

# OUR COMMUNITY URGENTLY NEEDS AN AQUATIC AND INDOOR SPORTS CENTRE IN MERNDA

## Investment Sought:

We seek government investment of \$250,000 to develop a Masterplan for the Mernda Aquatic and Indoor Sports Centre.

The rapidly growing communities of Doreen and Mernda urgently need an aquatic and indoor sports centre like those enjoyed by other communities. Our residents experience higher than average health issues yet have limited access to exercise facilities known to reduce the incidence of some of these diseases.



## A NEW AQUATIC AND INDOOR SPORTS CENTRE FOR MERNDA

A new aquatic and indoor sports centre is planned for development in Mernda. The centre will include indoor aquatic facilities, health and fitness areas and indoor and outdoor sports courts. The Centre will be a community hub, offering a socially inclusive environment in which people of all ages and backgrounds can come together to participate in a diverse range of physical activity for the betterment of their health and wellbeing. It is estimated that the centre will attract 500,000 – 550,000 visits per year<sup>1</sup> plus an additional 250,000 visits per year for the indoor and outdoor netball and basketball courts.

## WHERE WILL IT BE LOCATED AND WHO WILL IT SERVICE?

The proposed site is within the future Mernda Sports Hub precinct on Plenty Road, Mernda, to the North of Bridge Inn Road. It will predominantly service the Mernda and Doreen areas, however is also expected to service a range of other communities including Epping North, South Morang and

Whittlesea township. The current population of Mernda/Doreen is currently 58,000 and this is projected to increase to over 65,000 by 2041.<sup>2</sup> The sports courts are intended to cater for netballers and basketballers, as well as a range of other sports played on indoor sports courts. The facility is also intended to act as a regional netball hub for training and competition.

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR TO ADVANCE THE AQUATIC AND INDOOR SPORTS CENTRE?

The Centre was originally identified in the 2011 *Mernda Regional Recreation Reserve Master Plan* and was a key recommendation of the 2014 *Major Leisure and Aquatic Facilities Strategy* as well as the *Indoor Sports Feasibility Study*. A *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study* has been completed and a *Netball and Basketball Plan* is close to finalisation, which all reconfirm the need for aquatic facilities and indoor / outdoor sports courts in this area. These documents outline proposals and estimated costs.

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY

Regular physical activity is a contributor to overall good health. In Australia, 2.6 per cent of the total disease burden is due to physical inactivity.<sup>3</sup> Below is a snapshot of the types of health issues experienced by our residents:<sup>4</sup>

### 58 per cent

*of our adult residents are overweight. This is significantly higher than for Victoria and is the highest rate for the North Eastern Melbourne Area.*

### 44 per cent

*of our adult residents do insufficient physical activity, the second highest rate in the North Eastern Melbourne Area.*

### 25 per cent

*of our adult residents have arthritis and 20 per cent have osteoporosis, rates that are significantly higher than for Victoria.*

### Seven per cent

*of our adult residents have Heart Disease which is the sixth highest rate in Victoria and the highest in the North Eastern Melbourne Area.*

### Six per cent

*of our adult residents have Type 2 Diabetes which is the third highest rate in Victoria and the highest rate in the North Eastern Melbourne Area (along with Darebin).*

In line with the City of Whittlesea's Active Whittlesea Strategy, the Aquatic and Indoor Sports Centre will make a positive contribution to community health and wellbeing outcomes by enhancing opportunities for residents to be more physically active, through addressing barriers to active participation across a diverse range of sport and physical recreation activities and environments. Royal Life Saving estimates that the average pool visit generates benefits of \$26.39 in improved health outcomes and consequent reductions in health spending and absenteeism.<sup>5</sup>

## REDUCING TRAVEL TIME AND INCREASING CONVENIENCE

The closest aquatic and leisure facilities available to Mernda and Doreen residents are 20-30 minutes drive away in Mill Park, Thomastown or Epping.

In addition, we also know that significant congestion on the roads further detracts from the ability to easily access sport and recreation facilities.

Our community engagement indicates that there is strong community demand and expectation for an aquatic centre in Mernda, with 76 per cent of survey respondents indicating they do not use an aquatic and leisure centre due to travel and cost.<sup>6</sup> 72 per cent of Mernda survey respondents rated the importance of building the centre as between 7-10 out of 10, with 45 per cent of those respondents rating it as extremely important (10/10).<sup>7</sup> We are confident that the Mernda aquatic and indoor sport centre will attract strong participation from local residents.

## SUPPORTING CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF NETBALL PLAYERS

The City of Whittlesea has a current shortfall of 21 indoor courts and 18 competition compliant outdoor courts, these needs will continue to grow as our population increases by 69 per cent between 2019 to 2044 (from 229,791 in 2019 to 388,417).<sup>8</sup> The proposed indoor and outdoor sports court facilities for the Mernda Aquatic and Indoor Sports Center will include competition compliant netball and basketball courts that will form part of a regional netball centre for the municipality.

Netball and basketball provide a significant participation opportunity for women and girls with female participants making up 96 per cent of netball registrations and 28 per cent of basketball registrations. Unfortunately there is an increasing number of City of Whittlesea residents seeking basketball and netball opportunities outside of the municipality, which suggests there is already significant shortage of available competition facilities in the City of Whittlesea.

<sup>1</sup> Council Minutes, Tuesday 12 February 2019, Item 6.2 Community Services, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> Forecast id, City of Whittlesea, population forecast. <https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea>

<sup>3</sup> The Australian Government Department of Health, Research and Statistics, citing the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare. <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-publhlth-strateg-active-evidence.htm>

<sup>4</sup> 2017 Victorian Population Health Survey: Dashboard, selected results; and Quick statistics for local government areas and time series data (2015-2017), LGA Snapshot.

<sup>5</sup> Royal Life Saving, *Economic Benefits of Australia's Public Aquatic Facilities: Industry Report*, 2017, p. 10. <https://www.swimaustralia.org.au/docs/rlss-economic-benefits-report-2017.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study, City of Whittlesea, November 2018, prepared by Sport and Leisure Solutions, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study, City of Whittlesea, November 2018, prepared by Sport and Leisure Solutions, p.10.

<sup>8</sup> Forecast id, City of Whittlesea, population forecast. <https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea>

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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