

BULOKE AQUATIC STRATEGY

Community Consultation Summary: What We Heard and How We Have Responded

The Draft Buloke Aquatic Strategy was placed on public exhibition from 21 May 2026 to 2 July 2026, providing the community, stakeholder groups and facility users with an opportunity to review the Strategy and provide feedback. A Public Hearing was also held on 27 July 2026, enabling submitters to present their views directly to Council.

A total of 46 submissions were received, Demonstrating strong community interest in Buloke Shire's aquatic facilities. Feedback highlighted the importance of local pools for water safety, health and wellbeing, recreation, education and community connection, while also identifying opportunities to improve sustainability and increase participation.

This document summarises the key themes raised through consultation and outlines how community feedback has informed updates to the Buloke Aquatic Strategy.

What We Heard

Community feedback demonstrated strong support for Buloke Shire's aquatic facilities and their ongoing role in supporting healthy, connected and vibrant communities. The key themes raised through submissions included:

Strong Support for Local Pools

Many residents and stakeholders view local pools as essential community infrastructure rather than discretionary facilities. Many submitters expressed concern about any future loss of aquatic services or reductions in community access. Feedback highlighted the importance of pools for:

- Water safety and swimming education
- Health and wellbeing
- Recreation and physical activity
- Social connection and community inclusion
- Heat relief during extreme weather
- Supporting community liveability and attracting families to rural towns

School Swimming and Water Safety Programs

Schools and community members highlighted the importance of maintaining affordable access to aquatic facilities for swimming and water safety education.

Key concerns included:

- Affordability of any future school user charges
- Clarification around supervision and lifeguard requirements



Maintaining Access While Improving Sustainability

Many submissions acknowledged the financial challenges of operating multiple aquatic facilities but encouraged Council to explore alternatives before reducing access. Suggestions included:

- Membership and user-pays models
- Community partnerships and volunteer involvement
- Expanded programming and events
- Flexible staffing and operational approaches

More Programming and Activation

Community members consistently identified opportunities to increase use of aquatic facilities through:

- Swimming lessons and water safety programs
- Aqua aerobics and fitness activities
- School and community partnerships
- Family events and special activity days
- Expanded recreational and social programs

Future Investment and Renewal

Many submissions encouraged Council to continue planning for future facility upgrades and renewal while seeking external funding opportunities to support long-term sustainability.

How We Have Responded

Based on community feedback, Council has made a number of changes to the Buloke Aquatic Strategy.

Equitable School Fee Structure

Introduce an equitable fee structure for private providers and school swimming and water safety programs that recognises Department of Education funding arrangements.

Membership and Pricing Options

Explore the introduction of voluntary place based aquatic membership options, including family memberships and flexible pricing arrangements, to support increased participation and encourage ongoing engagement with Council aquatic facilities.

Utilise Community Partners to Support Aquatic Delivery

Investigate opportunities to utilise trained volunteers, qualified teachers and community partners to support closed-group aquatic activities, subject to legislative, safety and policy requirements.

Maintaining Equitable Access at Local Pools

Revise proposed service changes for Watchem and Berriwillock pools to a five-day-per-week operating model across the full swimming season rather than a shortened season.

Operating Temperature Clarification

Clarify that weather-related opening thresholds apply to general public operations and do not apply to approved bookings and programmed activities.

