

Feedback Form

Submissions Close 9 April 2010

Mount Alexander Aquatic and Leisure Centre Proposal

Mount Alexander Shire Council has developed a proposal for a new indoor aquatic and leisure centre to be located at Western Reserve on the corner of Forest and Wheeler Streets in Castlemaine. The proposal includes a 25 metre heated indoor pool, learn to swim pool, program pool, splash pads, gymnasium, program room, crèche, change facilities, car parking and landscaping. To help contain the costs of providing opportunities for swimming in the Shire, it is proposed that the Chewton, Castlemaine and Harcourt pools be closed by the time the new pool opens.

Date: 9/4/2010

Your Postcode: 3450

Do you support the proposal to develop a new indoor aquatic and leisure facility in Mount Alexander Shire?

This submission is by Dean Bridgfoot on behalf of the **Mount Alexander Sustainability Group (MASG)**

NO- MASG does not support this proposal in its current form

WHY? MASG has concerns over whether the environmental, social and economic implications of this facility have been adequately and comprehensively assessed. Until that has occurred MASG would not support the proposal as it stands.

The concerns with this proposal specifically are:

- Greenhouse gas impacts of a large heated pool facility, there is insufficient information in the report to gauge what will be the direct greenhouse gas emissions from the construction and operation of the proposal
- Greenhouse gas impacts from the increased distances that residents of outlying areas may produce to travel to the centralised facility once their pools cease operations do not seem to have been assessed.
- Economic evaluation- there is insufficient information in the report to assess what will be the likely running costs of the facility if energy (gas or electricity) prices are to increase. The Australian Business Council recently forecast that electricity costs are likely to double in the next 5 years; there is no indication in the report whether any scenarios were used to assess the likely impacts on operating costs under increased energy costs, and what would occur if costs were to increase.
- Social impacts. MASG is concerned about the possible impacts on low income residents from the likely rate increases to build and operate the facility AND the higher prices for entry to the facility
- Social impacts: MASG has concerns over the social impacts of centralising the pool infrastructure and how that may result in residents in outer areas (particularly Chewton and Harcourt) having to drive or use infrequent public transport to access the facility once their pools cease operations. The likely costs of fuel or transport to attend these facilities have not been factored into the social impacts of this proposal and are likely to increase with time.
- Social impacts: MASG has concerns over the impacts of the closure of local pools on the ability of residents to meet informally in a local, easy to get to setting and the impacts that the removal of this opportunity may have on different age demographics in those communities, particularly young families and teenagers, and what these impacts may have on the social cohesion and sense of community for Chewton and Harcourt.

MASG is disappointed that the report does not indicate the likely water or greenhouse impacts of the new facility, and its section on “Environmentally Sustainable Design” has no details of the likely energy usage or sources of energy for the facility other than noting that “water and power efficient appliances and fitting are used”. We are concerned that the likely financial impacts of the facility seem to have been made on narrow basis and we are suspect that the report does not model the likely impacts of increased energy costs on the operating costs of the facility nor does the report seem to model the impacts of “peak oil” or increased fuel prices and how it may affect financially those residents from outlying areas who would lose their local pools.

OTHER COMMENTS __MASG understands and supports the need for a Hydrotherapy facility in the shire, but questions whether this could not be provided as a additional smaller structure incorporated into the current Castlemaine Pool or even on nearby land, being close to the Hospital and aged care facilities.

Thank you – information provided by you will be used to assist Council make a decision on this important proposal.