



HANDS UP MALLEE



FREE POOL ACCESS PILOT REPORT

Summer 2023/24

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Latji Latji as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which we are. We also acknowledge their near neighbours the Barkindji.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging and to the ancient connection they hold with their Country.

We acknowledge there are also other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live, work in and contribute to the cultural heritage of the Mildura region.

About Hands Up Mallee

Established in 2015, Hands Up Mallee (HUM) is a place-based collective impact initiative in the Mildura LGA in the far northwest of Victoria. A group of local leaders began the HUM initiative when they recognised that we needed to work together differently to address social, health and wellbeing equity issues in our community.

HUM works in partnership with the community, local service providers, agencies and all three levels of government. The initiative takes a place-based approach to solutions for local issues centring on community voice and combining this with local data and current research to develop collective action for a better community for children, young people and their families. HUM is committed to continuous learning and improvement concerning its work to achieve positive social outcomes for the Mildura community.

Contributor Acknowledgement

Hands Up Mallee recognises the generosity of all partners and community members who share their time, words, insights, and support to work collaboratively and create change. Their contribution is essential to our work. The stories and information shared, and outcomes achieved in our journey together to create a connected community where families matter and children thrive, belong to them and the Northern Mallee.

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Executive Summary

In the summer holidays 2023/2024 the free pool access pilot for young people under 18 years in Red Cliffs was extended a further year, and a new trial of this was approved for Merbein. Hands Up Mallee and partners supported the Merbein trial with a co-design approach with young people to design and conduct events to activate the pool environment and encourage people under 18 years to make the best of the free access.

The key outcomes are summarised in the table below.

	Pool Pilot 2022-23	Pool Pilot 2023-24
Number of Children Attending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase of 81%• Total Attendance: 1,356	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase from previous year sustained.• Total Attendance: 1,352
Companion Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase of 1,358%• Total Attendance: 248• 13x the number of passes sold in the previous year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase from previous year sustained.• Total Attendance: 251
Adult Swim	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase of 109%• Total Attendance: 651	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease of 30% from previous year• Total Attendance: 459
Pool Entry Takings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease of 37%• Difference in Takings: -\$2441	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease of 23% from previous year• Difference in Takings: -\$922

Surveys of participants indicated that they appreciated affordable days out with their families and friends, and the events made this more fun, and provided chances for children new to the community to meet others in preparation for going to a new school.

The young co-designers felt they had grown as a leader from their involvement and were more confident for it. They liked that their ideas were valued and implemented.

The relationships between partner organisations were strengthened and there was a greater willingness to learn through sharing innovative approaches.

The recommendations from tracking the extension of the Red Cliffs free pool pilot and the findings from the Merbein free pool pilot include:-

Scale Out

Continue to provide free access for children and young people at the Merbein and Red Cliffs pools over the 2024-2025 summer season.

Explore scaling the pilot model of free pool access and young people/community led activation trial in Ouyen for summer of 2024-2025.

Scale Out

Continue to provide free access for children and young people at the Merbein and Red Cliffs pools over the 2024-2025 summer season.

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Resources and Infrastructure to Support Activation

Continue to test activation activities designed by young people to inform and prioritise investment of resources and infrastructure to support ongoing activation at community pools.

Sustainability

Explore ways to sustain a partnered and coordinated approach to supporting and enabling young people led activation of community swimming pools over the summer seasons into the future.

Systemic Change

Shift and change the way that new and existing Council owned and managed community assets, resources, policies, and relationships are working to increase participation, reduce social isolation and improve health and well-being outcomes for young people and children.

Explore opportunities for other community infrastructure to support better outcomes for children and young people, using a similar approach and ensuring that young people are actively involved in shaping them to ensure equity, appeal, safety, accessibility, and agency

Report Purpose

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- provide the background of the Free Pool Access Pilot iterations.
- to summarise the process, activities, learnings, and outcomes of the 2023/24 summer Free Pool Access Pilot by:
 - Capturing the reflections and learnings for partners about what makes activation events/activities successful.
 - Capturing initial insights of change and impacts on families and children.
 - Identifying clear recommendations and opportunities for future work and ways of working
 - Making comparisons between the locations, years, and approaches to the activation events through evidence

Key Audiences

The report is designed to inform Hands Up Mallee partners, particularly those who were actively involved as part of the Free Pool Access Pilot.

These partners are:

- Aligned Leisure
- Youth Engagement Services, MRCC

Secondary audiences include the Hands Up Mallee Backbone Team, local service providers not part of this pilot, interested community groups/partners, and the broader community.

Methodology

The report has been developed, prepared, and designed by Hands Up Mallee Backbone.

See Annex 1 for more details of the evaluation methodology.

Background

The Beginning

In 2022, Hands Up Mallee led a co-design project with local youth, families, and youth service providers to engage with community to identify key priorities, challenges and opportunities that support positive outcomes for youth development.

This project involved young people and families, designing, and undertaking consultation with their peers and others. The purpose of this was to understand what life is like for young people and their families in this community, and what makes things hard or easier.

The youth-to-youth consultation told us:

- They felt that there is nowhere affordable in Red Cliffs for youth to meet and socialise.
- Families wanted them to meet with their peers in places that were safe for them.
- There are limited facilities e.g., local basketball facilities are not available after school hours.
- There is insufficient public transport between Red Cliffs and Mildura.
- Most things organised for youth are delivered in Mildura.

From this, the idea of trialling free pool access for young people (up to 17 years old) during the summer holiday period in Red Cliffs during the 2022/23 summer came about.

The Pool Pilot was continued in Red Cliffs for the 2023/24 summer holidays by offering free pool access during the school holidays for the first time and running two events at the pool.

The free pool access pilot was extended to trial in Merbein for the 2023/24 summer holidays.

Summer 2022/23

During the summer of 2022/23, a pilot project was delivered in Red Cliffs to test the impact and potential outcomes of providing free access to the Red Cliffs swimming pool for children and young people over the school holidays. The pilot involved a strong collaboration between Aligned Leisure, Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC), Red Cliffs young people and community and Hands Up Mallee. Local young people co-designed and delivered a series of activation events aimed at engaging young people and children at the pool.

Findings and outcomes from the Red Cliffs 2022/23 Pool Pilot evaluation:

- Number of children attending the pool during the school holidays increased by 81%
- Companion carers (non-swimming adults) increased by 1358% from previous year.
- Adult swims increased by 109%
- Pool entry takings decreased from previous year but not significantly.
- Young people, children and families reported increased participation, connection, and sense of agency.

Recommendations

Recommendations from the Red Cliffs 2022/23 Pool Pilot were:

Scale Out - Provide free universal pool access for children and young people at Red Cliffs, Irymple, Ouyen and Merbein Pools over summer.

Activate - Activate Merbein pool replicating Red Cliffs model.

System Change - Explore opportunities for other community assets to support better outcomes for children and young people, using the same approach.

Summer 2023/24

The free entry to the Red Cliffs pool was extended for the 2023/24 summer school holidays, based on the recommendations from the initial pilot.

The pilot was also replicated at Merbein based on the previous recommendations. It was identified as an opportunity based on:

- Merbein also being a satellite township with similar challenges for young people.
- Early learnings from Hands Up Mallee and MRCC pilot work to test both the need and an approach for out of hours activities for children and young people
- An interest from the Merbein Development Association and the Merbein community to better support children and young people.
- Alignment with the Merbein Community Plan which outlined a plan to provide safe, easily accessible, and engaging activities co-designed by Merbein young people with support from community groups and agencies. The findings from the Red Cliffs Pool pilot aligned with the vision presented in the Merbein Community Plan to meaningfully engage young people in Merbein.

The 2023/24 summer also allowed an extension of the pilot for the Red Cliffs pool by:

- Offering free pool access to young people for the summer holidays.
- Hosting two events to attract young people and their families to the pool.



About the Free Pool Access Pilot

Purpose

The purpose of the 2023/24 Free Pool Access Pilot was to:

- Extend the testing of free entry to young people (17 and under) in both Red Cliffs and Merbein over the summer school holiday period.
- Provide free access to a safe place for young people to meet over the school holidays to increase community participation and connectedness.
- Have local young people lead the activation events in Merbein, to further test model in a similar satellite township and compare results and insights.
- Empower young people to design and facilitate activities and events to better understand what ways of working and engaging with young people and families helps to increase agency and community participation.
- Test the continuation of activation events in Red Cliffs, led by Aligned Leisure, in partnership with community as well as a community led event with the Red Cliffs Connected activation event.

Expected Outcomes

What we were expecting to see from the pilot was:

- Increased community participation for Merbein young people, children, and families through accessible activities.
- Sustained community participation for Red Cliffs young people, children and families with the continued free access and events.
- Strengthened peer relationships for co-designers and pool attendees.
- Young people feel safe in community and help to create safe spaces for other young people.
- Young people feel empowered and connected to community through involvement in the design of the pilot.

Key Partners

Partner	Role
Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) - Sport and Recreation - Youth Engagement Services	Pool contract management Co-fund youth events and co-design Co-design and event support
Aligned Leisure	Pool contractor, pool management and water safety
Young Co-designers	Participation, event design, support event delivery
Hands Up Mallee (HUM)	Co-design facilitators, event management, evaluation, co-fund activities
Community members	Volunteer and input about community's needs and interests
VicHealth	Funders of Connected and Supportive Communities module
Department of Social Services	Funders of Hands Up Mallee

Approach

The key features of the approaches include:

- Co-design with young people the supporting activities and resources they think will help enable and support community participation for young people and families.
- Undertaking a partnered approach to provide the necessary resources.

Aligned Leisure worked in partnership with MRCC to negotiate contracts in order to provide free access to the pools for the purpose of the pilot at both venues.

Merbein Pool Pilot

Guiding Principles

The following principles guided the Merbein Pool Access Pilot:

- Equity and inclusion
- Positive development and voice of young people
- Strengths-based approach
- Health, wellbeing, and safety prioritised

Collaborative Approach

The Pool Access pilot was delivered through a collaborative approach between MRCC, Aligned Leisure, Hands Up Mallee, and young members of the Merbein community.

The collaboration was supported by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which outlined key roles and responsibilities of all partners. The Hands Up Mallee Backbone facilitated the collaboration and led meetings to plan the project and check in on progress along the way.

The staff involved in the Merbein collaboration were actively involved in the first pilot project at Red Cliffs in 2022/23.

Promotion

Promotion of the three activation events in Merbein was led by Hands Up Mallee and supported by Aligned Leisure and MRCC. Communication channels involved social media, direct contact with local schools, community groups, businesses and Merbein neighbourhoods through letter box drops.

Targeted promotion with the Merbein and Red Cliffs communities regarding the free access was led by Aligned Leisure through their social media and supported by Hands Up Mallee and MRCC with cross promotion.

Engaging and co-designing with Young People

A key aspect of the Merbein Pool Pilot was the involvement of young people through a co-design process. Local Merbein young people were invited to help design and lead a series of 'activation' events at the pool with a goal of engaging young people and families.

The Hands up Mallee Backbone facilitated a 'Fun in the Park' event in Merbein in the lead up to the summer period and pool pilot. The event provided an opportunity to engage with Merbein young people and families and invite them to be involved in the co-design work.

The Co-Design Group

A co-design group of nine Merbein young people was formed in November 2023. The diversity of young people involved in the group included a range of ages, gender, cultural background, and neurodiversity.

Between 15th November and 11th December 2023, the co-design group came together for a series of workshops held on weekdays afterschool at the Merbein Library.

The co-design groups' primary focus was designing and planning pool events. The 'vibe' heavily influenced the direction of planning and they wanted to ensure that all age groups were being considered in the experience and imagining what their peers and other community members would like to do.

The group worked on all design considerations for the events – target audience, suite of activities, food, experiences, times and days, vibe, roles and supports required. Ultimately, the group agreed that the pool needed to feel like a relaxed place, to have fun and feel safe.

Payment was provided to the young people for their time and contribution to the co-design sessions, events and the debrief session and transport was offered if needed. Snacks and water were provided, which created a chance to chat before each session and the workshops were planned to be creative, fun, and engaging while still ensuring the group was progressing in planning.



Merbein Pool activation events

As a result of the workshops, design and planning, the co-design group delivered three 2-hour activation events over the summer period at the Merbein pool.

Event 1 Saturday 13 January	Event 2 Friday 19 January	Event 3 Thursday 25 January (Day before public holiday)
Water Games at the Pool	Fun at the Pool	Chill out at the Pool
Time: 11am - 1pm	Time: 4 - 6pm	Time: 4 - 6pm
Activities: Mural painting, smoothie bike, cricket, inflatables, pool toys & games, free pizza, and icy poles	Activities: Inflatables, pool games, canvas painting, guess the watermelon weight with a prize, free BBQ, and icy poles	Activities: Pool toys & games, inflatables, canvas painting, photobooth, guess the lollies with a prize, free pizza, and icy poles
Budget: \$400	Budget: \$400	Budget: \$400

Pool event resources

Being able to combine MRCC and Hands Up Mallee resources (materials, staff etc) meant that the events were delivered at relatively low cost. On average, the cost for each event was approximately \$350. Each event had a 'headliner' activity or provider featuring at each one. This allowed the co-design group to plan and run some smaller, unstructured activities (art, pool games etc) which were all cost effective.



Red Cliffs Pool Pilot Extension

During the 2023/24 summer, there was free access the Red Cliffs pool offered to all young people 17 years and under, from 21 December 2023-28 January 2024. This was an outcome from the previous summers' pool pilot held at Red Cliffs.

The Red Cliffs events for the 2023/24 summer were different to Merbein. They both offered free access to the pool for young people 17 years and under, but they were organised by two separate parties and not linked other than it was the pool with free entry for young people.

Event 1 – Saturday 6 January 2024	Event 2 – Friday 21 January 2024 (Last weekend of school holidays)
Time: 1-4pm	Time: 3-5pm
Weather conditions: 33 degrees	Weather conditions: 29 degrees
Organised by: Aligned Leisure	Organised by: Red Cliffs Connected Community Group
Activities: Inflatables (pool toys)	Activities: DJ, dancing, and games, guess the watermelon weight, sensory table, painting, inflatables (pool toys), free pizza and icy pole
Promotion: Aligned Leisure social media pages	Promotion: Aligned Leisure and Hands Up Mallee social media pages, community Facebook groups e.g. Red Cliffs Focus Group and Red Cliffs Families
Headcount: 67	Headcount: 80-90
Cost to run: no cost	Cost to run: \$600

*Red Cliffs Connected is a pro-active group of local community members who hold four 'Red Cliffs Connected' events a year to connect families in the local community. Hands Up Mallee has supported the group to form and design activities such as the Red Cliffs Connected events to better support children and families in the community.

Red Cliffs Pool Activation Events

Aligned Leisure delivered an activation event on the 6th January 2024 at the Red Cliffs pool over summer. The learnings from young people in Red Cliffs and the events held in January 2023 were shared with Aligned Leisure team to inform these types of events.

The event day created a fun vibe at the pool and a different atmosphere to usual; however, the attendances on the day didn't reflect that an event was being hosted, which is different to the results from the previous summer.

One of the key learnings from the Aligned Leisure team responsible for the event was to improve the promotion of the event as it seemed like those that were there were already planning on coming to the pool and didn't come specifically for the event.

The second activation event held at Red Cliffs was co-designed and led by the Red Cliffs Connected community group.



Outcomes

Measures of Outcomes

The outcomes of the Free Access Pool Pilot are measured through three key aspects:

1. Cost
 - a. Looking at revenue & passes sold
2. Engagement
 - a. Measured by headcounts & passes sold (attendance).
3. Activation of the events
 - a. Evidenced by how the event is organised, the promotion of events and attendance rates and the experience of participants.

Cost and Engagement Data Summary

Merbein Pool Pilot 2023/24

- Number of children attending the pool during the school holidays decreased by 15%*.

* Whilst the Point of Sale data indicates there was a decrease in takings, headcount data as a secondary data source suggests there was a 10% increase in attendance.
- Companion Carers (non-swimming adults) increased by 393% (5x the number of passes sold in the previous year).
- Adult swims increased by 38%.
- Pool Entry takings decreased by 50% (total loss \$3,374) from the previous year.

Red Cliffs Pool Pilots 2022/23 and 2023/24

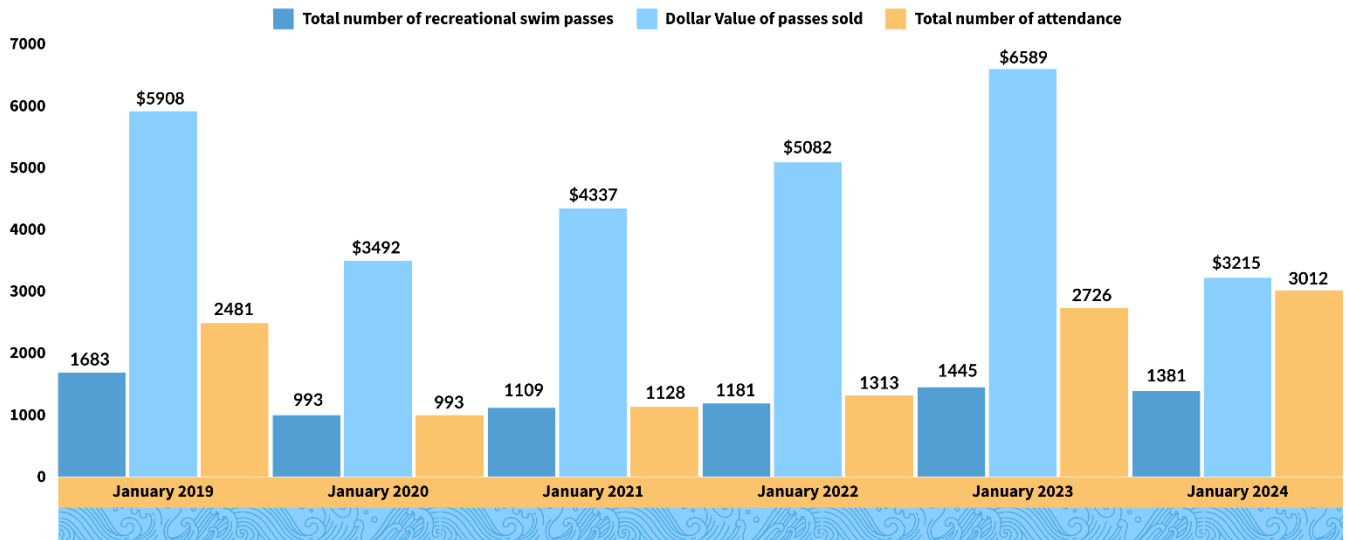
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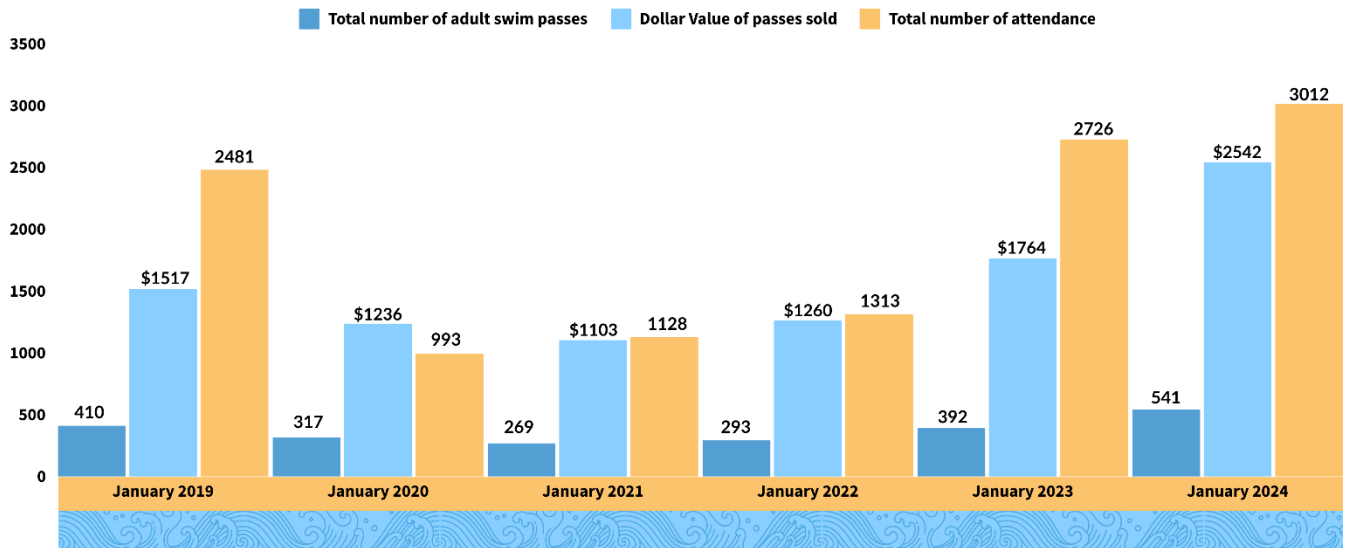
Cost and Engagement – Data Results

Merbein Swimming Pool

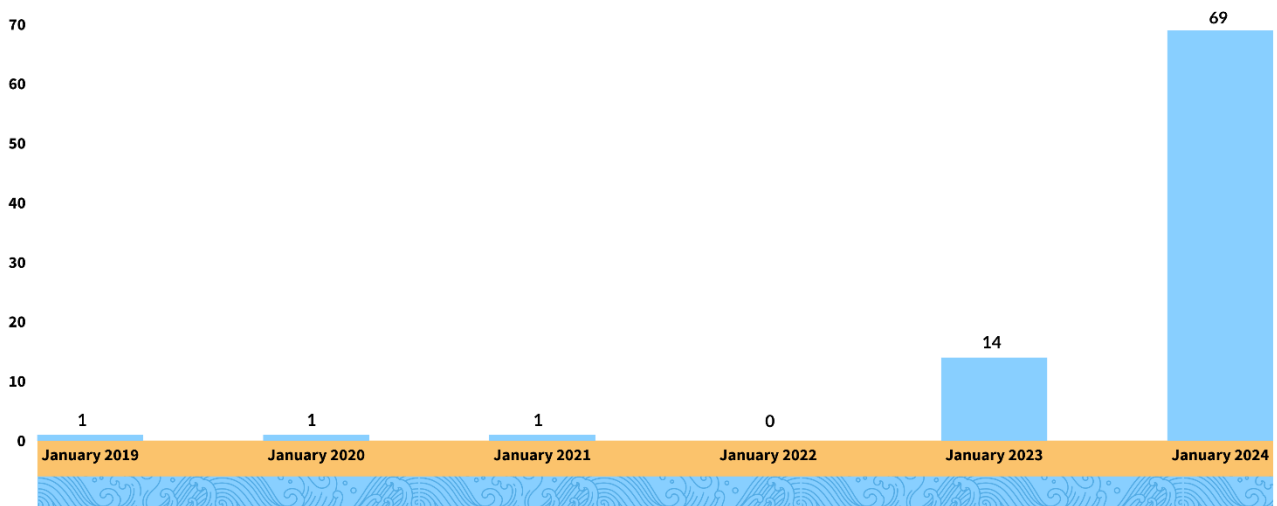
Number of 'recreational swim' passes sold, and revenue value - Merbein Swimming Pool



Number of 'adult swim' passes sold, and revenue value - Merbein Swimming Pool

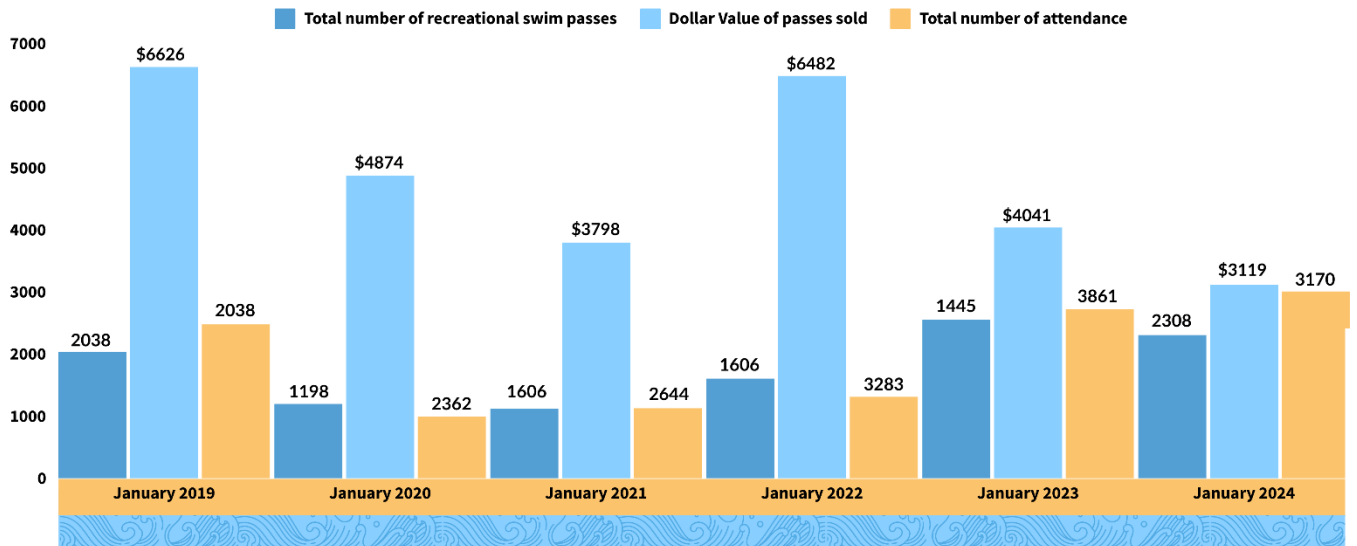


Number of 'companion carer' swim passes - Merbein Swimming Pool

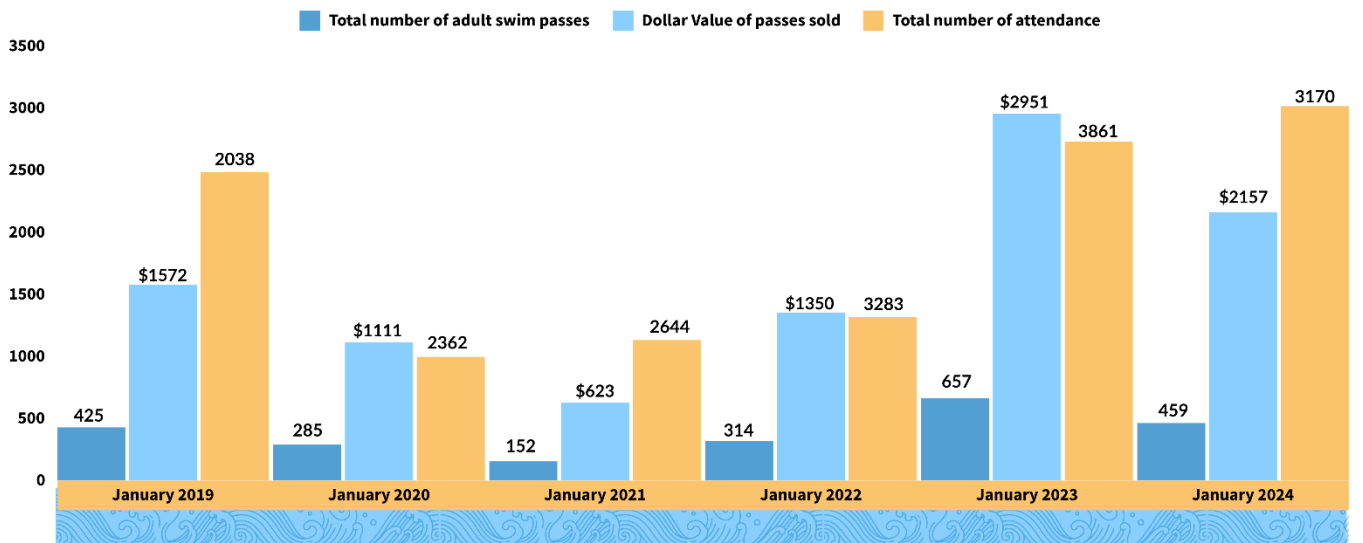


Red Cliffs Swimming Pool

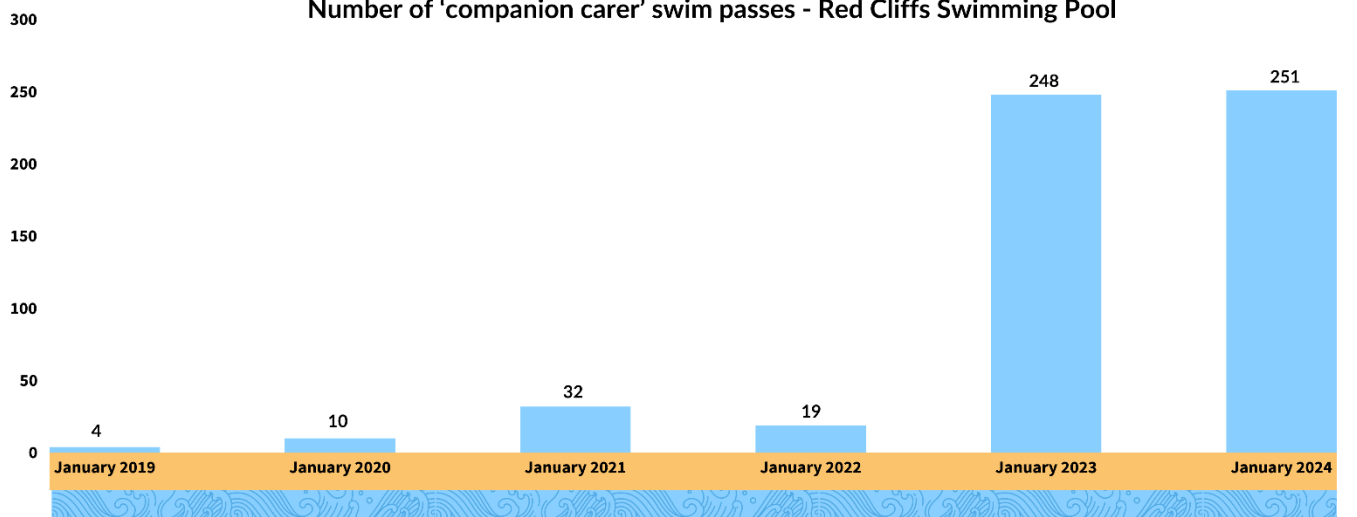
Number of 'recreational swim' passes sold, and revenue value - Red Cliffs Swimming Pool



Number of 'adult swim' passes sold, and revenue value - Red Cliffs Swimming Pool



Number of 'companion carer' swim passes - Red Cliffs Swimming Pool



The significant increase in companion carer passes sold at the Merbein Pool and a rise in companion passes sold in Red Cliffs over the 2024 summer period resulted in more adults being present, which allowed for more supervision, increased social activity, and created a family-friendly atmosphere that everyone enjoyed.

Due to the population size difference between Red Cliffs (6,138 people) and Merbein (4,976 people) it is important to focus comparison on patterns and trends rather than direct comparison of numbers and revenue value across the two locations.

Merbein Pool Activation Events

The events held at the Merbein pool attracted lots of young people and families to the pool. The group decided to trial two different start times for the events – 11am and 4pm and thought holding them on different days of the week gave people the chance to attend at least one event if they had other plans for the school holidays.

All events were delivered with a clear plan and a team pulling them together without any major issues. Young people co-designers mostly turned up for their planned event and did their best to run activities and engage with attendees with support from HUM team, some of the young people organisers were unable to attend the events.

Weather factors had a strong influence on attendance, but the suite of activities organised by the group for each event meant there were plenty of options to choose from and could easily be re-designed so that a fun range of activities were still delivered to those attending.

 **Hands Up Mallee**
December 15, 2023 · 🌐

Looking for some summer fun?
Join Red Cliffs Connected at the Red Cliffs Pool on Sunday the 21st of January from 3 to 5pm for great activities, a free zooper dooper and slice of pizza.
It's a great way to meet other families in your community.
There's free pool entry for ages 17 years and under (children under 10 must be supervised by an adult).

For more information contact:
Mel on 0418 339 622 or at mtucker@schs.com.au
or
Catherine on 0422 235 088 or at cthompson@schs.com.au

SUMMER FUN
AT THE RED CLIFFS POOL

WITH RED CLIFFS CONNECTED
SUNDAY 21ST JANUARY
3-5 PM

JOIN US FOR GREAT ACTIVITIES.
A FREE ZOOPER DOOPER
& SLICE OF PIZZA.

MEET OTHER
FAMILIES IN
YOUR COMMUNITY!

FREE POOL ENTRY FOR 17 YEARS AND UNDER.
CHILDREN UNDER 10 MUST BE SUPERVISED BY AN ADULT

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
MEL
0418 339 622
MTUCKER@SCHS.COM.AU

CATHERINE
0422 235 088
CTHOMPSON@SCHS.COM.AU

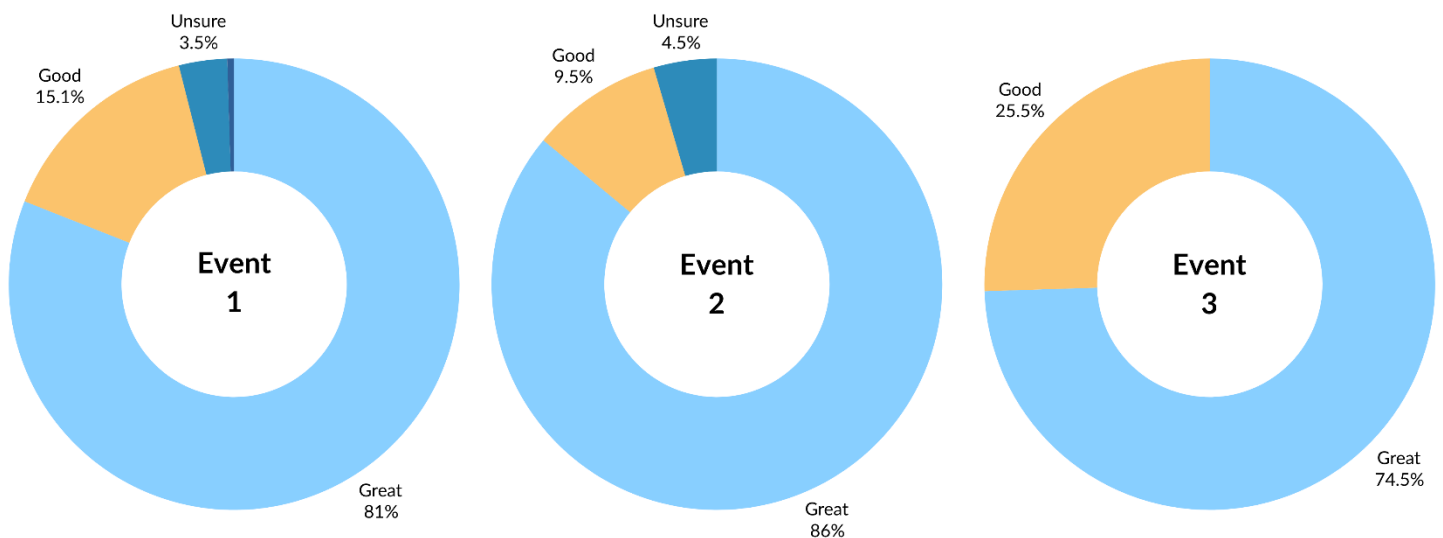
RED CLIFFS CONNECTED
ARE SUPPORTED BY:
 **HANDS UP
MALLEE**

Attendance at the Merbein pool events:

	Event 1	Event 2	Event 3
Day	Saturday 13 January	Friday 19 January	Thursday 25 January (Day prior to public holiday)
Time	11am - 1pm	4 - 6pm	4 - 6pm
Headcount	180	60	40 - 50
Weather conditions	39° Hot and sunny	30° Mild	34° Humid, strong winds
Activities	Mural painting, smoothie bike, cricket, inflatables, pool toys & games, free pizza, and icy poles	Inflatables, pool games, canvas painting, guess the watermelon weight with a prize, free BBQ and icy poles	Pool toys & games, inflatables, canvas painting, photobooth, guess the lollies with a prize, free pizza and icy poles
Cost:	\$350	\$350	\$300

A 'noodle poll' (adding noodles to buckets that had emojis to rate their experiences) at each event captured people's feelings about the events and acted as general satisfaction barometer.

Participant Satisfaction



What people said

Survey responses regarding people's general feelings about the events validated the noodle poll results with a majority of those surveyed saying they **'loved'** the events.

Feedback from attendees highlighted that people enjoyed and appreciated the events at the pool, that the events made going to the pool **'more fun'** and that it got them **'out of the house'** during the holidays.

"Having somewhere to go that's free means we can take the kids to more places over the holidays" – Mildura carer

Free food and access to pool toys and activities was noted as a common incentive to families who were looking for an affordable day out. The low cost to families was a common response in the feedback from attendees.

Some survey respondents from outside of Merbein said that they commuted to the Merbein Pool because they wanted to go somewhere different, and it can be too expensive to attend the Mildura Waves as a family.

"We like being at the Merbein Pool because there are different size pools for everyone" – Merbein Family

The opportunity to hang out with friends and family and do something different was a key motivation for people to come along to the Merbein pool. All attendees surveyed said the events made them feel good about living/visiting Merbein.

The overall feeling across all the events was that there was a **'great family vibe'** and it was a **'relaxing day out after the Christmas time chaos'**.

The young people organisers when reflecting on the events said it was **'fun to see other people having fun'** and they were pleased that the relaxing vibe they wanted to achieve was reflected in the positive feedback from attendees.

Some attendees saw the events as an opportunity to meet new people in their community.

'I've brought the kids here to hopefully meet some kids from the Merbein primary school, so they're hopefully not going to a new school not knowing many children.' – Merbein Mother

Young people as co-designers

The Merbein co-design group was vastly different to the group who participated in the Red Cliffs pilot the summer prior. This group was younger and for many of them, this was the first project they had participated in outside of school. It took some encouraging to get them involved in the planning sessions at first but their enthusiasm to contribute to the project and create something for their peers became evident once they started visualising the events.

It was essential to create a safe space for them to share their ideas, so a set of group values was established in the first session to ensure all participants felt safe, supported, and respected. These values heavily influenced the overall vibe they wanted at the pool events, which was 'safe', 'chill', 'fun' and 'positive' and this carried throughout the entirety of the project.

Building social confidence was a goal for some of the young people organisers. During the planning process, one of the young people said they were 'worried about who/how many people would be there [at the planning sessions]' but was surprised by how easy it was meeting new people. The group connected quickly and supported each other when sharing ideas and felt 'confident working with a teammate'. The young people who attended the reflection session post-events agreed that the project had given them confidence and now felt capable to participant in similar projects in the future.



"I worked well in a team to plan and review the pool party. I think I got better at listening to other people's ideas." – Youth organiser

Young people thought the events were successful and were proud to see what they had planned come to life. The process of designing the events was fulfilling and learned a lot in the process about how to plan and run things. Re-grouping prior to the events and supporting the young people organisers more with the running of events was great feedback for improving the ways of working with young people.

After the project wrapped up, one of the young people organisers presented their experience participating in the pool access pilot to a local community group.

They spoke about their contribution to the project, how they had grown as a person and what have learned during their involvement.

“I feel more confident to volunteer to join in projects like this in the future because I enjoyed it and feel confident.” – Youth organiser

The changes in social capacity were highlighted by the parent of a young people organiser, who said they had noticed a change in their child’s confidence and commitment to volunteer in the future over the 4-month project engagement.

Hearing from the young people involved and their families about how their children felt after their involvement in the project reinforced how important the HUM guiding principles are to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families. Seeing the change from apprehension in the first co-design session to how they stepped out of their comfort zone and led their event was a great example of how providing

“He came home from the first session and said he was feeling validated with his ideas... felt like he had ideas worth sharing.” – Parent of youth organiser

young people the chance to develop their voice can result in positive outcomes.

Their generosity to share reflections and feedback on the project has provided the HUM team and partners with new insights into how to produce meaningful engagement with young people.



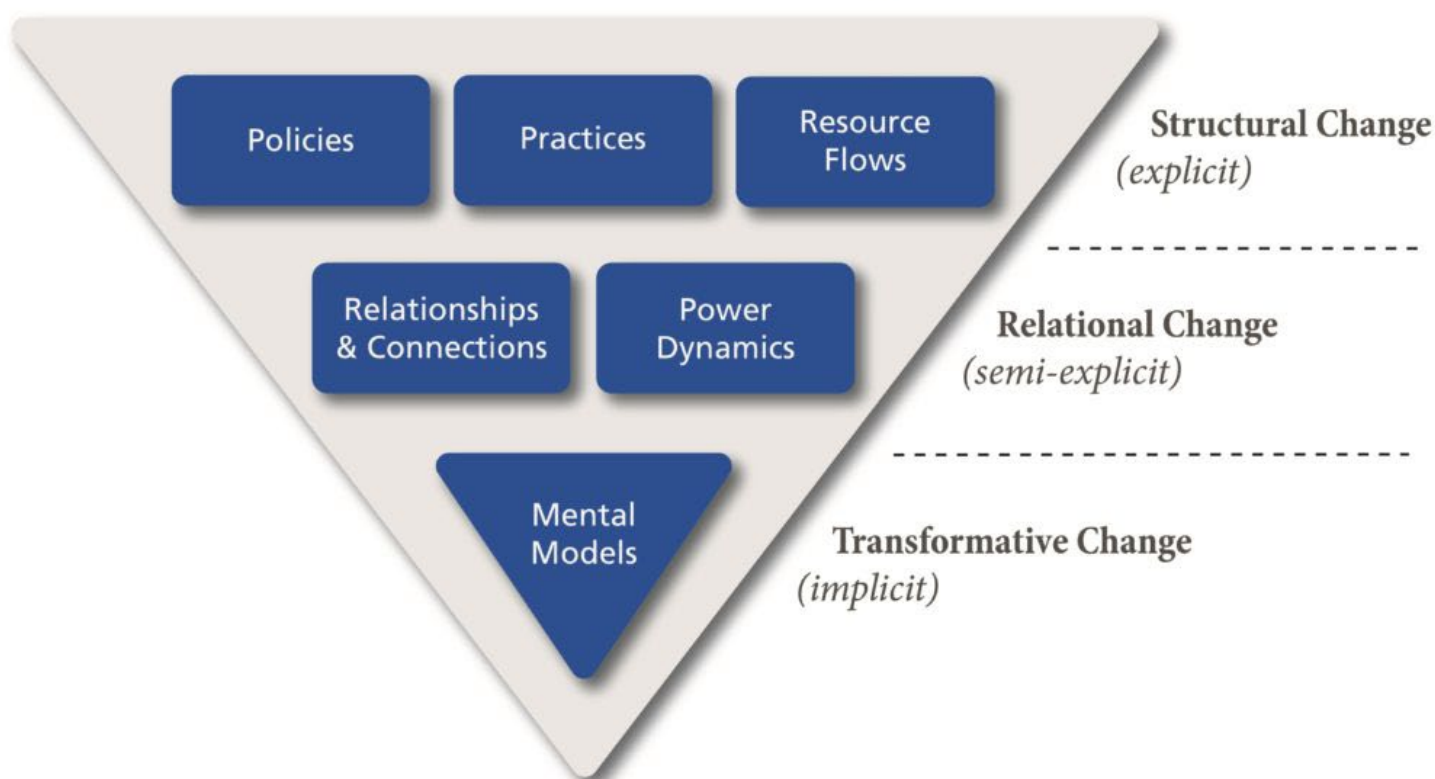
Signs of Systemic Change

Systems Change

Hands Up Mallee employs a systems change approach to improve outcomes for children, young people and families focussing on prevention and early intervention.

As part of its approaches to evaluation it looks for signs of systems change related to changes in practices, resource flows, policy, relationships and connections, power dynamics, and mindsets.

Six Conditions of Systems Change



FSG :

Water of Systems Change JOHN KANIA, MARK KRAMER, PETER SENGE June 2018

Policy

This pilot was aimed at testing whether waiving pool fees for young people 17 years and under would increase the use of the pool and promote social connection and well-being in the Merbein community as it did in Red Cliffs in the year prior.

Resources

This pilot highlighted the impact of using existing resources differently, for example combining and sharing resources (money, materials and human resources) to support the involvement of young people as well as the activation events. The pilot also utilised key community resources such as the local Lions Club involvement and the relationships built through Sunraysia Community Health Services Community Connector program in the Merbein community.

Practices

The practice and value of Co-design with young people was a key aspect of the pool pilot. Co-design is a practice and a way of thinking that is very different from consulting with young people and moves towards a more empowered position for young people.

Relationships

The relationships between partner organisations is growing stronger, there is greater engagement and increased understanding of whole concept. Community relationships are growing as well, an example of this is the Merbein Arts Group through participation in events were open to talk about the role they play in community and how they cater for and include different ages and demographics.

Power dynamics

The agency of young people was increased by their experience of co-designing activities and the opportunity to demonstrate leadership capabilities. This was built throughout the pilot as they were involved in planning, promoting, and running event activities, particularly those which required supporting younger children.

Mindsets

There was evidence of a greater collective willingness, openness, and curiosity to learn from innovative pilots, to compare pilots and communities to build good evidence for informing decision making.

Learnings

Co-designing with Younger Young People

Compared to the co-design group in Red Cliffs who brought a different level of confidence, the Merbein group was slightly younger and needed more support and guidance in their co-design process. This required more scaffolding to support their emerging leadership.

Implementing strategies around how to support young people's success is essential to future project involvement (e.g., having early conversations about the commitment and expectations involved for young people and knowing how to manage different group dynamics such as age, gender, culture).

Undertaking practice runs prior to the events was not achieved but upon reflection will be part of the project design in the future.

Establishing an open dialogue with families on how the sessions and events will run was essential for participation. This worked well in most cases, but family schedules were a factor for consistent attendance. Giving the parents/carers the heads up on any changes was appreciated and allowed them to plan for the on-going involvement.

Collaborative Effort

Collaborative efforts require relationships, trust, and communication. The collaborative efforts could be strengthened through broader communication of the partnership work and intention with members of the teams. An example of this is the engagement and communication with lifeguards who are working at the pool.

Communication and Promotion

Improving promotion of free access to pools, more targeted, localised, frequent – genuine consideration of the audience and the other barriers to participation, (e.g., fixed mindset that pools are a costly experience, so they don't go there).

The co-design session and events were promoted through the HUM social media channels. One of the young people organisers' parents saw the co-design call out poster on social media and showed their child who, 'liked the pitch'. Although there were delays on the online promotion, it was still effective in getting the word out to community who aren't reached through word of mouth.

There was a large reach in Merbein with the targeted flyer handout. Trialling different approaches such as leaving flyers at the busy takeaway shop on a Friday night proved to be an effective communication tool in a satellite town. The first event was also promoted via a letter box drop to in the local area and was by far the most attended event.

Differences between Merbein and Red Cliffs

Merbein families and Red Cliffs families were quite different – Red Cliffs seemed more connected and larger groups, Merbein more single parent/carers or couples with kids, not as many large groups coming together.

The location of the Red Cliffs pool is visible by pedestrians and traffic as it is closer to the town hub – this also means walking to the pool for young people is made much easier. Merbein is located off the main road and majority of people commuting past the pool would most likely already be going there. Which can affect the visual promotion of events happening at the pool and awareness of the location.

Building stronger relationships with local community members and having a 'social connector' with families has made a notable difference in Red Cliffs. This can enable stronger connection to children and families and be an opportunity to build trust over time.

About the Potential Beyond this Pilot Project

The Merbein Development Association were curious to learn more about the impact, outcomes, and learnings from the Pool Access pilot for the purpose of informing their community led efforts to better support children, young people and families. There are many potential ripple effects of doing this work and the learnings must be shared broadly to have ongoing impact.



Recommendations

Scale Out

Continue to provide free access for children and young people at the Merbein and Red Cliffs pools over the 2024-2025 summer season.

Explore scaling the pilot model of free pool access and young people/community led activation trial in Ouyen for summer of 2024-2025.

Resources and Infrastructure to Support Activation

Continue to test activation activities designed by young people to inform and prioritise investment of resources and infrastructure to support ongoing activation at community pools.

Sustainability

Explore ways to sustain a partnered and coordinated approach to supporting and enabling young people led activation of community swimming pools over the summer seasons into the future.

Systemic Change

Shift and change the way that new and existing Council owned and managed community assets, resources, policies, and relationships are working to increase participation, reduce social isolation and improve health and well-being outcomes for young people and children.

Explore opportunities for other community infrastructure to support better outcomes for children and young people, using a similar approach and ensuring that young people are actively involved in shaping them to ensure equity, appeal, safety, accessibility, and agency.



Annex 1

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation report is to:

1. Capture learnings for MRCC, Aligned Leisure and Hands Up Mallee and any community partners involved in the pilot project about what works in providing free access to the pool during January 2024 for the Merbein young people aged 17 years and under and why. This builds on the 2023 pilot at Red Cliffs which has been extended for 2024.
2. Capture insights and understanding for HUM and its partners (MRCC, Services, Aligned Leisure, and Community Groups) as to the co-design process in terms of its effectiveness in engaging young people, supporting their voices to be heard, and to increase their agency in community.
3. Report to funders and resource contributors as to progress and outcomes of the pilot project.
4. Make recommendations for future efforts to increase the opportunities for young people and families to:
 - a. Connect and strengthen peer to peer support and community belonging in safe, community spaces.
 - b. Maximise access and use of community assets such as swimming pool sites beyond the swimming season.
5. Assess the early instances of impact and signs of systemic changes of the pilot project.
6. Assess what elements of the model are transferable and/or relevant for scaling out to other similar locations?

To meet these objectives, the Theory of Change and high level evaluation and their sub-questions have been developed (see Annex Two)

Report Audience

The primary audiences for the evaluation are:

Audience	Information needs
Hands Up Mallee MRCC Aligned Leisure	To identify whether this pilot is ready for scaling To learn about what works in our context and place To understand what ways of working and engaging with young people and families increases participation and agency
Merbein community	To support future ideas and decisions To understand what works in the Merbein context and place
Project funders	To ensure accountability To understand what works and what elements are transferable and scalable To build understanding as to how to effectively engage young people in co-design and increase their role in decision-making and leadership.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation will be underpinned by a reflexive approach to evaluation suited to the generative and short sprints of the co-design and pilot testing. The methodology for the evaluation aims to support strategic learning and inform decision-making and end of pilot evaluation.

The Measurement Evaluation and Learning approach will be an intentionally light framework to suit the emergent and iterative co-design approach, with short cycles for rapid reflection and pivots, drawing on logic, reflection huddles, and gathering and reporting data to support the pilot's development and implementation.

The overall evaluation findings at the end of the piloting phase will be presented in a report.

Data collection methods

Quantitative Data or Metrics	Qualitative Information and Tools
# People attending pool and events	Surveys, polls, and interviews
# Service partners	Photo stories, social media
# Young people involved	Output documents
# Community members	Reflections and observations

Annex 2

Theory of Change

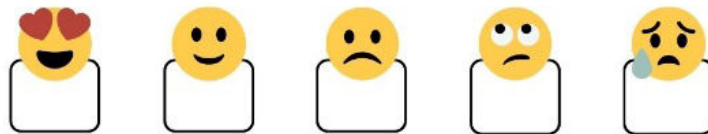
COMMUNITY ASPIRATION	A connected community where families matter and children thrive		
BROADER GOALS	Health and wellbeing equity	Adaptative service co-design and delivery approaches	Reducing social isolation
END OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES	Young people feel safe, engaged and connected	Partners adopt new approaches and engage young people in co-design	Young people feel more connected to peers and services
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	Young people come and enjoy their time at the pool	Increased partner confidence in trying different approaches and are ready to further test or scale	
	Community awareness rises	Testing activities and reflecting on what worked well	Small feedback loops inform and improve future activity design and implementation
	Promotion/engagement plan	Partners and young people are ready to help	Running engagement activities to promote connect, fun, and safety
	Bring together potential partners to shape pilot concept	Orientation and leadership capacity building	Designing and scheduling series of activities
INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES	Build on the learnings of Fun in the Park, HomeBase Hoops and Red Cliffs Connect 2022	Co-design activities with young people	Engage Young People

Annex 3

Pool Event Survey

Merbein Pool - Event Survey

What is your general feeling about the event today at the pool?



Finish this sentence:
If I wasn't at the pool today, I would be...

	Definitely not	Not really	Not sure	Yes mostly	Yes absolutely
The activities made coming to the pool more fun for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These events make me feel good about living in Merbein	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	To do something different	My friends/family asked me	I usually come here at this time	It is free	It's easy to get to
I came to the pool today because: (tick any that apply)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have another reason why you came? please share:

What I liked most about today:

Something else I would like to see in Merbein is:

My Age

My Gender

I live in