

7.5. REQUEST TO WAIVE LANE HIRE FEES - DOUGLAS CLUSTER OF SCHOOLS

REPORT AUTHOR	Manager Community Services
MANAGER	General Manager TC Jasper Corporate and Communities
DEPARTMENT	Community Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council supports the Douglas Cluster of Schools, and St Augustine's Primary School, by waiving lane hire fees at the Mossman Pool for learn to swim programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council is in receipt of a request from the Douglas Cluster of Schools to consider waiving lane hire fees at Mossman Pool for learn to swim programs held each year.

While St Augustine's Primary School is not included in the cluster, in the interests of equity, it is recommended that the fee waiver be extended to all primary schools.

This report seeks endorsement from Council to waive the fees associated with lane hire.

BACKGROUND

For swimming lessons at Mossman Pool, schools are currently charged an entry fee per student of \$4, and lane hire fees at the not-for-profit rate of \$12 per hour, per lane.

According to the cluster, it costs approximately \$80 per student to facilitate the swimming curriculum, which may include bus fares, additional teacher supervision, a qualified instructor, the purchase of resources such as kick boards, and pool fees. For families struggling with cost-of-living pressures, and families with multiple children participating, it is becoming a cost that is out of reach for many.

The Queensland Government requires state schools to provide a water safety and swimming education program in Prep to Year 6 as part of the Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework. Subsidies from the Department of Education are minimal and only available to eligible students, generally in the Prep to Year 1 age group.

COMMENTS

The National Drowning Report 2024 showed that there was a 16% increase in drowning deaths in 2023/24. The report states *"there is a fear that swimming skills are going backwards and are perhaps lowest since large scale investments in school-based activities in the 1960's-70's. Many families lack the means or access to private lessons, and schools are often unable to provide the safety net they once did"*.

Additionally, the report highlights that coastal locations represented 46% of drowning deaths. Ensuring that learn to swim programs remain affordable and accessible, particularly for school aged children, will reduce the overall risk of drowning in the community.

PROPOSAL

That Council supports the Douglas Cluster of Schools, and St Augustine's Primary School, by waiving lane hire fees at the Mossman Pool for learn to swim programs.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Waiving the lane hire fees will result in a minimal impact to the overall revenue of the pool. However, there is no additional cost associated with the management of the pool to provide the lanes required for swimming lessons.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is a minimal risk that the loss of revenue will impact the operating budget of the pool.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Waiving fees will improve access and affordability. Due consideration has been given to the financial impact on providing the service, which is considered minimal.

Environmental: Nil

Social: Learning to swim is particularly important in the Douglas Shire due to the aquatic lifestyle and high number of waterways and pools. Swimming lessons provide essential water safety skills, reducing the risk of drowning and boosting confidence in and around water. Swimming also offers numerous physical and mental health benefits, contributing to overall well-being.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Liveability

To deliver community activities to promote safe, healthy, inclusive and socially engaged communities with an environmental conscious.

1.1 - Deliver community initiatives that support healthy, inclusive and socially engaged communities.

Operational Plan 2025-2026 Actions:

New project arisen during the financial year.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Custodian Council owns and manages infrastructure, facilities, reserves, resources and natural areas. In fulfilling its role as custodian, Council will be mindful of the community, the economy, the environment, and good governance.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Team Leader Tourist Park & Aquatics, Councillor Workshop 22 July 2025

External: Daintree State School Principal, on behalf of Douglas Cluster of Schools

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Nil