

An Aquatic, Health and Wellbeing Centre for George Town: Business Case

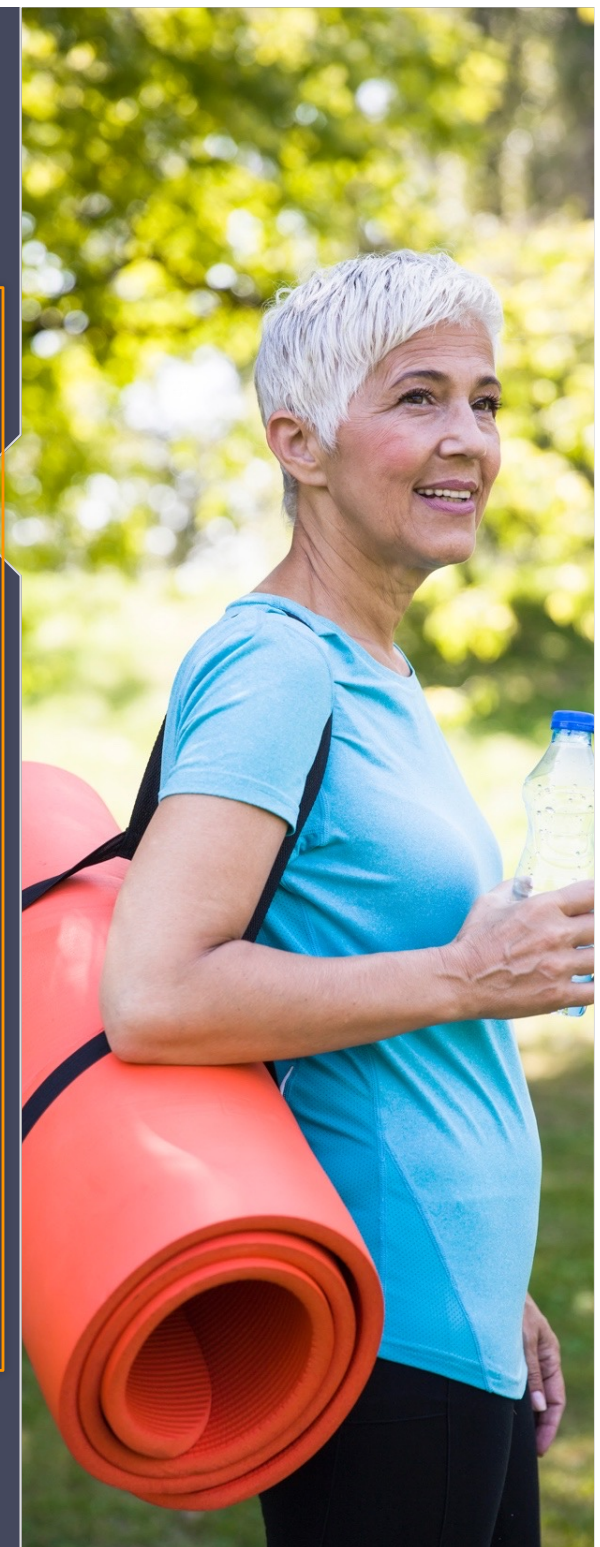
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1. The project: What we did + who we spoke to

What we did

The project:

- Drew on details collected as part of the Recreation Strategy, community survey, round table consultation with adults and children and telephone interviews
- Looked for potential competitors
- Prepared design concept based on what professionals and community think is required
- Undertook a site inspection of the existing facility
- Prepared a design concept
- Sought info about energy
- Prepared operational costs and had these peer reviewed by Council staff.

Who we spoke to

Organisations consulted during this project included:

- **Reclink**- as a provider of programs at the centre
- **YMCA**- As a provider of programs at the centre
- **Bass Coast Physio**- potential user of the pool and other elements of the centre including the consult rooms,
- **HR Plus**- General supporter of the project who are increasingly aware of the gaps in services especially in the NDIS sector
- **Beacon Foundation** - in partnership with the schools in the area are potential user of the facilities and interested in the potential of training programs for teens in pool and cafe areas
- **Local schools**
- **Department of Education** – about role of pools on campus
- **New Horizons**- A disability provider of recreation activities in Launceston, who are interested in the centre but not currently in George Town.
- **OT Rehab Services** Northern Tasmania
- **Other facilities**; Smithton Aquatic and Wellbeing Centre and Burnie Swimming pool.
- Councillors and staff



2. What is being planned?

- ❖ An aquatic centre with associated fitness and community spaces will provide the community with much needed year-round swimming, therapy, fitness and allied health services.
- ❖ The facility will be developed to add to the existing outdoor pool – as an integrated aquatic health and wellbeing centre
- ❖ The centre will provide warm water and well designed facilities to meet every day residents needs, as well as facilities for people of all ages and abilities.
- ❖ A centre to meet the communities needs to encourage recreation and fun, as well as active and healthy lifestyles.

The compelling reasons

- Many residents want to be active but can't !*
- Many residents would be more active and satisfied if they could go to a gym, do fitness classes and swim regularly
- George Town must have attractive community facilities to position its self and grow
- Existing aquatic and fitness facilities don't cater for older people or those with a disability
- Local enterprise and employment opportunities for casual and full time staff are in short supply.

3. Why is it needed?



* According to a survey conducted By @leisure for George Town Council in 2020

Many residents want to be active but can't !

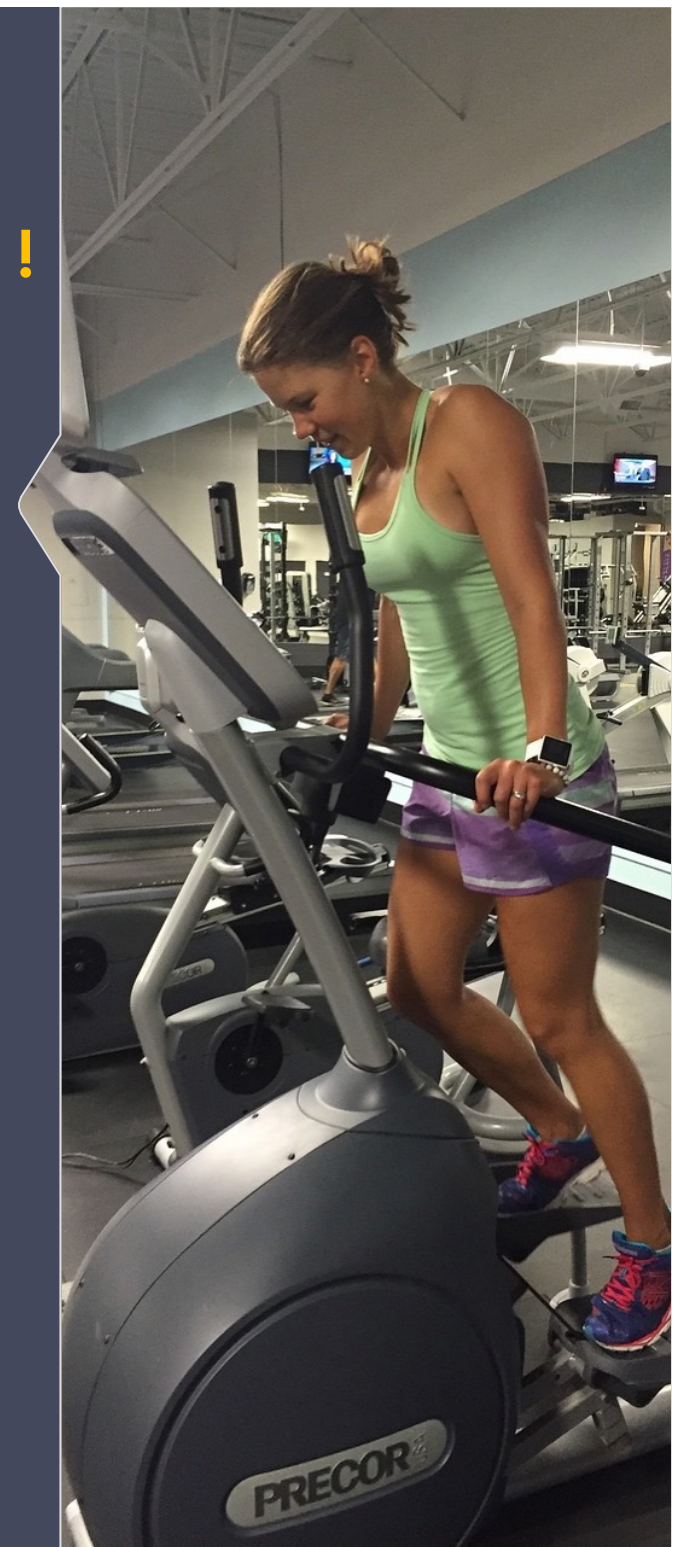
The key recreation activities residents want to do, but can't are:

- * A gym (35%)
- * Aquatic/group fitness classes (18%)
- * Swimming (12%), and
- * Yoga (9%)

What the community said

"I am not a strong swimmer, but I would use the pool to do exercises similar to those offered by our physio. I would like to see a set time, or a lane set aside for people like me."

"Having weights available for seniors would also be well received."

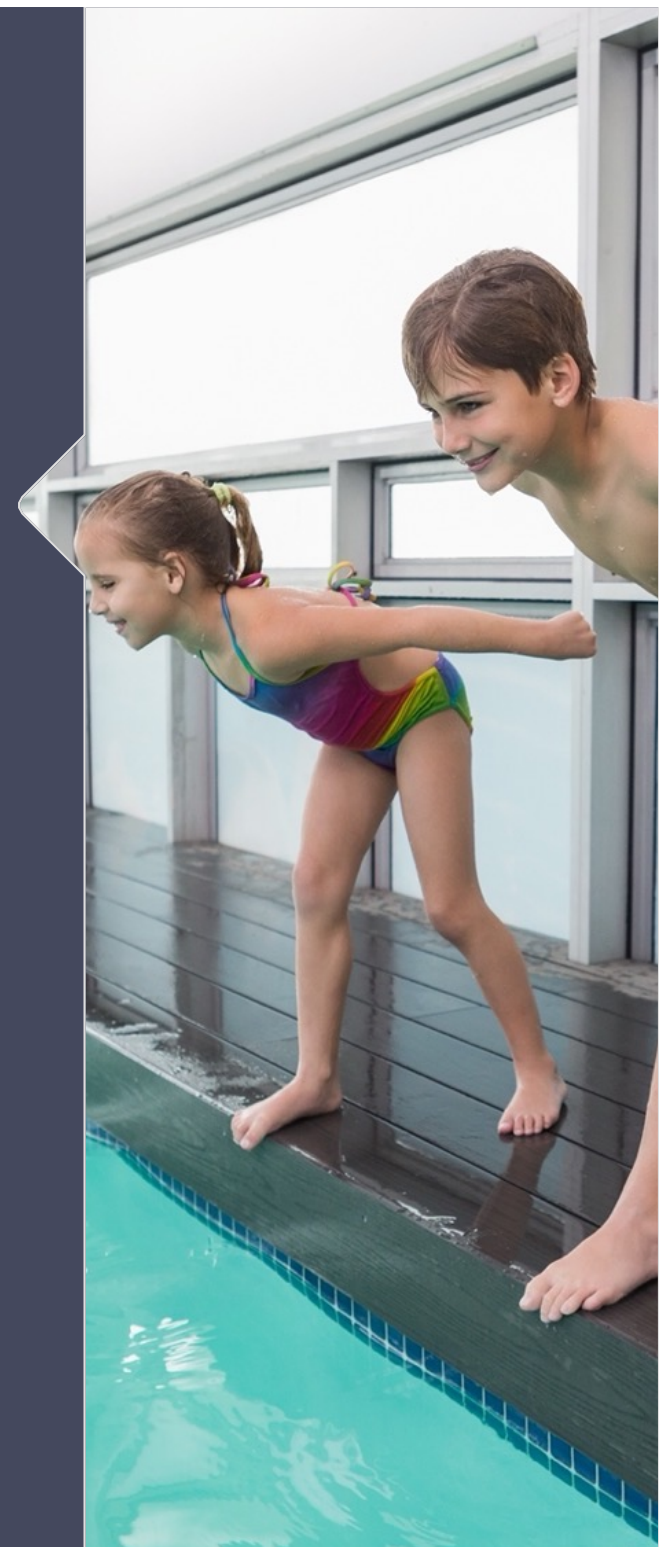


Many residents have to travel elsewhere, for regular recreation and therapy

- To go a swimming pool (45%,) or a gym (17%), is the main reason people travel outside George Town for recreation.
- 25 % of residents who swim else, go to Launceston Aquatic Centre.

What the community said:

- “Really just want a gym facility and access to weights/equipment without having to travel to Launceston”.
- “Wheelchair access needs to be improved at the pool so that people can access the pool”.
- “Upgrading aquatic services to an indoor facility would in itself increase participation as many families with disabled children and family members currently travel so their children can use these facilities”.



NDIS need facilities to offer services for people with a disability, in their own community

NDIS says in George Town funds are “under subscribed by \$15M due to transport barriers”.

What the community said:

24% of residents live with a person over 65 yrs. or with a disability. The things that would encourage this person to engage more in recreation activities were:

- Better swimming pool accessibility (19%)
- The provision of safe, low impact and accessible facilities (19%)
- An accessible gymnasium (15%) and
- The promotion of physical activity programs (7%).
- “Existing facilities don’t cater for older people or those with a disability”
- “Having access to a year-round facility would be amazing, as a family with mobility issues water based exercises are the only low impact exercises suitable to us and are crucial to our family's fitness and wellbeing and inclusion.”
- “Upgrading aquatic services to an indoor facility would in itself increase participation as many families with disabled children and family members currently travel so their children can use these facilities”.
- “Wheelchair access needs to be improved at the pool so that people can access the pool”.



Many residents would be more active and satisfied if they could go to a gym, do fitness classes and swim regularly



What the community said

- 56% of residents expressed interest in attending the centre or at least one activity 1-2 times per week.
- 69% of respondents said they would use an indoor swimming pool 2-3 times per month or more.
- The favoured activities in descending order of priority were:
 - Swimming for fun/recreation
 - Gym/weightlifting
 - Aerobics/group exercise and
 - Aquatic fitness programs

“The Healthy George Town free program has been a great idea - maybe expand on that a little more to include older school children and adults who work.”

“Healthy George Town has the potential to include additional programs out of school/work hours.”

“There is considerable value an all year, indoor components with warm water – gentle exercise, learn to swim and a raft of other casual use.”

George Town must have attractive community facilities to position its self and grow



Some 4,200 people live in the town of George Town. Council have a goal to increase population. With the current population aging, there is an imperative to attract more families.

The area's key strengths are extensive capacity, high voltage electricity, natural gas, raw and treated water, access to a deep-water port, air, rail and road links.

With recreation infrastructure and health services that this centre can provide, George Town can become more competitive to attract employees and their families.

What the community said

The existing pool is a “Fantastic facility in very central location - now at an age and form that cannot meet all the market needs.”

4. What facilities will be offered?

Aquatic facilities

A combination indoor year-round 25m pool will provide a small number of lanes for lap swimming, a warm water pool for gentle exercise and therapy, and a spa. Components include:

- A 3 lane 25m lap pool for exercise, training and some lessons and classes
- An indoor 10m*20m warm water pool for lessons, therapy and aqua fitness, with ramp and hoist access direct from a Changing Places change room
- A small end spa
- Accessible and family changerooms

The outdoor 25m pool and water slide will remain. The outdoor toddlers pool will be replaced with an interactive water play area (splash park) and the indoor pool hall. Once the indoor pool is operational, additional accessibility improvements to the outdoor pool and green space could be made. Outdoor components include:

- Interactive water play for children
- Retain the outdoor pool and water slide
- Future access improvements and family shade and picnic facilities.



4. What facilities will be offered? (cont'd)

Indoor gym and fitness facilities

Two indoor spaces will allow for group fitness and gentle exercises classes. These can be opened up as one larger space for training, and meetings. A modest community gym is also provided that can include accessible fitness equipment.

Two additional rooms are provided for allied health professionals who may conduct activities for specific clients such as NDIS participants or hire the rooms for private practice.

Components include:

- Multipurpose / group fitness room with carpet and timber floor that divides into two spaces
- A community gym (with room to expand)
- Two treatment rooms for visiting physio/ allied health professional
- A health assessment room and office
- First aid



4. What facilities will be offered? (cont'd)

Other facilities and opportunities

- A café is also included.
- There is interest in this being run as a social enterprise that may provide opportunities for secondary school students, people with a disability and disengaged young people. Alternatively it can be staffed. Costs assume it is serviced with reception by one staff member.
- Detailed design will need to agree on the best location for the café based on the likely management model and its ability to service the street as well as indoor and outdoor pools.
- Additional NDIS, health, employment and service providers are likely to use the facility. These may be negotiated as a separate category of membership or as a service agreement.
- Two allied health rooms are provided in the concept. Additional from may be required depending on the commitment of partners or local business.
- The gym is quite small. During detailed design, consult further with partners about whether additional space is required. Accessible fitness equipment may need additional space.
- Further investigation and detailed design will be necessary if the centre is to be run on Hydrogen.

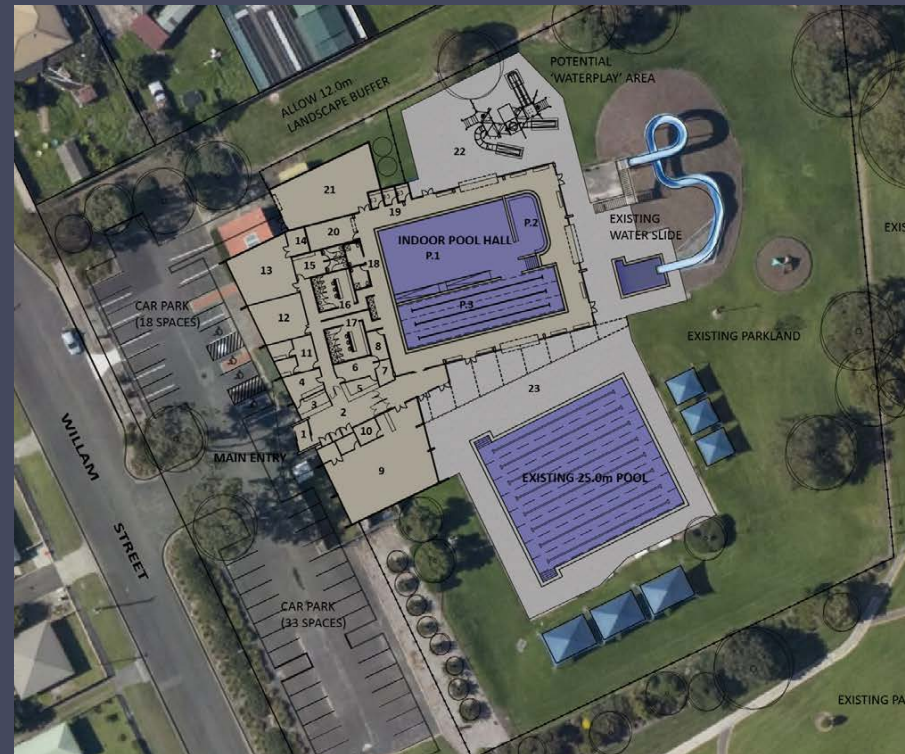
5. What will the facility look like?

The facility is proposed on the same site as the existing swimming pool. The indoor pool hall will replace the toddlers pool and retain other outdoor components.

Existing



Proposed



Example of a similar facility in Tasmania



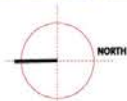
Design concept

Proposed Site Plan
 George Town Council - George Town New Aquatic, Health + Fitness Centre
 William Street, George Town, Tasmania



LEGEND

- 1 - Main Entry / Airlock
 - 2 - Main Foyer / Reception
 - 3 - Cafe severy
 - 4 - Cafe kitchen + store
 - 5 - Admin reception / control counter
 - 6 - Administration area
 - 7 - Manager's office
 - 8 - First Aid room
 - 9 - Gymnasium
 - 10 - Gym office / store / health assesme
 - 11 - Treatment rooms x2
 - 12 - Group Fitness / Multi-purpose 1
 - 13 - Group Fitness / Multi-purpose 2
 - 14 - Store room
 - 15 - Staff room (inc change)
 - 16 - Male amenities + change
 - 17 - Female amenities + change
 - 18 - Accessible Change x2
 - 19 - Family Change x3
 - 20 - Pool store room
 - 21 - Pool Filtration Plant
 - 22 - (optional) splashpad / waterplay
 - 23 - new outdoor pool concourse
- Pool
- P.1 - 20x 10m Warm water program pool
 - P.2 - Spa (in-built)
 - P.3 - 25m x 3 lane pool

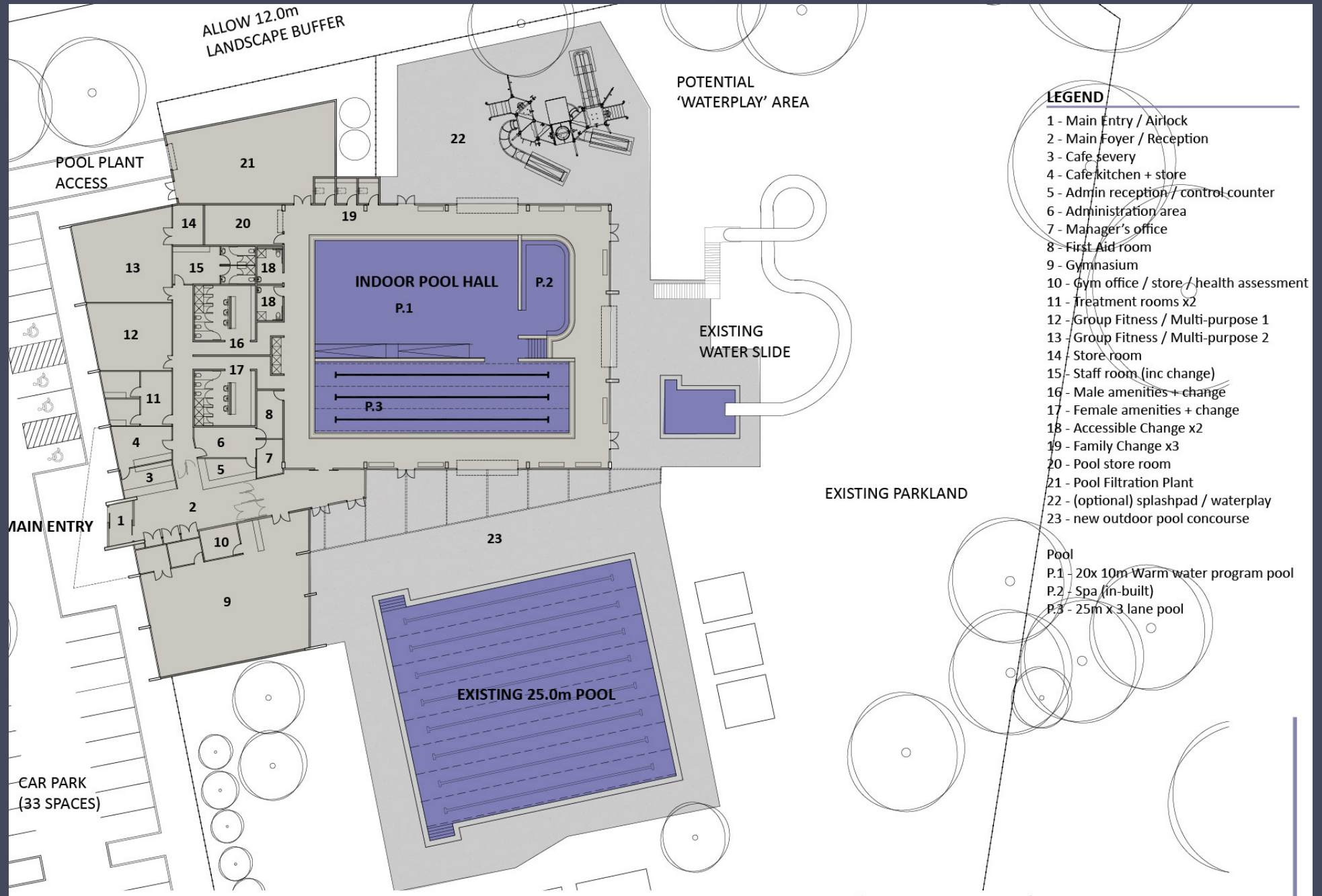


Sean Stone (trading as Active Facility Design)
 18 Hamam Court, Craydon North, VIC 3136
 mob 021 920 742
 p 0418 700 762
 e sean@activefacilitydesign.com.au
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PRELIMINARY ISSUE

Job Number: AFD - 2009 Dwg No: **SK-01**
 Scale: 1:500 @ A1 Revision:
 Date: 15.04.2021 Job Leader: P.1
 Job Leader: SOS

Design concept





6. How many people will use the facility and how much will it cost?

Attendances

- A total of 47,300 visits per annum are projected. This includes the outdoor pool.
- The estimated number of visit to the gym is 19,000 (at one visit per week) however that is very conservative and some 30,000 may well be achievable.
- This is an increase of some 38,100 on the outdoor pool attendances in 2020/21 (9,200).

Capital costs

- The probable capital cost based on the design concept is estimated at \$14 million dollars.
- A detailed design will need to be prepared before more accurate costs can be provided by a Quantity Surveyor.



Projected income and expenditure - base case scenario

A base case income and expenditure scenario was prepared and assumptions tested with staff.

- The projected annual income from the centre – based on the current design concept is \$476,974 per annum.
- The projected annual expenditure of the centre – based on the current design concept is \$806,305 per annum.
- The overall net cost to Council per year will be \$329,331 excluding depreciation or \$489,331 including depreciation.
- With additional members/gym visits possible, income of \$40,000 p.a. more is projected.

The net cost to Council of the existing seasonal pool (contractor) is \$131,000 pa.

A break down of the base case income and expenditure follows. with details provided in Appendix 1. Assumptions are provided in Appendix 2.

6.1 How much will it cost to run:

Summary income and attendance projections

	INCOME ITEM	Annual \$. Income	Annual No. Visits
1	Casual swim adult	\$18,975	3,450
2	Casual swim child	\$9,245	2,150
3	Gym members	\$224,294	19,008
4	Aquatic members	\$19,008	3,168
5	Personal training	\$10,800	1,296
6	Group exercise classes	\$15,859	1,344
7	Aquarobics	\$22,656	1,920
8	Learn to swim members	\$99,840	7,680
9	Café	\$23,462	
10	Pool lane hire per hour	\$2,268	576
11	Warm water pool hire	\$3,402	432
12	Birthday parties per person	\$1,820	200
13	Treatment rooms x 2	\$14,800	1,000
14	Multi-purpose room hire	\$2,000	640
15	Slide	\$968	
16	Picnic numbers	\$1,632	816
17	SWSP	\$3,700	1,850
18	Swim carnivals	\$2,040	1,800
	TOTAL ATTENDANCE		47,330
	TOTAL INCOME	\$476,973	

Expenditure projections

	EXPENDITURE ITEM	Construction \$	Annual \$	Council internal \$
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$806,305	\$130,615
	TOTAL RESULT (excl. cap. costs)		-\$329,331	
	Estimated construction costs			
	• Building (prelim est. only)	\$13,500,000		
	• Equipment	\$500,000		
	• Total estimated building cost	\$14,000,000		
	• Building depreciation		\$135,000	100 Useful Life (Years)
	• Equipment + fittings depreciation		\$25,000	20 Useful Life (Years)
	TOTAL RESULT (incl. depreciation)		-\$489,331	

7. Cost- benefits

The cost benefits of this facility have been broadly estimated based on the building cost, and use projections.

Based on the assumptions made, each visit may generate \$1.63 value to the community.



ECONOMIC BENEFITS	
Current value of avoided absenteeism	\$603
Number of new participants	1,101
No. of additional visits by people who would not otherwise have taken part in gym fitness and swimming activities	44,021
No. of additional hours of physical activity	44,021
Present value of avoided absenteeism	\$12,337,574
Present value of avoided general health costs	\$2,470,057

HEALTH BENEFITS	
Value of time benefits for participants	\$733,690
Total health benefits	\$1,267,196
Present value of health (user) benefits	\$20,749,314

SOCIAL BENEFITS	
Value of volunteering	\$32,000
Present value of volunteer labour	\$523,974
Non-user benefits	\$20,749,314

BENEFIT:COST RATIO	
For every dollar invested, the facility would generate this value (in \$) for the community	1.63
NET PRESENT VALUE	\$21,949,085

8. What happens next?

- Firm partnerships should be sought to make this centre available to service providers who target George Town residents.

A letter of support is provided as Appendix 3.

- Further investigations will be required if the centre is to be powered with hydrogen as this will have an impact on design and costs. Alternatively, achieving a 6 green star rating can be investigated.
- A detailed design should be prepared in conjunction with staff and the community and likely service providers, as well as hydrogen specialists.
- The probable capital and costs operational costs can be revised once detailed design has been completed and area schedules agreed.



Appendix 1. How much will it cost to run?

Projected income, base case scenario, classes, weeks etc. .,

	INCOME	Classes	Cost ex. GST	No.	Weeks	Annual \$.	Annual No. Visits
1	Casual swim adult		\$5.50	69	50	\$18,975	3,450
2	Casual swim child		\$4.30	43	50	\$9,245	2,150
3	Gym members		\$11.80	396	48	\$224,294	19,008
4	Aquatic members		\$9.00	44	48	\$19,008	3,168
5	Personal training		\$25.00	22	48	\$10,800	1,296
6	Group exercise classes	14	\$11.80	2	48	\$15,859	1,344
7	Aquarobics	5	\$11.80	8	48	\$22,256	1,920
8	Learn to swim members	48	\$13.00	192	40	\$99,840	7,680
9	Café					\$23,665	
10	Pool lane hire per hour		\$23.63	2	48	\$2,268	576
11	Warm water pool hire		\$23.63	3	48	\$3,403	432
12	Birthday parties per person		\$9.10	8	25	\$1,820	200
13	Treatment rooms x 2			20	50	\$14,800	1,000
14	Multi-purpose room hire		\$25.00	2	40	\$2,000	640
15	Slides		\$2.00	22	22	\$968	
16	Picnic attendances		\$2.00	816		\$1,632	816
17	SWSP		\$2.00	1,850		\$3,700	1,850
18	Swim carnivals		\$170	12		\$2,040	1,800
	TOTAL INCOME					\$476,974	
	TOTAL VISITS						47,330

Appendix 1. How much will it cost to run?

Projected Expenditure, Base Case Scenario (cont'd)

No.	EXPENDITURE	Hours	Rate	No.	Weeks	Annual \$	Council Internal Cost
14	Outdoor pool preparation					\$3,780	
15	Summer pool hrs inc. 1 LG + 1 Recpt	462	27	2	22	\$24,948	
16	Manager	38				\$80,000	
17	Learn to Swim Coordinator	19				\$32,500	\$32,500
18	Health and Fitness Coordinator	0				\$0	\$26,362
19	Lifeguards - indoor	66.5	27	1	52	\$93,366	
20	Lifeguards - outdoor	30	27	1	22	\$17,820	
21	Duty Managers	32	29.5	1	52	\$49,088	
22	Group exercise classes	19	48	1	50	\$45,600	
23	Gym Instructors	23	29.5	1	50	\$33,925	
24	Learn to Swim Instructors	24	27	1	48	\$31,104	
25	Staff on costs (allow 20%)					\$76,681	
26	Café (cost of goods sold)					\$13,594	
27	Cleaning 7 days x 4 hrs. x \$25 ph. x 52					\$36,400	
28	Mowing						\$3,172
29	Cleaning materials and consumables					\$10,000	
30	Staff training					\$10,000	
31	Electricity					\$55,000	
32	Water					\$11,000	
33	Gas					\$85,000	
34	First aid					\$1,000	
35	Pool chemicals					\$20,000	
36	Marketing					\$10,000	\$15,000
37	Repairs and maintenance					\$15,000	\$15,000
38	Licenses					\$12,000	
39	IT - Software					\$5,000	
40	Garbage removal						\$3,000
41	Security						\$3,600
42	Program expenses					\$8,500	
43	Insurance						\$25,000
44	Office supplies					\$5,000	
45	Debit and bank fees						\$6,483
46	Contingencies					\$20,000	
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE					\$806,305	\$130,117
	TOTAL RESULT (excl. building costs)					-\$329,331	

Appendix 1. Projected Expenditure, Base Case Scenario (cont'd) - Total Result

EXPENDITURE	Est. Capital cost	Annual \$	Depreciation	Council Internal Cost	Estimated life
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (from previous table)		\$806,305		\$130,117	
TOTAL RESULT (excl. building costs)		-\$329,331			
EST. CAPITAL COSTS					
• Building	\$13,500,000				
• Equipment	\$500,000				
TOTAL EST. BUILDING COST	\$14,000,000				
DEPRECIATION COSTS					
• Building depreciation			\$135,000		100
• Equipment, furniture and fittings depreciation			\$25,000		20
TOTAL RESULT (incl. depreciation costs)		-\$489,331			

Appendix 2. Assumptions

CATCHMENTS

1. George Town population 2016 Quickstats - 4,347. 80% adults over 15 yrs. = 3,473. 20% - Children U15 =874.
2. George Town LGA population 2016 Quickstats - 6,764. Forecast 7,269 ID - 2021 (Assume 2021 Adults - 5,815. Child U15 - 1,454)
3. George Town and West Tamar East - (30 minute drive to George Town) - 2021 ID - 10,256 (Adults 8,390. Children U15 1,865)

OPERATING HOURS

Open 63 hours a week. Closes from 1.00pm - 4.00pm M-F

Pricing at lower end of competitors - ex GST

Exclusions. No slide supervision costs included

	INCOME	NOTES
1	Casual swim adult	2% of 3473 = 69. Benchmarked. Adult swim (9% of 5,815 = 523) participation 51 times pa. (Ausplay Oct 2019)
2	Casual swim child	5% of 874 = 43. Benchmarked. Child swim (9% of 1454 = 131) participation 48 times pa. (Ausplay April 2019)
3	Gym members	Design capacity for 440 i.e. approx. 175 sq m. members George Town pop 4,347 x 81% (adults) = 3521 x 28% Regional AusPlay 2019) = 985 members (Assume 48 weeks suspension for 4) Assume Direct Debit at \$11.80 p/wk. 396 members visit 1 per week x 48 weeks = 19,008
4	Aquatic members	44 members visit 1.5 times p/wk x 48 weeks
5	Personal training	2% of membership base
6	Group exercise classes	Local fitness provider. 12 classes p/wk. @\$10 and 2 x \$6. Assume 14 land classes and 5 aquatic each week. Attendances for casuals only. Assume majority become members - see visits in 'Gym Members'
7	Aquarobics	See above
8	Learn to swim members	Learn to swim Children 0-14yrs in George Town catchment - town 874- U15 years x 22% = 192
9	Café	Included if not outsourced to social enterprise. Recommend including café service with reception if not outsourced so it can be serviced by one staff member. Assume \$0.50 per visit
10	Pool lane hire per hour	Based on Circular Head but less.
11	Warm water pool hire	Same hourly rate as above
12	Birthday parties per person	No food component. Inflatable with Lifeguard
13	Treatment rooms x 2	Treatment rooms (Local commercial examples - \$228 p sq pa/\$328/\$180/\$270/\$200) assume 74 sq @ \$200 per sq)
14	Multi-purpose room hire	2 hirers per week paying \$25 per hour for 40 weeks
15	Slides	Based on outdoor usage 22 p/wk x 22 slides @\$2
16	Picnic numbers SWSP and carnivals	As per previous outdoor attendances

Appendix 2. Assumptions (cont'd)

	STAFFING incl. loading	Award rate/payment	Hours	Rate	No.	Weeks	Annual \$	Notes
14	Outdoor pool preparation	Same as previous					\$4,000.00	
15	Summer pool hours 3 hrs. per day x 22wks = 462hrs x 2 staff		642	27		22	\$24,984.00	
16	Manager		38			52	\$80,000.00	Assume pool plant and water chemical knowledge
17	Learn to Swim Coordinator		19			52	\$65,000.00	Assume they Coord LG roster, work reception shift and or part based at Council
18	Health and Fitness Coordinator							Part time Council based role/or based on gym floor depending on service level required
19	Lifeguards	Health and fitness award rates	66.5	27	1	52	\$93,366.00	
20	Lifeguards - outdoor	Health and fitness award rates	30	27	1	22	\$17,820.00	
21	Duty Managers	Health and fitness award rates	32	29.5	1	52	\$49,088.00	
22	Group exercise classes	Health and fitness award rates	21	45	1	50	\$47,250.00	
23	Gym Instructors	Health and fitness award rates	23	29.5	1	50	\$33,925.00	Assume certain level of service on gym floor to write programs and help retention
24	Learn to Swim Instructors	Health and fitness award rates	24	27	1	48	\$31,104.00	Learn to Swim Instructors 373 div 4 kids per class = 93 classes div 2 = 47 hours pw
25	Staff on costs (allow 20%)	20% of above					\$89,307.40	
26	Café (cost of goods sold)	Cost of goods	60%					
27	Cleaning 7 days x 4 hrs. x \$25 ph. x 52	Assume contractor					\$81,900.00	
28	Mowing						\$10,000.00	
29	Cleaning materials and consumables	Same as previous. Costs incurred by Council					\$3,172.00	
30	Staff training	Same as previous					\$5,000.00	
31	Electricity	Benchmarked					\$55,000.00	Requires further details
32	Water	Benchmarked					\$11,000.00	
33	Gas	Benchmarked					\$85,000.00	Requires further details
34	First aid	Benchmarked					\$1,000.00	
35	Pool chemicals	Benchmarked					\$20,000.00	
36	Marketing	Benchmarked -split costs between centre and Council					\$25,000.00	
37	Repairs and maintenance	Benchmarked -split costs between centre and Council					\$30,000.00	
38	Licenses	Benchmarked - e.g. Point of Sale software licence, Swim Survive, Les Mills classes					\$12,000.00	
39	IT - Software	Benchmarked,					\$5,000.00	
40	Garbage removal	Benchmarked					\$3,000.00	
41	Security	Benchmarked, alarm service, building check etc.					\$3,600.00	
42	Program expenses	Benchmarked - swimming lesson equipment replacement etc.					\$8,500.00	
43	Insurance	Benchmarked					\$25,000.00	
44	Office supplies	Benchmarked - \$100 p/wk.					\$5,000.00	
45	Debit and bank fees	Assume 2% of gym members and swim lesson members on direct debit					\$6,981.00	
46	Contingencies	Same as previous					\$20,000.00	

Appendix 2. Assumptions (cont'd) Hours and costs

Existing Outdoor Pool	Hours
Staffing = 2 staff @52.86, 1 @ \$26.43	
Seasonal Pool opens October to March	
Monday - Friday 1.30pm - 5.30pm	20
Saturday and Sunday 12.00pm - 5.00pm	10
Early mornings 7.00am - 9.00am daily	10
Contractor - \$12,121.59 per month inc. GST	336
Pool set up	60
Cleaning	216
Mowing - contractor	48
Utilities - Electricity and water \$28,000 plus	
Note: Contract cost was \$131,000 ex. GST	

Benchmarking of local indoor pools operating hrs.	Hours
George Town Aquatic Health and Wellbeing Centre	
Monday - Friday 6.00am - 1.00pm 4.00 - 7.00pm	50
Saturdays 8.00am - 4.00pm	8
Sundays and public holidays 10.00am - 3.00pm	5
SUB TOTAL Participant hrs pw	63
SUB TOTAL Staff set up/pack up pw	3.5
TOTAL pw	66.5
Smithton Aquatic and Wellbeing Centre	
Monday - Friday 6.00am - 7.00pm	65
Saturdays 8.00am - 4.00pm	8
Sundays and public holidays 10.00am - 4.00pm	6
SUB TOTAL Participant hrs pw	79
SUB TOTAL Staff set up/pack up pw	3.5
TOTAL pw	82.5
Burnie Swimming Pool	
Monday - Thursday 5.30am - 8.00pm	58
Fridays 5.30am - 7.00pm	13.5
Saturdays and Sundays 8.30am - 6.00pm	19
TOTAL pw	90.5

Appendix 3. Letter of support



21 April 2021

To whom it may concern,

Letter of Support: George Town Aquatic Health and Wellness Project

I am writing to you in support of the George Town Aquatic Health and Wellness project proposal. HR+ Tasmania has been active within the community for over two decades (supporting the recruitment and retention of local GPs and health professionals) and works collaboratively with others to improve the health and wellbeing of the George Town municipality, including through the provision of NDIS Plan Management and Coordination of Support (CoS) services.

HR+ Tasmania is very willing to support this initiative. We recognise the significant opportunity this project presents to positively support improved health and wellbeing outcomes in the George Town community. We believe a dedicated facility focused on health and wellness, particular in the provision of space and amenities for increased service delivery in George Town, is highly desirable.

For background, HR+ Tasmania is the Rural Workforce Agency funded by the Australian Government to work with communities to improve access to, and the quality and the sustainability of the primary health workforce in the state. We deliberately focus our support in rural and remote Tasmania. As noted above we are also a registered NDIS provider of intermediary services. The connection between the two elements is the allied health workforce needs of both the primary health and disability sectors. We believe there is significant unmet demand for allied health services in George Town, particularly psychology, speech pathology, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy.

HR+ Tasmania has been leading a Health Employment Aging Ability Rural Training (HEART) Initiative in George Town since mid-2020. HEART is a five year+, place-based, cross sector, workforce planning and development initiative. HEART strives for multiple outcomes in George Town, including: an increase in NDIS participation (leading to more people receiving the funding and support they require, including support delivered in George Town where possible); greater collaboration between sectors in the recruitment and retention of health professionals, including visiting allied health services that will require consulting space; and an increase in the number of George Town residents completing training and entering the health, disability and aged care workforce locally.

Our interpretation of data available from the NDIS (see attached) suggests the NDIS is significantly undersubscribed in George Town. Data suggests there are 129 people in George Town with an approved NDIS Support Plan (as at 31 December 2020); while our modelling suggests 500 or more George Town residents may be eligible for NDIS support (in a population of approximately 7000). Of the current NDIS participant cohort, who have a combined total of \$3.6m in package funds, only 49% of their funding packages are utilised each year (\$1.8m). This suggests that NDIS participants experience significant difficulties purchasing the supports they required in George Town and the surrounding region. This is further supported by NDIS registered service provider data that shows there are 1.8 participants for each active provider, while the state and national averages are 17.7 and 41.4 respectively. George Town is therefore an extremely "thin market" and is unlikely to attract more allied health services without additional NDIS participants and the facilities in which to practice. To this end, we believe a facility, like the Aquatic and Wellness centre as proposed, would contribute to the attraction of visiting allied health professionals to George Town and inspire greater participation in wellness programs. We believe 'fit for purpose' facilities, increased visiting and residents allied health professionals, and expanded wellness program offerings would be an important step toward addressing unmet service demand and improving health outcomes in George Town.

Should you require any further information regarding this letter of support, please contact Primary Health Workforce Manager, Paul Mallett, on 0450 242424 or pmallett@hrplustas.com.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Barns', written over a thin horizontal line.

Peter Barns
CEOHR+ Tasmania