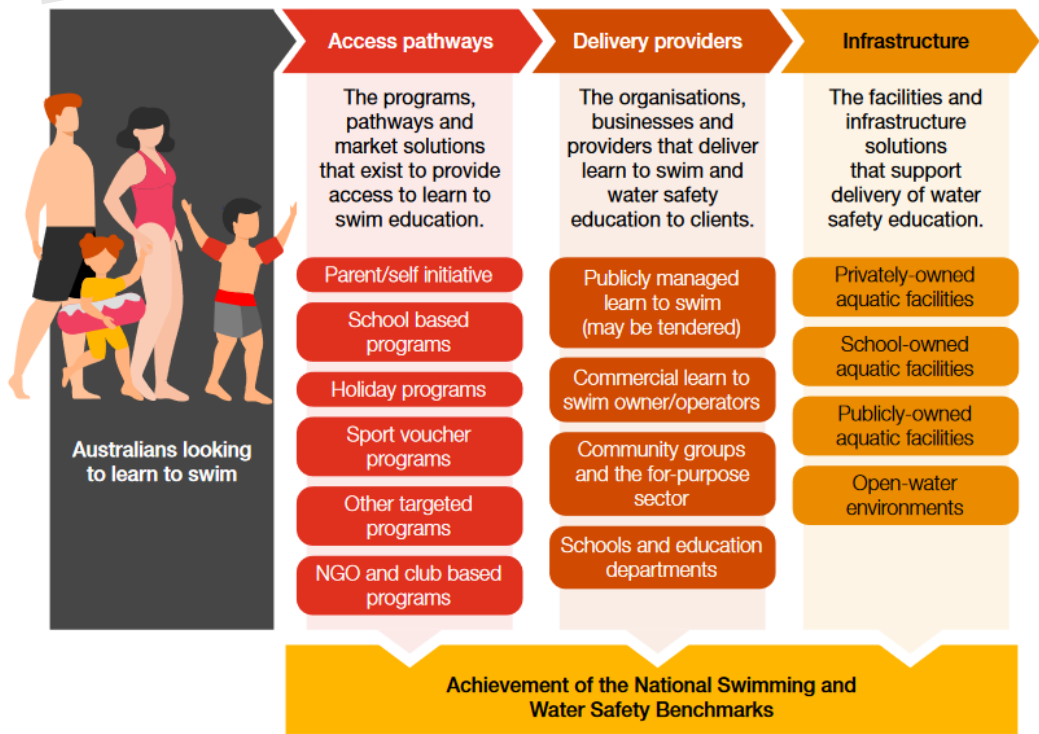
In line with the department’s P–12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework, Queensland state schools are required to provide a water safety and swimming education program in Prep to Year Six.

5.5.PRIVATE POOLS AND LEARN-TO-SWIM

As defined in the earlier section of the report, private pools are aquatic facilities/ venues provided within premises such as hotels or private residences. Conventionally, private pools are intended for private use only. Whereas private learn-to-swim is defined as the aquatic venue provision by private operators to which the public is admitted on payment of fees or membership.

Royal Life Saving Australia, in partnership with PWC, developed the report ‘Towards A Water-Loving Nation Free From Drowning: The Role Of Learn To Swim’ to understand and assess the learn-to-swim ecosystem. This report identified ‘commercial learn-to-swim operator’ as a key delivery provider, whilst ‘privately owned aquatic facilities’ were identified as one of the key infrastructure to support delivery of swimming and water safety education.

Figure 15: Learn-to-swim Ecosystem

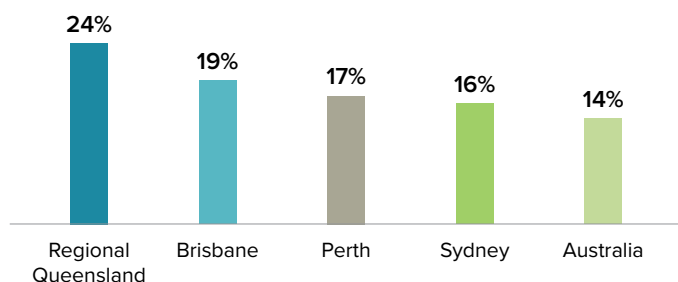


Private pools, along with learn-to-swim programs, assist in reducing the sole burden of delivery aquatic facilities and programs on local government. Their role in the network of aquatic facilities is essential to meet the increasing demand for water safety-related programs.

5.5.1. Private Pool Ownership

In addition to private pools utilised for swimming programs and learn-to-swim, private pools have been conventionally built and utilised by the homeowner for personal recreational purposes. Regional Queensland (24%) leads Australia in their ownership of private swimming pools and spas, followed by Brisbane (19%), Perth (17%), and Sydney (16%), who are all above the Australian average of 14%¹¹.

Private swimming pools and spas ownership



The total number of Australians living in a residence with a private pool or spa is

3.1 million.

The leading factors that influence these numbers include:



Higher average temperatures experienced in regional Queensland, Sydney and Perth, compared to Melbourne and Tasmania, for example.



Shifts in trends of home ownership and preferred components¹², including shrinking backyards and the rise of apartment living.



Rising costs of real estate and the greater value represented by the inclusion of swimming pools or spas.



Greater focus on homes to service recreational and fitness requirements.

¹¹ *One-in-seven Australians (3.1 million) live in a house with a swimming pool or spa - Roy Morgan Research*

¹² *Pool and study: The changing face of the Australian dream home (afr.com)*

5.6. AQUATIC CENTRE MANAGEMENT

5.6.1. Management Options

There are a variety of management models which may be considered for the management of aquatic centres. There is no one superior operating model suitable for all local governments and all pools within the one council. This is due to varying capacity and resources, the number and variety of facilities and the desired community and health outcomes a council wishes to address.

Management options include:

- « **Council Internal Management** – This is where a council would directly employ management and staff to operate the facility. This management model allows the council to have full control of operations, pricing, programming, asset management and staffing.
- « **Council Establish Company Limited by Guarantee** – This model involves the council establishing a separate wholly-owned company to manage and operate the facilities on its behalf. This allows the company to be in control of the facility, based on the Management Services Agreement and key operating directions set up by the council. This option is particularly useful where councils wish to be more commercial and are prepared to hand off responsibility to the company, but ultimately control and direct the company. Employees under this model can be engaged outside of the Local Government Award. Companies limited by guarantee are most viable when they manage large, contemporary facilities, or a network of similar facilities.
- « **External Management** – For the purpose of this report, the following three models have been considered under external management:
 - **Not-for-profit** - This option would engage a not-for-profit organisation to operate the facility. This would be for a set term and financial arrangement. The agreement could include performance conditions, key performance indicators and several maintenance responsibilities.
 - **Commercial Operator** - This option would see the council contract or lease out management rights of the facility to either a professional contract management company or an individual, to operate the facility. This is usually done through a contract for an agreed term and set of conditions that bind each party. Under this arrangement, the council can contract/ lease all or part of the facility and service responsibilities within the venue.
- « Of note, post the COVID-19 pandemic, the commercial operator market has tightened, whereby operators are more selective when determining interest levels to manage a facility. The following factors are being considered by commercial operators when determining to tender:
 - Standard and range of facility offerings.
 - Facility location and catchment size.
 - Opportunities for establishing a network of facilities in close proximity to optimise their financial return.
 - Willingness of the council to establish a true partnership between the operator, the council and the community.
 - Realistic management fees.
 - Length of term being offered supports investment in the region to underwrite start-up costs and to be able to attract quality staff.

All models are diversified from each other and have a range of benefits and risks. In determining its preferred model, the fundamental questions for the council relate to:

- « Level of control the council wants or is prepared to relinquish, and
- « Level of risk the council is prepared to take or wants to relinquish.

Figure 16: Management Models Risk and Control



Current Management Arrangements

Council currently leases its aquatic centres to commercial operators with agreements not due to expire until 2033, with the exception of the Tobruk Memorial Pool which expires in 2026. In order to support optimised value for money and the service delivery outcomes, the leases are underpinned by detailed service level agreements. The lease service level agreements articulate the roles and responsibilities of Council and the commercial operators relating to:

- « Term
- « Payment of annual cash subsidy by Council
- « Supply of water and chemicals by Council
- « Asset maintenance and water quality
- « Staffing and qualifications by the commercial operator
- « Compliance
- « Reporting
- « Inspections, audits and water testing
- « Safety and first aid
- « Financial performance
- « Participation
- « Customer satisfaction
- « Community engagement
- « Business development
- « Facility development
- « Operations.

In some circumstances, Council has entered into a joint funding agreement with commercial operators to improve facilities aimed at enhancing the use and viability of a centre.

In theory, the above model is considered best practice for a commercial operator model. However, the detail and presentation of data, information and reports across Council's current network of commercial operators is varied and not fully consistent with the requirements of the lease and service agreement documentation.



6. ENGAGEMENT THEMES

Expansive community and stakeholder engagement assisted to inform current constraint and future needs and opportunities. Stakeholders and techniques included:



Community Survey
(578 responses)



Interviews with
Council Officers



Interviews with Council-owned
Aquatic Centre Operators



Interviews with
Schools



Interviews with
Peak Sporting Bodies



Interviews with
Local Swim Clubs.

The key themes from the engagement activities were:

Location, fees,
programs/ services,
modern facilities
supports/ inhibits
use

40% of community
use aquatic facilities
>2-3 times per week

Safety concerns
main factor for
not visiting inland
waterways

Perception of similar
risks between inland
waterways and
beaches

45% of community
willing to travel
between 15 and 30
minutes

Many facilities
approaching
end-of-life

Modernisation of
facilities required

Babinda Pool at end-
of-life

School pools play
critical role in
assisting to service
demand

Demand for high
performance aquatic
opportunities is
increasing

FNQ Region is
overrepresented in
drownings

7. DEMAND ANALYSIS

7.1. PROVISIONAL ASSESSMENT

The benchmarked local governments are located in regional, coastal locations and have relatively similar population catchments, including:

- « Geelong
- « Newcastle
- « Wollongong
- « Tweed Regional
- « Rockhampton
- « Sunshine Coast.

Aquatic facility, programs and services needs in these localities are serviced by a combination of Council-owned aquatic facilities, school and private facilities, natural bathing reserves and patrolled beaches.

The benchmarking found that in comparison to the benchmarked localities, the Cairns Region has:

A relatively consistent current rate of provision through **to 2031** of council-owned aquatic centres

1 : 38,794 (Cairns Region) /
1 : 37,600 (benchmark regions)

A moderately lower rate of provision will be triggered **by 2036**

1 : 41,329 (Cairns Region) /
1 : 37,600 (benchmark regions)

The higher current rate of 50m pool provision will continue **beyond 2036**

1 : 8,347 (Cairns Region) /
1 : 16,578 (benchmark regions)

7.2. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

The current network of aquatic facilities supports accessibility to the majority of the higher populated communities within the Region. The primary exception is accessibility for the Edmonton SA2 area. Demand in this locality and to its immediate south will further intensify as the Mount Peter Master Planned area is developed, as summarised below:

- « The Edmonton SA2 2021 population of 11,614 (4th largest in the Region) is estimated to increase to 15,490 by 2046 (5th largest SA2 in the Region).
- « The Mount Peter Master Planned Area is captured within the Gordonvale/ Trinity SA2 – this population is estimated to increase from 9,961 in 2021 to 28,733 by 2046 (highest SA2 population in the Region as at 2046)
- « The Mount Peter Master Planned Area generated population growth is the largest estimated for the Region between 2021 and 2046.

From a provisional perspective, an additional aquatic centre would only be required for the Cairns Region should one or more of the current Council-owned aquatic centres be decommissioned. If this were to occur, a new aquatic centre within the Edmonton SA2 could service the current and increasing gap within this community, together with the new community to be realised within the Mount Peter Master Planned Area.

On this basis, the combined Edmonton and Gordonvale/ Trinity SA2's of 44,233 persons would be serviced by two aquatic centres at Gordonvale (current centre) and Edmonton (future potential centre). This would equate to one aquatic centre per 22,112 persons. Conversely, the Babinda Pool, services 5,305 persons.

8. FUTURE CAIRNS AQUATIC FACILITIES - KEY INFLUENCERS AND DRIVERS



Vision

To deliver the preeminent leisure and aquatic facilities in regional Australia.



Community Profile

- « Population growth will increase demand
- « Higher proportion of people aged 30 – 54 years
- « Proportion of 45 – 64 years is estimated to decrease by 2046
- « Lower proportion of older adults 60+ years
- « Higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- « Current catchment of approximately 170,000 people estimated to increase by a further 60,000 people by 2046
- « Mount Peter Master Planned Area fastest growing locality with 19,000 new people by 2046 (incorporated within Gordonvale-Trinity SA2).



Trends

- « Aquatic centres that optimise use and viability are attractive to the four key aquatic user markets:
 - Recreation, leisure and adventure (60 – 70%)
 - Fitness and training (20 – 25%)
 - Therapy (10 – 15%)
 - Education (10 – 15%)
- « Increasing focus on swim safety education
- « Importance of natural recreational water, however higher risk
- « School, private and residential pools reduce burden on local government
- « Secondary spend opportunities (food & beverage) support increased viability



Demand

- « Provision of Council-owned aquatic facilities
 - 1:33,389 (benchmarked local governments 1:37,600)
- « Provision of Council-owned 50m pools
 - 1:8,347 (benchmarked local governments 1:16,578)
- « Accessibility gap within Edmonton and future Mount Peter Master Planned Area

- « Babinda Pool
 - End of life
 - Very low visitation
 - Small catchment
 - Significantly high cost per visit
- « Smithfield Pool / Marlin Coast Bicentennial Pool
 - Highest catchment multiple
 - Non-contemporary leisure water
 - Low cost per visit
 - Program pool amenities poor
- « Tobruk Memorial Pool
 - Opportunity for enhancements as regional centre
 - Poor leisure water offerings for young children
 - Opportunity to enhance and expand fitness and allied health opportunities
 - Lowest cost per visit of Council-owned pools
- « Gordonvale Aquatic Centre
 - Planned investment in a new Splash Pad and Learn-to-swim pool will have a positive impact on future use and viability
 - Enhanced toilet/ changerooms and accessibility needed
 - Good site location with space for expansion
 - High cost per visit
- « Woree Sports and Aquatic Centre
 - Lowest cost to Council of all pools within the network
 - Low cost per visit
 - Non-contemporary leisure water
- « Approximately \$12 million for future improvements to Council-owned aquatic centres
- « Most heavily populated areas have accessibility to a patrolled beach or natural recreation water facility
- « Babinda and Mirriwinni have access to Bramston Beach, Babinda Boulders
- « Council has engaged the Royal Life Society of Australia to undertake a Risk Assessment for informal or nature-based recreation facilities
- « Muddy's Playground in need of modernisation
- « The Esplanade Lagoon important attractor to the Region – opportunity for enhanced picnic/ BBQ facilities
- « Sugarworld in need of modernisation
- « Over \$5.5 million budgeted for future improvements to Sugarworld, Muddy's Playground and the Lagoon
- « School pools, private pools and learn-to-swim opportunities reduce the service delivery burden on Council
- « Funding availability for aquatic infrastructure renewal within Council's 10-year Capital Works program impacted by competing Council priorities.



Management

- « Commercial operator model, including lease and service level agreement considered best practice for external model
- « Length of term supports operator investment in quality delivery and ability to attract high quality staff
- « Inconsistencies with provision of data, information and reports
- « Potential for dedicated Council aquatics officer
- « Potential to create standardised data and reporting templates.

9. NEEDS ANALYSIS

An assessment of the earlier research, engagement and analysis is summarised below to identify future Cairns Region aquatic facilities needs:

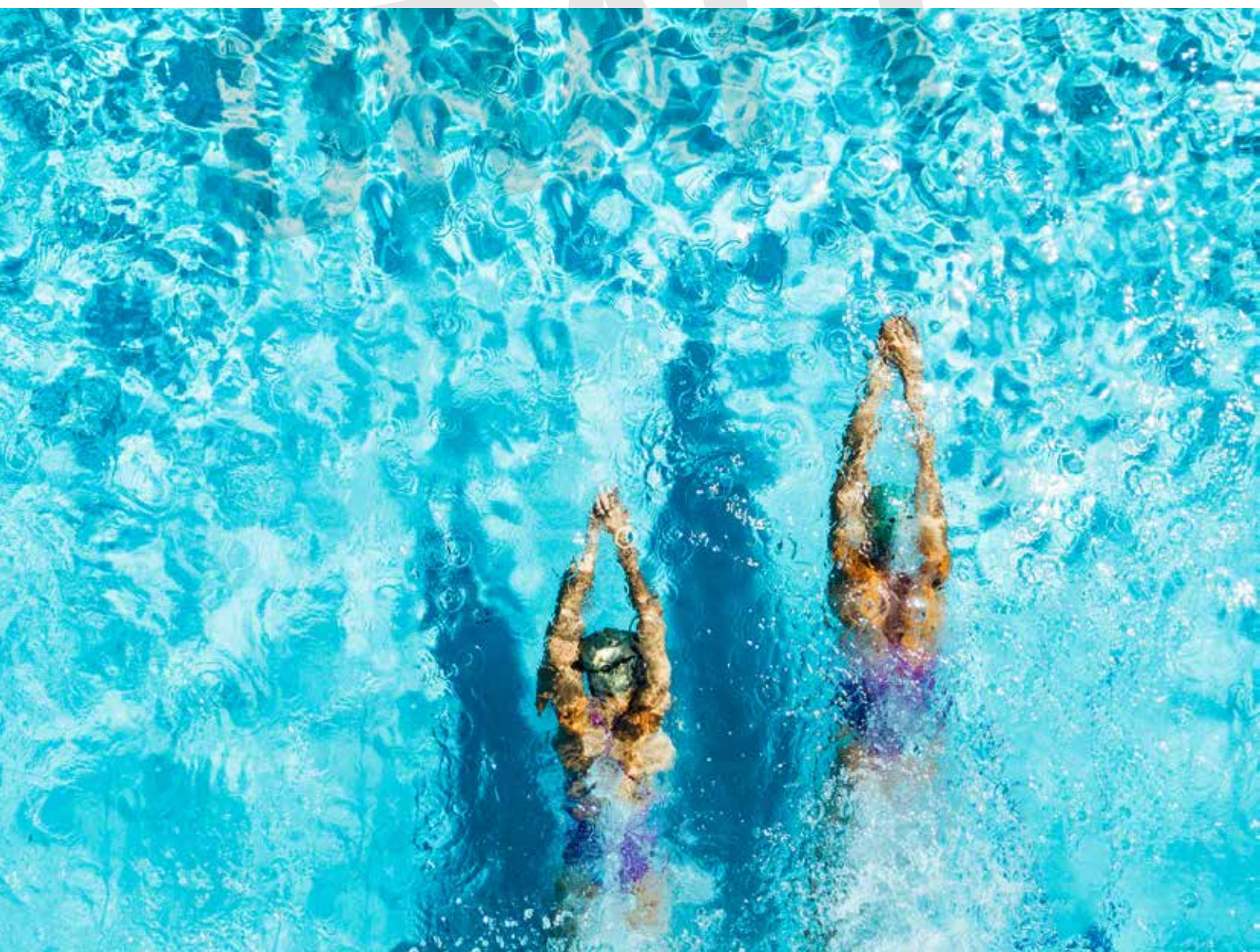
Table 2: Future Cairns Aquatic Facilities Needs

FUTURE NEEDS	RATIONALE
	NETWORK PROVISION
New/ upgraded aquatic centre to service Edmonton and new Mount Peter catchment.	« Edmonton's estimated population of circa 15,000. « Mount Peter's estimated 2046 population of circa 20,000. « Average provisional benchmarking suggests one aquatic centre for 37,600 people. « Consistent with earlier Edmonton aquatic centre feasibility investigations by Council. « Historical community trends suggest residents are less likely to travel south to a regional locality (i.e. Gordonvale) for aquatic centre facilities, programs and services. « The community survey suggests there is strong community interest in aquatic facilities from this Region with 29% of respondents coming from Edmonton and Bentley Park.
Babinda Pool surplus to future network needs.	« Pool in need of major redevelopment and investment. « Significantly higher cost per visit (\$71.23) compared to industry benchmarks (\$5.73). « Extremely small catchment (1,509). « Relatively close proximity to alternative aquatic centres in Gordonvale (26 minutes) and Innisfail (24 minutes). « Community survey responses indicate approximately 45% of the community believe a 30 minute travel time is acceptable. « Natural recreation water facilities (i.e. Babinda Boulders). « Retention, combined with a new aquatic centre in the Edmonton/ Mount Peter area, results in oversupply within the Cairns Region aquatic network.
Ensure future 50m pool design incorporates ramp entry, swim walls and appropriate depths/ temperatures to optimise multi-use outcomes.	« Current (1:8,000) and future (1:10,000) 50m pool oversupply compared to average benchmarking (1:17,000). « Supports investment in better diversifying aquatic facilities, programs and services aimed at all potential aquatic user markets.
Explore opportunities to activate/ develop/ partner to provide aquatic leisure and/ or aquatic sport and program opportunities for communities without accessibility (<15-minute drive time) to aquatic facility opportunities.	« Ensures some form of accessibility to aquatic facilities for all members of the Cairns Region community. « Community survey responses indicate that less than the majority of the community (55.74%) believe a travel time of more than 15 minutes to an aquatic facility is acceptable.
Ensure no further leisure aquatic facilities within coastal localities.	« The Esplanade Lagoon and Muddys Playground provide adequate local and tourism leisure aquatic opportunities. « Coastal communities have the benefit of accessibility to beaches, including to patrolled beaches for the higher-density communities. « Supports funding focus towards optimising the provision and performance of the aquatic centre network.

STANDARDS OF SERVICE	
Pop-up swim walls/ moveable bulkhead for all 50m pools.	« Provides programming flexibility between short and long course programs and events. « Enhances the capacity of the pool in peak usage periods. « Relatively low investment for high impact.
Modernised food and beverage offerings.	« Important component to the viability of an aquatic centre. « Encourages longer stays and increased secondary spend revenue generation. « Smart design outcomes support efficient front-of-house labour outcomes to reduce operating costs. « Provides an alternative attractor to broader community visitation to support passive marketing outcomes. « Community survey responses found that approximately 53% would be encouraged to visit more often if facilities were modernised and a further 45% would be influenced by expanded programs and services.
Shading over all outdoor pools.	« Recognised extreme heat environment of the Cairns Region. « Supports year-round activity by reducing water temperatures in extreme heat conditions. « Enhanced visitation will improve the financial performance of the aquatic centres.
Universal accessibility design.	« Ensure all future aquatic centre enhancements optimise universal accessibility outcomes to optimise use for all members of the community.
Ensure Tobruk Pool, as the regional aquatic centre, enhances facilities, programs and services to meet the full aquatic needs of all potential aquatic markets and demographics.	« Current centre leisure and adventure water offerings are limited. « Enhanced universal design outcomes will provide opportunities for people with a disability and better position the centre as a destination for para sport athletes and events. « Contemporary health and fitness centre and allied health offerings will provide a return on investment that will support improved financial viability. « Enhance facility offerings support differentiating the aquatic centre network and establishing the centre as the major regional facility. « Community survey responses found that approximately 53% would be encouraged to visit more often if facilities were modernised and a further 45% would be influenced by expanded programs and services.
At a district scale, ensure the remaining aquatic centres in the network provide opportunities for all potential aquatic user markets.	« The provision of an indoor, warm-water program pool will support multi-use outcomes for learn-to-swim programs, people with disabilities programs, older adults, rehabilitation and recovery purposes. « Water play offerings should incorporate multiple play elements to encourage multiple concurrent usage. « A multi-purpose program room provides additional incentive for broader community visitation and can service a diversity of community fitness, meeting and training needs. « Community survey responses found that approximately 53% would be encouraged to visit more often if facilities were modernised and a further 45% would be influenced by expanded programs and services.
Repurpose and redevelop Sugarworld into a district standard aquatic centre.	« The Sugarworld site location is ideally positioned to service the current and future Edmonton and Mount Peter catchments. « Sugarworld is currently a tired facility that offers no significantly different provisions from those the community can access elsewhere. « Without investment, Sugarworld will continue to be an increasing drain on Council resources. « There is a need for contemporary CPTED design outcomes to reduce the impact of regular vandalism and break-ins. « Secondary spend offerings are poor, these elements are essential to optimising the viability of a recreation leisure facility. « Edmonton's estimated population of circa 15,000. « Mount Peter's estimated 2046 population of circa 20,000. « Average provisional benchmarking suggests one aquatic centre for 37,600 people. « Consistent with earlier Edmonton aquatic centre feasibility investigations by Council. « Historical community trends suggest residents are less likely to travel south to a regional locality (i.e. Gordonvale) for aquatic centre facilities, programs and services. « The community survey suggests there is strong community interest in aquatic facilities from this catchment with 29% of respondents coming from Edmonton and Bentley Park.

MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Improvements to the consistency and standard of operating data provided to Council by operators.	« The current commercial operator model, including lease and service level agreement, is considered best practice for the external model. « There is inconsistency in the frequency, detail and reporting mechanisms between operators. « Effective and frequent data is essential to ensure Council can oversee operator performance and ensure its assets are being fully optimised.
Develop standardised reporting templates for operators.	« Standardised reporting templates will clearly specify the reporting and data detail required by Council. « A standardised approach will support enhanced analysis and the ability to better compare the performance of one aquatic centre against another.
Continuation of longer-term (five-year minimum) operator agreements.	« Supports operator investment in quality service delivery. « Ensures opportunities are attractive to the operator market, as the approach supports adequate time to recoup initial start-up costs. « Enables the operator to attract quality staff. « Recognises that post the COVID-19 pandemic the commercial operator market has tightened, whereby operators are more selective when determining interest levels to manage a facility.



10. AQUATIC FACILITY HIERARCHY & CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK

The implementation of a Hierarchy/ Classification Framework for aquatic facilities provides guidance on the purpose, location accessibility and embellishment needs of aquatic facilities within the Cairns Region. The Framework summarises the desired standards of service, as outlined in the figures below.

Figure 17: Cairns Aquatic Facility Hierarchy and Classification Framework

The Aquatic Facility Hierarchy & Classification Framework aims to guide opportunities for the Cairns community to access the following diversity of artificial and natural aquatic service types:



It is noted that the **Esplanade Lagoon** is outside the Framework below as it is classified as a Regional Tourism Facility.



Regional Aquatic Hub

Characteristics

It offers a comprehensive range of high-standard facilities, programs and services and is the aquatic high-performance event and training destination for the Region.

Service Type

Aquatic Sport, Programs and Leisure



Designated Facilities

Tobruk Memorial Pool



Catchment

Region-wide



Management

External Commercial Operator



Desired Standards of Service



Aquatic Sport

- 50m outdoor pool:
 - « World Aquatic State/ National Standard
 - « Cover over pool
 - « Moveable bulkhead and all abilities access.
- 25m outdoor pool:
 - « World Aquatic Regional Standard
 - « Cover over pool
 - « Moveable bulkhead and all abilities access.



Aquatic Programs

- 2 x warm water program indoor pools:
 - « Variety of heating options to support a range of programs
 - « Variety of depths to support multiple programs
 - « All abilities access
 - « Swim ledge in one pool
 - « Universal change cubicles.



Aquatic Leisure

- Water play park:
 - « Covered over activity area
 - « Minimum 150m2
 - « Multiple play elements
 - « User age cohort 0-9 years.
- Adventure water:
 - « Covered over activity area
 - « User age cohort 10+.



Ancillary

- 50m pool spectator seating:
 - « Covered
 - « Capacity for permanent and temporary seating of 2,200.
- Public amenities:
 - « Consistent with local planning regulations
 - « Changerooms
 - « Group change area
 - « Family change area
 - « Changing places change area.
- Entry/ foyer:
 - « Café
 - « Retail area
 - « Reception, administration offices and staff amenities
 - « First aid room.
- Multi-purpose community program/ meeting room.
- Health and fitness centre.
- Allied health.
- Creche.
- Design principles:
 - « Universal accessibility
 - « CPTED principles
 - « ESD principles.
- Oversized storage to support para sport athletes.
- Arrival/ departure drop-off.
- Bus parking.

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia minimum guidelines to be met.



1 Tobruk Memorial Pool. Photo Credit: Cairns Regional Council
2 FlowRider. Photo Credit: Tobruk Memorial Pool

District Aquatic Hub

Characteristics

It offers a diverse range of facilities, programs and services and is capable of hosting local and district aquatic competitions and events.

Service Type

Aquatic Sport, Programs and Leisure



Designated Facilities

- Smithfield Pool/ Marlin Coast Bicentennial Pool
- Gordonvale Aquatic Centre
- Woree Sports and Aquatic Centre
- Sugarworld Aquatic Centre



Catchment

30-minute Travel Time



Management

External Commercial Operator



Desired Standards of Service



Aquatic Sport

- Outdoor pool*:
 - « World Aquatic Regional Standard
 - « Depth to support safe diving at both ends
 - « Cover over pool
 - « Moveable bulkhead or pop-up wall
 - « All abilities access.



Aquatic Programs

- Warm water program indoor pool:
 - « Heated to support a range of programs
 - « Depth 0.9m to 1.8m
 - « All abilities access
 - « Swim ledge
 - « Universal change cubicle.



Aquatic Leisure

- Water play park:
 - « Covered over activity area
 - « Minimum 100m2
 - « Multiple play elements
 - « User age cohort 0-9 years.



Ancillary

- 50m pool spectator seating:
 - « Covered
 - « Capacity for 250 spectators.
- Public amenities:
 - « Consistent with local planning regulations
 - « Changerooms.
- Entry/ foyer:
 - « Café
 - « Retail area
 - « Reception, administration offices
 - « First aid room.
- Multi-purpose community program/ meeting room
- Design principles:
 - « Universal accessibility
 - « CPTED principles
 - « ESD principles.
- Arrival/ departure drop-off.
- Bus parking.

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia minimum guidelines to be met.

3 Smithfield Pool. Photo Credit: Marlin Coast Swimming & Fitness

4 Gordonvale Aquatic Centre. Photo Credit: The Cairns Post

* Maintain, however do not exceed, current 50m pool provision rate

Aquatic Node

Characteristics

Distinct from larger 'Hubs' Aquatic 'Nodes' provide only a singular aquatic service types per location. A node may vary greatly in scale. Some facilities form a local function as part of the network of accessible aquatic opportunities across the region, others such as the Esplanade Lagoon or Muddys Playground also contribute to the City's appeal as a major tourism destination.

Service Type

Aquatic Sport, Programs and Leisure

Catchment

15-minute Travel Time



Designated Facilities

- Aquatic Leisure (play; natural aquatic facilities)
- Aquatic Sport and Program (schools; private)



Management

- Water play and natural aquatic facilities managed by Council.
- Schools/ private pool managed by the asset owner.
- Not all natural aquatic facilities are acceptable for swimming or access. Council will take a consistent and risk-based approach to public access to natural water bodies, in accordance with minimum industry guidelines.



Desired Standards of Service

Aquatic Leisure



Natural Aquatic Facilities

- In accordance with Royal Life Saving Society - Australia Guidelines.
- Minimum safety standards recommended within the Cairns Regional Water Safety Audit, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, 2024.
- All natural aquatic facilities must be assessed against the relevant risk framework.



Aquatic Play

- Water play park:
 - « Covered over activity area
 - « Minimum 100m2
 - « Multiple play elements.
- User age cohort 0-9 years.

Aquatic Sport and Programs

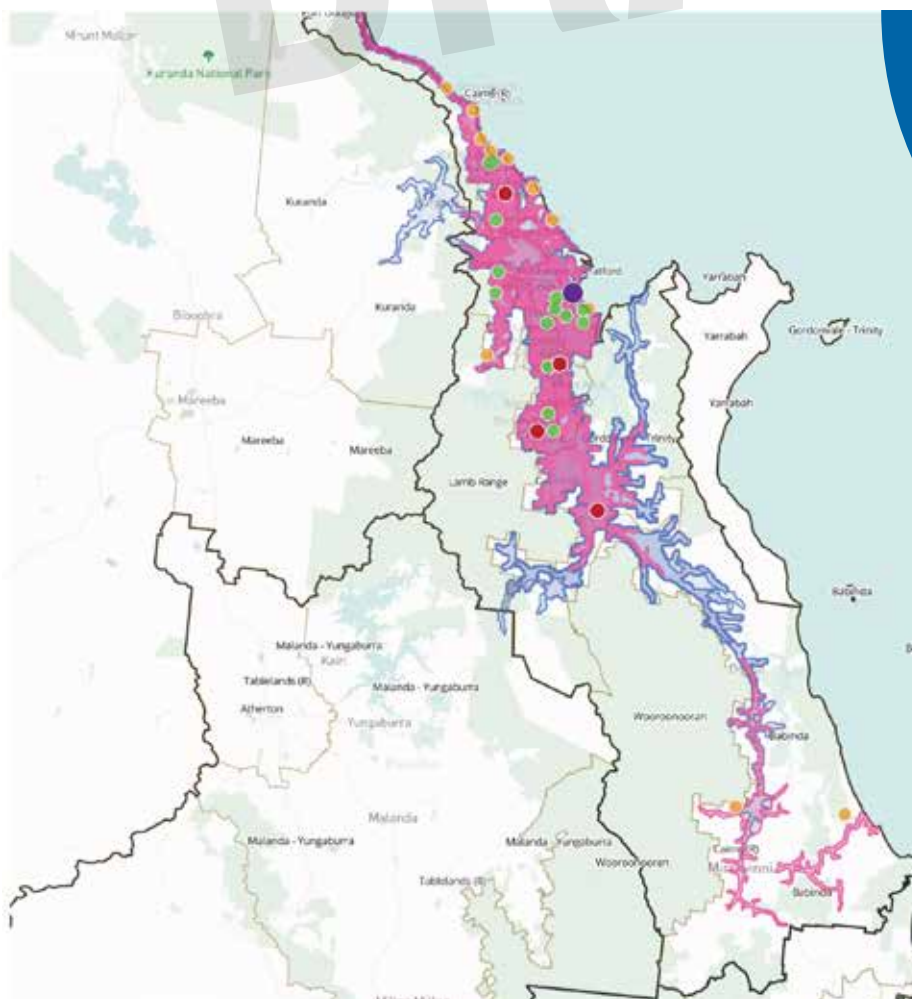


Schools and Private

- To be determined by the asset owner.



5 Muddy's Playground. Photo Credit: Cairns Regional Council
6 Ellis Beach. Photo Credit: Ellis Beach Surf Lifesaving Club



REGIONAL AQUATIC HUB

- Regional Facility

DISTRICT AQUATIC HUB

- District Facilities

AQUATIC NODE

- Aquatic Leisure
- Aquatic Sports and Programs
- District Aquatic Hub Catchment
- Aquatic Node Catchment

Current Provision

11. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

SHORT TERM (2025-2027)

Endorse Aquatic Strategy

Implement recommendations of the Royal Life Saving Society Australia

LOCATION	RECOMMENDATIONS
Crystal Cascades	« Extend the prohibition area where public access is not acceptable « Rezone swimming areas « Continue to monitor water levels and close access when unsafe « Remove upper access stairs « Provide new fencing and new signage.
Isabella Falls	« Consider prohibiting access in high-risk areas OR whole site closure « Improve signage.
Ryan Weare Park	« Improve signage « Prohibit drugs and alcohol « Supervision measures.
The Rocks Reserve	« Improve water quality monitoring « Supervision measures « Improve signage.
Goomboora Park	« Improve water quality monitoring « Supervision measures « Improve signage.
Western Arterial Conservation Park (Devils Drop)	« Prohibit risky activities « Install safety signage « Provide rescue equipment.

Commence process for tender of Tobruk Pool. Tender to consider:

- « Health and fitness centre.
- « Allied health.
- « Onsite creche.

Consult with the community regarding decommissioning Babinda Pool

Ensure annual asset condition & operational compliance inspections undertaken

Undertake a review of capital works program to ensure that adequate provisions are in place and alignment to recommendations of the Strategy

Undertake the following facility improvements to the Tobruk Memorial Pool, subject to funding availability:

- « Changing places amenities.
- « Para sport storage facility.
- « Universal change cubicle for the current warm water program pool.

Undertake the following facility improvements to the Muddy's Playground, subject to funding availability:

- « Improve the functionality and safety of the plant area by developing a dedicated plant building.
- « Upgrade the pipework and reticulation infrastructure.
- « Replace the soft fall in the wet areas.
- « Replace the existing water jets with new interactive water features.
- « Landscaping.

Implement Sugarworld improvement plan

- « Adventure play.

Decommission Babinda Pool following community consultation and development of Anzac Park (Refer to ANZAC Park Babinda Renewal-Stage 1 Concept below); or once asset fails or is no longer safe to use.

Community consultation
complete & Anzac Park
redeveloped

MEDIUM TERM (2028-2031)

Undertake the following facility improvements to the Gordonvale Aquatic Centre, subject to funding availability:

- « Warm water program indoor pool with universal change cubicle.
- « Cover and modernise water play park.
- « New centre building with:
 - Universal amenities/ changerooms
 - Café
 - Retail area
 - Reception, administration
 - Offices
 - First-aid room

Undertake the following facility improvements to the Woree Sport and Aquatic Centre, subject to funding availability:

- « Replace the leisure pool with a water play park.
- « Increase shade cover over 50m pool.
- « Install universal change cubicle within 25m pool area.

Undertake the following facility improvements to the Smithfield Pool/Marlin Coast Bicentennial Pool, subject to funding availability:

- « Replace the leisure pool with a water play park.
- « Increase shade cover over 50m pool.
- « Install universal change cubicle within 25m pool area.

Undertake the following facility improvements to the Tobruk Memorial Pool, subject to funding availability:

- « Review flow rider and improve aquatic leisure offering.
- « including kids water play area.

Commence consultation & planning for new 'Edmonton' pool

LONG TERM (2032 AND BEYOND)

Implement Sugarworld Improvement Plan (refer to Sugarworld Gardens Concept Plan below)

- « Construct new "Edmonton Pool" as an integrated district aquatic leisure hub to include aspects of the existing water park.
- « Review water park asset condition and provision to align leisure offering with other district aquatic hubs in the region.

Assuming consultation complete

Undertake the following facility improvements to the Tobruk Memorial Pool, subject to funding availability:

- « Renew Indoor learn to swim pool to contemporary standards

Additional warm water pool to accommodate emerging therapies at Tobruk

11.1. ANZAC PARK BABINDA RENEWAL-STAGE 1 CONCEPT (JULY 2025)



11.2. SUGARWORLD GARDENS CONCEPT PLAN (JULY 2025)



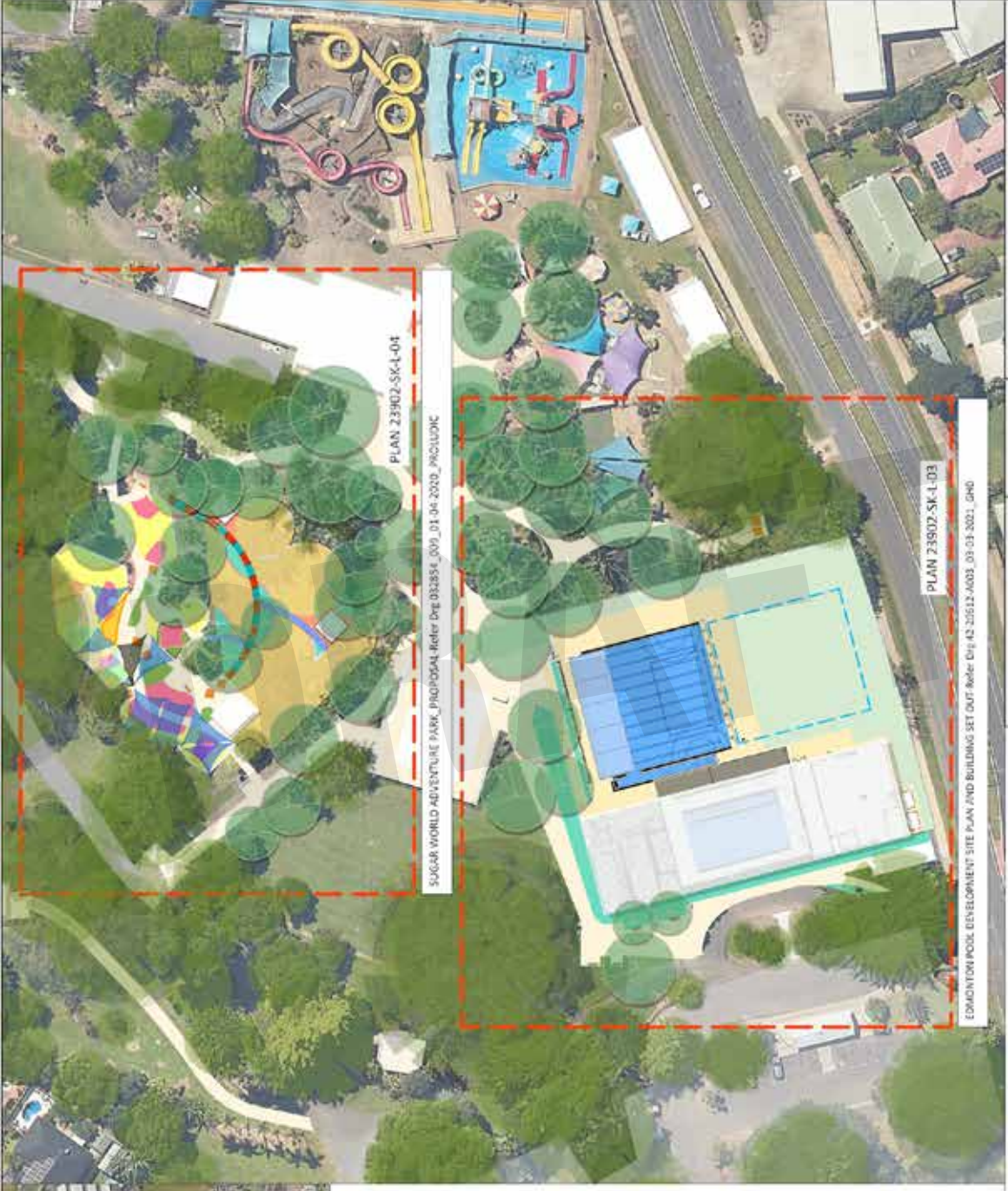


SITE PLAN 1:2500 @A1-REFER DRG_23502-SK-L-01

KEY

- 1 CARPARK AREAS
- 2 PROPOSED LUMMONTON POOL COMPLEX
- 3 EXISTING WATERPARK
- 4 PROPOSED POOL ENTRY AND EXISTING AMENITIES
- 5 PROPOSED ADVENTURE PLAY AREA
- 6 EVENTS LAWN AND EVENTS STAGE
- 7 EXISTING ALL ABILITIES PLAY AREA
- 8 PASSIVE RECREATION
- 9 EXISTING COMMUNITY GARDENS
- 10 COUNCIL DEPOT

- EXISTING TREES
- PROPOSED TREES
- EXISTING PLANTING AREA
- PROPOSED PLANTING AREA
- TURF
- FOOTPATHS AND PAVED AREAS
- PEDESTRIAN AND INTERNAL SERVICE VEHICLE CONNECTIVITY
- BOUNDARY



DMH7697435

Cairns REGIONAL COUNCIL

Project Management Office
Design & Survey Services

DRAWING NOT TO SCALE

SUGAR WORLD GARDENS CONCEPT PLAN UPDATE
HAMILTON DRIVE EDMONTON
CONCEPT PLAN
DETAIL PLANS DRAWING KEY

Project No	600945	Drawn by	MP	Check by	CB	Long Scale	1:400	Short Scale	23502-SK-L-02	Sheet	C
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LEGEND

VEGETATION AND SURFACES

- EXISTING TREES
- PROPOSED TREES
- EXISTING PLANTING AREA
- PROPOSED PLANTING AREA
- TURF
- FOOTPATHS AND PAVED AREAS
- PAVED AREA POOL

FURNISHINGS

- A** EXISTING BENCH
- B** EXISTING PICNIC SETTING
- C** PROPOSED BUBBLER
- D** PROPOSED BENCH INCLUSIVAT
- E** PROPOSED BENCH
- F** PROPOSED BENCH
- G** CYCLE RACK LOCATIONS
- S** SIGNAGE LOCATIONS

DRAWING KEY

- DRAINAGE KEY
- EXTENT OF PROPOSED WORKS

POOL ENTRY

25M POOL

POTENTIAL TO EXPAND DEVELOPMENT TO ACCOMMODATE A 50 M POOL

INDOOR PROGRAM POOL

PUMP HOUSE

AMENITIES

SET DOWN ZONE

DRG KEY-REFER DRG 23902-SK-L-02

EDMONTON POOL DEVELOPMENT SITE PLAN AND BUILDING SET OUT-REFER DRG 42-20012-A003_03-03-2021_GHD

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Cairns REGIONAL COUNCIL

Project Management Office
Design & Survey Services

Project No: 23902-SK-L-03

Project Name: SUGAR WORLD GARDENS CONCEPT PLAN UPDATE

Project Location: HAMILTON DRIVE EDMONTON

Project Description: CONCEPT PLAN

Project Status: PLAN DETAIL ENTRY AND POOL COMPLEX

Project Date: 23/09/2023

Project Scale: 1:200

Project Sheet: C

Project No: 23902-SK-L-03

Project Name: SUGAR WORLD GARDENS CONCEPT PLAN UPDATE

Project Location: HAMILTON DRIVE EDMONTON

Project Description: CONCEPT PLAN

Project Status: PLAN DETAIL ENTRY AND POOL COMPLEX

Project Date: 23/09/2023

Project Scale: 1:200

Project Sheet: C

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