

6.4. MOSSMAN SPLASH PAD FEES AND CHARGES

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council implements a one-year trial of an honour system allowing free entry to the Mossman Pool venue for families committing to utilise only the splash pad.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council received funding from the Queensland Government to build a zero-depth water-play area in each of Port Douglas and Mossman.

Council has a strong desire to ensure access to the splash pad is free for Douglas Shire residents.

The Mossman splash pad was built within the fenced precinct of the Mossman pool facility for security and amenity, but this location presents challenges for the provision of free entry to the splash pad.

Various options have been explored to enable free entry for families utilising the splash pad, including fencing the splash pad from the rest of the venue, changing the fees and charges schedule to allow free entry to the Pool precinct for all Douglas residents, or to allow free entry to the precinct for those only using the splash pad.

Each of these options would result in reduced services to patrons of the pool precinct or a negative financial impact to Council, or both.

BACKGROUND

Council received funding from Queensland Government to build a zero-depth water-play area in both Port Douglas and Mossman. In the 2022-2023 Operational Plan, Council resolved that the Mossman water-play area would consist of the installation of an off the shelf type splash park within the Mossman pool facility.

The current fees set by Council in the 2023-2024 Fees and Charges Schedule for entry to the Mossman pool include:

- Family Day Pass (4 people) - \$15
- Adult - \$6
- Children aged 3 – 12 years - \$5
- Children Under 3 – no charge
- Spectator – no charge

This provides all-day access to the amenities and kiosk, toddler pool, kid's pool, free BBQ and picnic area, 50 metre pool, and new splash pad.

With the recent additions of the Aquaglide inflatable obstacle course, the free BBQ and picnic area, and regular events throughout the year, the venue is becoming an ever-greater attraction for families looking for a day of children's entertainment.

COMMENTS

The location within the fenced pool precinct creates challenges for the provision of free entry to the splash pad that should be considered.

Options canvassed for providing free access to the Mossman splash pad include:

1. To create a separate venue accessible from Park Street by fencing the splash pad to excise it from the rest of the pool precinct.

This option would allow families to gain entry to the splash pad while not accessing any of the other facilities at the Pool precinct.

2. Change the fees and charges schedule to allow free entry to the entire pool precinct for Douglas Shire residents.

This option would result in a negative financial impact to Council from lost revenue of approximately \$60,000 per annum.

The financial impact could be mitigated by offering limited free entry: only on weekends; for a limited time from the opening of the new splash pad; or by offering residents a set number of vouchers per year.

3. Change the fees and charges schedule to allow free entry for patrons utilising the splash pad only.

If this option is approved, it should be noted that extra staff will need to be engaged to monitor patrons' usage of the various play areas. By implementing the 'honour system' community members will need to be clear upon entry which part of the facility will be used.

Implementing a system wherein children playing in the kids' pool are charged entrance fees but those playing in the splash pad are allowed free entrance may cause confusion among some families.

If implemented, the honour system may result in a reduction of revenue of up to \$60,000 per annum.

Of the options explored, the implementation of an honour system allowing free entry to the facility for those only utilising the splash pad, will have the least negative impacts for Council.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that Council implements a one-year trial of an honour system allowing free entry to the Mossman Pool venue for families committing to utilise only the splash pad.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Council risks losing up to \$60,000 per annum in lost revenue from pool entry fees if the entry fees are fully waived or an honour-system is implemented and not utilised as intended.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The size and location of the splash pad on a side street, behind the rest of the pool precinct and separated from the carpark results in a risk of it becoming underutilised if it is separated from the main facility by a fence and separate entrance gate.

This would also reduce the ability of lifeguards or other Council Officers to see or respond to any injuries or incidents at the splash pad.

Separating the splash pad would increase the risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour at the venue.

Creating two different entry criteria for families utilising the facility risks creating a hierarchy of venue patrons where paying customers feel entitled to first use of the limited extra family enjoyment facilities, including the BBQ and picnic tables. This could lead to an increased risk of unpleasant interactions between customers and/or staff. A trial period would allow time to assess the level of this risk and respond accordingly.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Swimming pools and splash pads are expensive to operate and maintain. The revenue brought into the venue through entry fees does not cover the costs of running the facility but an annual loss of \$60,000 for operating expenditure would need to be diverted from elsewhere in Council's budget.

Environmental: Nil

Social: The splash pad adds to the activities provided to families visiting the Mossman Pool precinct. Any changes to the levels of service provided would impact the social benefits of a thriving, low-cost, public venue.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 5 - Robust Governance and Efficient Service Delivery

Strong governance and financial management are the foundations of the way in which Council will conduct its business and implement the initiatives of the Corporate Plan.

Goal 2 - We will put the customer at the centre of our service delivery and process improvement as we deliver efficient and appropriate services based on community expectations.

Operational Plan 2023-2024 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:

Builder/Owner Council makes a significant investment every year in the infrastructure that underpins the Shire through its capital works program. Council will manage its assets with appropriate frameworks and deliver its projects through robust project management.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Councillor Workshop 21 November 2023

External: Nil

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Nil