

Report

Prepared by i.e. community for Darebin City Council

Reservoir Leisure Centre Scoping Study

3 March 2025

Final

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and affirm that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their customs and ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge that Elders past, present and emerging are central to the cohesion, intergenerational wellbeing and ongoing self-determination of Aboriginal communities. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting culture, history and language.

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We make every effort to ensure we capture participant feedback accurately, however, we cannot guarantee that every contribution is represented in this report. We are confident this report captures the breadth of views we heard through the engagement period.

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About this report

This report provides the foundation for redeveloping Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC), drawing together findings from extensive community engagement, demographic analysis, and previous studies. It builds upon earlier feasibility work to provide Council with an evidence-based framework for decision-making that aligns community needs with Council's strategic objectives and fiscal realities.

The report outlines community priorities for the redevelopment, analyses demographic trends and their implications, and presents a proposed staged implementation approach that considers both short-term facility needs and long-term transformation opportunities. Particular attention is given to ensuring RLC's future role in supporting health, wellbeing, and social inclusion outcomes for the Darebin community, with a focus on Reservoir and the north of the city.

The report contains the following sections:

- Part 1: Summary and context - page 4
- Part 2: Research and engagement - page 10
- Part 3: Analysis and insights - page 16
- Part 4: Recommendations - page 22

The findings from the scoping study engagement process are provided as an addendum to this report.

Part 1: Summary and context

Summary

A valued community asset needing significant investment

The Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) Scoping Study reveals a need for an upgraded facility, while highlighting what people love about RLC and its role in supporting community health and wellbeing. Through extensive community engagement, including over 760 survey responses and in-depth stakeholder consultation, the study found strong support for transforming RLC into a contemporary community hub that better serves Darebin's diverse population. Community members emphasised the need for enhanced aquatic facilities, modernised fitness areas, and spaces that promote social connection and mental wellbeing. These needs may be addressed through an integrated precinct approach with neighbouring facilities and local service providers.

Planning for a growing and changing community

Demographic analysis projects significant population growth and increasing diversity in Reservoir by 2041, with particular growth in young families and older residents. These trends underscore the importance of creating flexible, inclusive spaces that can adapt to evolving community needs. The study outlines recommendations to address both current facility issues and future community requirements.

A redevelopment that is fit for purpose

The engagement process found strong support for RLC's role as a local community facility, rather than a regional recreation destination. While Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre (NARC) was often mentioned as a quality benchmark, there is a strong feeling in the community that maintaining RLC's unique community-focused character is more important than building a new centre to match NARC's offering. This was reflected in mixed views about the need for a 50m pool and the value that it would provide compared with maintaining a low cost and accessible facility.

More than an aquatic centre

The study identifies significant challenges for the redevelopment of RLC, including ageing infrastructure, accessibility barriers, and evolving community needs. However, it also reveals opportunities to address pressing health challenges in the north of the city, particularly mental health issues, social isolation, and physical inactivity. The community's vision for RLC extends beyond traditional leisure centre functions, encompassing spaces for social interaction, health service delivery, and cultural activities.

There is the opportunity to further explore the role of RLC as a community hub and how these functions could be delivered with a precinct-wide approach.

Feedback from diverse community groups consistently emphasised the importance of creating a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible centre. Key priorities across all groups included the need for culturally safe environments, affordable access, targeted programming that reflects community diversity, and spaces that facilitate social connection. The RLC User Survey reinforced these findings, revealing high satisfaction with current services despite facility limitations, demonstrating the centre's strong foundation in service delivery.

A staged approach to the redevelopment

Financial modelling suggests that a major redevelopment is unlikely before 2032. To address this, the study recommends a staged approach that focuses on maintaining and improving current operations while preparing for long-term redevelopment. This includes addressing critical maintenance needs, expanding health and wellbeing programs, and developing strategic partnerships with service providers.

Implementation will require careful consideration of trade-offs given the need to consider this project in the context of other capital works projects. The study identifies the opportunity to explore strategic partnerships with education, health and community service providers to support integrated service delivery while potentially sharing facility costs. This approach aligns with a broader sector-wide shift towards consolidating community assets into integrated community hubs.

A clear roadmap for redevelopment

The scoping study outlines a clear roadmap for RLC redevelopment, providing Council with an evidence-based approach that aligns community aspirations with practical constraints. It emphasises the importance of maintaining community engagement throughout the redevelopment process while managing expectations about project timing and scope.

While this roadmap presents a logical sequencing based on the study findings, components may be initiated earlier or later depending on Council priorities, funding opportunities, and emerging community needs. The roadmap allows for flexible implementation while ensuring all critical elements are appropriately considered and addressed.

Phase 1 (nominally 0-2 years) focuses on addressing immediate maintenance needs, building stakeholder relationships, improving current operations and services, and laying the groundwork for future planning.

Phase 2 (nominally 3-5 years) centres on developing the strategic foundation for redevelopment through funding strategies, detailed concept planning, and assessment of operational models.

Phase 3 (nominally 6-10 years) moves into implementation, with development of a detailed phased plan for facility upgrades or rebuilding, followed by commencement of the redevelopment itself.

Further details of each phase are provided at the end of this report, starting on page 23.

Opportunity for targeted investments

The scoping study has identified opportunities for targeted investment to address works required to ensure the ongoing operation of the centre and key community concerns. While long-term redevelopment is necessary to fully address structural and strategic needs, there is the opportunity to deliver targeted improvements that meet many of the community's needs without requiring a major rebuild.

Feedback indicates that enhancements in areas such as cleanliness, maintenance, accessibility, and functionality can significantly improve the community's experience and satisfaction with the centre. By prioritising these improvements, Council can respond directly to community feedback, demonstrating commitment to the project while laying the groundwork for a larger redevelopment.

Specific priorities are identified on page 25.

Context

Objectives

The RLC Scoping Study aimed to:

1. Engage the community to identify priorities for the future redevelopment while being transparent about project scope, limitations, and timeline.
2. Develop evidence-based recommendations that enhance health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly for East Reservoir residents.
3. Build upon and integrate findings from previous consultations and studies.
4. Consider demographic trends and future community needs to inform long-term planning.
5. Ensure recommendations align with Council's strategic objectives and financial constraints.

This report serves as a critical bridge between community aspirations and future redevelopment planning. It provides Council with clear scope for the redevelopment while acknowledging current facility constraints and financial limitations, setting realistic expectations for the redevelopment scope and timeline.

The successful implementation of this scoping study's recommendations requires careful integration with Council's strategic planning process. This includes alignment with the Council Plan, incorporation into the Asset Plan, alignment with the Community Infrastructure Plan, and funding in the Long-Term Financial Plan.

Background

Reservoir Leisure Centre has been an important community facility for many decades, with increasingly vocal community calls for upgrades to meet contemporary standards and expectations. Over the past five years, a series of technical assessments has reinforced these community concerns, highlighting the pressing need for substantial investment in the facility. Community advocacy has particularly emphasised the need for improved accessibility, enhanced aquatic facilities, and spaces that better serve Darebin's diverse population.

The 2018 Condition Audit Report identified that RLC was approaching the end of its functional life (10+ years), with key infrastructure requiring urgent attention to maintain operations. This led to the 2019 Feasibility Study by Otium Planning Group, which explored redevelopment options ranging from minor refurbishment to complete facility replacement.

Building on these technical assessments, the 2022 East Reservoir Wellbeing Strategies report highlighted RLC's critical role in addressing community health challenges, particularly mental health, social isolation, and physical inactivity. The report emphasised the need for the facility to better serve vulnerable populations, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Council's financial modelling has indicated that major redevelopment of the RLC is unlikely to be feasible before 2032 due to a number of other capital works obligations and the potential significant redevelopment cost of the project. This timeline constraint has shaped the approach of this scoping study, which focuses on identifying strategies to maintain and enhance the facility's community value over the next decade while planning for eventual redevelopment.

This sequence of studies and reports provide key considerations for the scoping study:

- The facility requires significant reinvestment to meet contemporary standards.
- RLC plays a vital role in community health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Future planning must balance community aspirations with financial constraints.
- Interim works are needed to maintain service delivery until major redevelopment is possible.

The RLC precinct, which includes the Reservoir Neighbourhood House and the East Reservoir Senior Citizens Centre, provides a strong context for considering future development opportunities as an integrated community hub.

Part 2: Research and engagement

Previous studies

East Reservoir: Strategies for Improving Community Health and Wellbeing (2022)

La Trobe University's Department of Public Health examined health and wellbeing challenges in East Reservoir, identifying social isolation and mental health as critical issues, particularly affecting vulnerable populations. The study revealed high rates of physical inactivity among CALD groups and older adults, contributing to increased chronic disease prevalence. Financial issues emerged as a significant barrier to accessing health services.

Implications for this study

The findings emphasise the need for RLC's redevelopment to prioritise accessible mental health services and social connection spaces, to incorporate universal design principles, and ensure cultural safety in facility design and programming. The study supports developing partnership models with health providers to deliver integrated services addressing identified community health challenges.

Reservoir Leisure Centre Discussion Paper (2020)

This paper explored RLC's potential evolution into a wellness hub, finding that while aquatic programs were well-utilised, the gym environment deterred some community members, particularly CALD communities and older adults. The research identified gaps in mental health support, family wellness programs, and low-impact exercise options. It emphasised the potential for health service partnerships and the importance of creating informal community gathering spaces.

Implications for this study

Future facility design should focus on creating welcoming, inclusive spaces that support both exercise and social interaction. The study indicates the need for flexible spaces accommodating health services and community programs, with structured programming that incorporate mental health, family services, and age-appropriate fitness options.

Condition Audit Report (2018)

Macutex's comprehensive facility assessment identified critical infrastructure approaching end-of-life, including pool systems showing water leakage, inefficient heating and ventilation, and inadequate water filtration. The audit highlighted significant non-compliance with current accessibility standards and escalating maintenance costs affecting operational efficiency.

Implications for this study

Short-term planning must prioritise critical system maintenance and safety compliance. The audit findings support a balanced approach to infrastructure investment that considers both immediate facility needs and long-term redevelopment goals.

Informing the scoping study

Collectively, these studies present a clear direction for RLC's future development:

- Immediate infrastructure challenges must be addressed while planning for long-term transformation.
- Facility design should prioritise inclusivity and accessibility for diverse community needs.
- Health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations, should guide planning decisions.
- Innovative funding and partnership models are needed to maximise community benefit within financial constraints.
- Planning must maintain flexibility to accommodate future opportunities and evolving community needs.

The scoping study synthesises these previous studies into a foundational framework that may serve as the primary reference for guiding RLC's future redevelopment planning.

Engagement findings

RLC scoping study engagement

Between August and September 2024, Council conducted extensive community engagement to inform the RLC Scoping Study. This engagement process built upon previous studies and consultations to create a clear picture of community priorities and aspirations for the facility's future. An overview of the findings is provided below.

Priorities for the redevelopment

Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) is highly valued by the community for its welcoming atmosphere, affordability, and accessibility. However, it is universally recognised that RLC needs an upgrade, with the current condition being a barrier to it fully serving the community's needs.

The engagement identified clear priorities for the redevelopment, centring around a more modern facility with improved aquatic facilities, including temperature-controlled pools, dedicated lap lanes, and upgraded hydrotherapy facilities. The community would like to see an expanded gym with modern equipment and improved group fitness areas, alongside basic but important upgrades to changing rooms and maintenance. We also heard that the redevelopment should provide better outdoor spaces and opportunities for the community to gather, including a cafe and meeting rooms.

The study highlighted significant barriers to using the facility, including the poor condition of facilities and an unwelcoming environment. These could be overcome with an upgrade providing greater accessibility and improved family-friendly amenities. The community would like to see more diverse programming options and affordable access for low-income residents.

Health and wellbeing priorities

The main health and wellbeing issues identified by the community were mental health, social isolation, physical inactivity, and limited access to affordable healthcare. They see the potential for a redeveloped RLC to address these issues by introducing accessible health services, support programs and spaces for social connection.

Inclusivity and accessibility

While RLC is recognised for being inclusive and accessible, mainly from a cost perspective, there is a clear desire from the community for this to be a continued focus. In many respects it is what sets RLC apart from other centres. There is strong support for culturally safe environments, diverse community programming, improved disability access, and intergenerational activities.

The Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre was held up as a benchmark for quality and amenities, with respondents expressing a desire for similar quality, while maintaining its distinct community-oriented identity.

Exploring the needs of different groups

The RLC Scoping Study engagement revealed distinct needs and priorities across different community groups.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community: Requires culturally safe spaces and programming that respects cultural practices, supported by sustained, relationship-based engagement. Accessible or discounted access to specific programs would further support participation.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities: Needs affordable, accessible facilities that combat social isolation and support mental health, especially among older members. Programs fostering intercultural understanding and designated spaces for cultural gatherings are essential to creating a welcoming environment.

LGBTIQ+ community: Requires an inclusive environment that ensures safety and acceptance. Gender-neutral facilities, along with programming that fosters social connections and strengthens community integration, are essential to meeting this group's needs.

Older residents: Benefit from age-appropriate programs that encourage physical health and social connection. Accessibility-focused improvements to facilities are crucial to enabling full participation, particularly for those with mobility challenges.

People with disabilities: Need enhanced physical accessibility across all facilities, including accessible changing rooms and inclusive fitness programs that cater to varied abilities. Affordability is also key to ensuring ongoing access for all.

Across all stakeholder groups, common needs emerged around accessibility, affordability, and cultural safety, highlighting the importance of a welcoming and inclusive RLC that fosters social connection and community wellbeing.

RLC User Survey

The RLC User Survey, conducted in May 2024, provided detailed insights into current user experiences and priorities.

Experience and satisfaction

The RLC User Survey revealed generally positive user experiences. Most users feel welcome and safe at the facility, while value for money and staff friendliness also received positive feedback.

Condition of the facility

The survey identified infrastructure as a primary concern, particularly regarding ageing facilities. Change rooms and lockers received particularly negative feedback, and pool temperature satisfaction was relatively low.

However, certain areas performed well, with high satisfaction reported for the gym and group fitness instruction. Customer service received mostly positive feedback, while steam, spa and sauna facilities drew mixed responses.

Program specific feedback

Feedback on the programs offered was mixed. While gym services received high ratings and group fitness classes received positive feedback for variety, the Learn to Swim program generated mixed responses. Notably, outdoor pools were identified as having limited use.

Community impact

Users reported that RLC has a significant positive impact on their wellbeing, with positive contributions to physical health most highly rated. The social impact is also significant, with many users feeling greater community connection and noting improved social connections through their use of the facility.

Priorities for the future

Feedback provided clear guidance on what needs to be improved, with emphasis on clean and hygienic facilities, properly functioning equipment, high-quality programming, excellent customer service, and an inclusive, welcoming environment.

Interest in future services showed demand for expanded offerings including Reformer Pilates, boxing/self-defence, women-specific sessions, 6-week challenges, allied health services, and digital solutions.

Part 3: Analysis and insights

Aligning findings

The engagement findings were analysed in relation to previous research and strategic assessments. This process identified key areas of alignment, where community priorities reinforce previous findings, as well as areas of divergence, where emerging needs and expectations differ from prior findings.

Areas of alignment

Infrastructure needs

- The User Survey strongly validates the 2018 Macutex Condition Audit findings regarding critical facility condition issues.
- Survey responses align with the 2019 Otium Feasibility Study's assessment of core infrastructure needs, especially regarding aquatic facilities and changing rooms.
- Community feedback about maintenance and cleanliness issues directly supports the Condition Audit's findings about escalating maintenance costs affecting operations.

Health and wellbeing focus

- User Survey results showing positive physical health and social connection impacts strongly reinforce the 2022 East Reservoir Wellbeing Strategies report's emphasis on RLC's role in addressing social isolation and physical inactivity.
- Community emphasis on mental health support and accessible programming directly aligns with the Wellbeing Strategies' identification of mental health as a critical challenge.
- The 2020 RLC Discussion Paper's findings about gaps in mental health support and family wellness programs are validated by current community priorities.
- High prioritisation of inclusive environment aligns with recommendations across all previous studies.

Accessibility and inclusion

- Diverse respondent demographics validate the Wellbeing Strategies' emphasis on inclusive service delivery for vulnerable populations.
- Community priorities for cultural safety and improved accessibility strongly align with recommendations from both the Discussion Paper and Wellbeing Strategies.
- Survey data showing strong local use supports the Feasibility Study's findings about RLC's importance as a local community asset.

Areas of divergence

Community hub vision

- While the 2019 Feasibility Study focused primarily on health and fitness services, the User Survey revealed broader service interests including allied health and specialised programs.
- The 2020 Discussion Paper's vision for a wellness hub has evolved, with current engagement showing strong desire for informal gathering spaces and social programming.
- Digital service delivery expectations represent new considerations not explored in any previous studies.

Service quality

- The User Survey revealed higher satisfaction with specific services than indicated in previous assessments, suggesting opportunities to build on existing strengths.
- Customer service capabilities appear stronger than previously documented, indicating operational strengths not highlighted in earlier studies.
- Program-specific feedback provides more nuanced understanding of service effectiveness than available in previous reports.

Service integration

- Current community and stakeholder feedback suggests more extensive service integration opportunities than considered in the 2019 Feasibility Study's options.
- Strong support for co-located health services extends beyond the partnership models outlined in previous studies.
- Interest in diverse programming indicates potential for more innovative partnership approaches than previously explored in the Discussion Paper.

Overall findings

Below are the consolidated findings from the engagement and analysis of previous studies.

1. Facility enhancement priority:

- Critical infrastructure upgrades cannot wait for major redevelopment
- Community expectations for facility quality are benchmarked against newer facilities.

2. Expanded role of the facility:

- Strong demand for evolution beyond traditional leisure centre functions
- Need for flexible spaces supporting diverse community uses.

3. Health and social impact:

- Clear mandate to address community health challenges
- Strong focus on mental health and social connection.

4. Inclusion and accessibility:

- Essential to remove barriers to participation
- Need for culturally safe and welcoming environments.

5. Implementation considerations:

- Short-term improvements must align with long-term vision
- Innovation required in funding and partnership models.

These findings guide the redevelopment roadmap on page 24.

Demographic trends and projections

Current population profile

RLC's catchment area within the City of Darebin centres on Reservoir, the municipality's largest suburb. With an Estimated Resident Population of 53,046 (2023) and a population density of 2,813 persons per square kilometre, Reservoir represents a significant portion of Darebin's population. The suburb is geographically defined by Mahoneys Road and the City of Whittlesea to the north, Darebin Creek to the east, and Merri Creek to the west.

Key demographic characteristics

Age distribution

Reservoir's age profile reveals several significant trends with implications for RLC planning:

- East Reservoir contains Darebin's largest concentration of children aged 0-6 years.
- The suburb is projected to house nearly one-third of Darebin's 0-6-year-olds by 2041.
- A significant middle-aged population (35-49 years) forms the core RLC user base.
- The proportion of residents aged 65+ is projected to increase from 18% (2021) to 25% (2041).

These trends indicate growing demand for:

- Family-oriented services and facilities
- Age-appropriate fitness and wellness programs
- Intergenerational activities and spaces.

Cultural diversity

Reservoir's cultural composition shows significant diversity:

- 38% of residents were born overseas (2021).
- 38% speak a language other than English at home.
- Major language groups include Italian, Greek, Mandarin, and Vietnamese.
- Growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

These statistics underscore the need for:

- Culturally appropriate programming
- Multilingual communication and services
- Culturally safe spaces and activities.

Socio-economic profile

The suburb presents a complex socio-economic landscape:

- Median weekly household income: \$1,394 (lower than Darebin average of \$1,516 and Victorian average of \$1,759).
- 28.6% single-dwelling households (compared to Northcote's 31.2% and Preston's 24.9%).
- East Reservoir shows higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage on SEIFA indexes.
- Higher unemployment rates and greater reliance on public housing in East Reservoir.

These factors highlight the importance of:

- Affordable access to facilities and programs
- Targeted support for vulnerable populations
- Programs addressing social isolation.

Housing and demographic change

Reservoir is experiencing early-stage gentrification:

- Median house price: \$860,000 (2023), representing 36% increase over five years.
- Remains relatively affordable compared to neighbouring suburbs.
- Influx of younger, wealthier residents.
- Pressure on long-term residents, particularly renters.

Projections and implications

Population growth

Reservoir's population is projected to grow by 18% by 2041, with specific implications for RLC planning.

1. Age

- 25% of population aged 65+ by 2041
- Growing demand for age-appropriate facilities
- Need for expanded wellness and social programs

2. Cultural diversity

- Continued growth in overseas-born population
- Increasing diversity of cultural backgrounds
- Enhanced need for inclusive programming.

3. Socio-economic considerations

- Ongoing challenges in East Reservoir
- Need to maintain affordability despite gentrification
- Focus on equity in access to services.

4. Housing and density

- Increasing housing density
- Growing demand for family services
- Pressure on community facilities.

Strategic implications

These demographic trends indicate the RLC redevelopment should:

1. Provide flexible spaces accommodating diverse age groups and activities.
2. Ensure cultural safety and inclusivity in facility design and programming.
3. Maintain affordability while meeting increased service expectations.
4. Plan for growing demand across all facility components.
5. Address social isolation through community space design.

Part 4: Recommendations

Redevelopment roadmap

This roadmap establishes a framework for the redevelopment of Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC), directly reflecting the priorities and needs identified through the scoping study's community engagement and technical analysis. It presents a phased approach that balances community needs with long-term transformation, while maintaining RLC's essential role as a welcoming, accessible community facility.

While this roadmap presents a logical sequencing based on the study findings, components may be initiated earlier or later depending on Council priorities, funding opportunities, and emerging community needs. The timings for each phase should be considered indicative, the roadmap allows for flexible implementation while ensuring all critical elements are appropriately considered and addressed.

Phase 1 (Nominally 0-2 years)

- **Facility maintenance and improvements:** Address required maintenance issues and continue investment in plant and equipment to ensure ongoing safe operation. Improve foyer and guest areas to provide a more welcoming environment, update change rooms, enhance cleanliness and maintenance standards.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Build on connections established during the scoping study to create sustainable, ongoing relationships with local service providers, community organisations, and potential funding partners.
- **Operational and service improvements:** Implement targeted improvements to RLC's operations and services based on the scoping study findings. Continue to engage the community to enhance program diversity, improve customer service, and optimise facility usage.
- **Health and wellbeing program expansion:** Expand wellbeing programs based on community priorities, including mental health support and culturally diverse initiatives.
- **Preliminary planning:** Initiate long-term redevelopment planning, including the development of a master plan for the TW Andrews precinct and an exploration of funding opportunities through advocacy and partnerships.

Phase 2 (Nominally 2-5 years)

- **Advocacy plan:** To seek capital funding from all levels of Government.
- **Funding strategy:** Create long-term funding strategy exploring diverse revenue streams and revenue opportunities. Build business case for investment to realise community vision for RLC while ensuring financial sustainability.
- **Concept plan:** Develop detailed redevelopment concept addressing community needs, health priorities, and RLC's community hub role.
- **Operational model assessment:** Evaluate potential operational (council-run, outsourced, hybrid) and partnership models, considering community engagement, service delivery, and financial sustainability.

Phase 3 (Nominally 5-10 years)

- **Phased redevelopment plan:** Develop a flexible, phased plan for major facility upgrade or rebuild that minimises service disruption and adapts to emerging community needs, technological advancements, and funding realities.
- **Commence redevelopment:** Begin construction and facility upgrades in line with the phased plan, ensuring minimal disruption to existing services while aligning with funding availability.

Targeted investments

To demonstrate how Phase 1 may be implemented in practice, we have identified specific targeted improvements that can be delivered in the short to medium term to enhance RLC's functionality and appeal. These priority investments provide tangible examples of the facility maintenance and improvements outlined in Phase 1, addressing key community feedback and issues identified in previous studies.

Priorities identified in the scoping study:

- **Upgrade of the change rooms:** Improving cleanliness, modernising amenities, and enhancing accessibility to provide a more welcoming environment.
- **Upgrade of the hot water system:** To address issues with availability of hot water and improve the user experience.
- **General facility cleanliness:** Basic improvements to the overall upkeep, including regular maintenance and minor cosmetic updates to improve the atmosphere (e.g., repainting, minor repairs).
- **Tidying up the outdoor area:** Cleaning up the outdoor spaces so that they can be used by the community for recreation and relaxation.
- **Re-opening the consulting rooms:** So they can be used to provide health and wellbeing services.

Implementation

The implementation of the RLC redevelopment requires careful consideration to ensure successful delivery of the roadmap and optimal outcomes for the community. Adequate resources will need to be allocated to support effective planning, coordination, and execution throughout the process.

Financial considerations

The redevelopment of RLC needs to be considered within Council's broader financial context. Council's Long-Term Financial Plan indicates limited capital funding availability before 2032, while government grant programs may not be as accessible as they have been in the past, particularly at the state level. High construction costs and interest rates are likely to impact project costs.

These constraints may be addressed, in part, through advocacy to secure government and external funding, as well as diverse funding approaches. Strategic partnerships with health and community service providers could support integrated service delivery while sharing facility costs. Joint funding arrangements with education institutions and sporting organisations may expand facility capacity and community benefit. Alternative revenue streams from complementary facility uses may also support financial sustainability.

A staged development approach would allow for incremental funding and partnership development. This requires flexible design that enables adaptation as opportunities emerge, while focusing on core community infrastructure with capacity for future expansion. Importantly, any development approach should maintain service continuity throughout implementation phases.

Trade-offs and priority setting

The implementation process will require careful balancing of competing priorities and constraints. Key considerations include maintaining core services, addressing immediate community needs while preserving long-term flexibility, and balancing capital costs with operational sustainability. Universal access requirements must be weighed against specialised facility needs, while community affordability should remain central to all decisions.

These considerations should guide the development of more detailed implementation planning as the project progresses. A systematic approach to evaluating options and making decisions will be essential for maintaining transparency and community trust throughout the redevelopment process.

Conclusion

This section summarises the key findings of the RLC Scoping Study and outlines the opportunities for Darebin to create a revitalised centre and community hub that meets the needs of residents now and into the future.

Based on the findings of the scoping study, a clear narrative is emerging about the future of the RLC as follows.

The future of RLC - A community-centred redevelopment

RLC plays an important role as a driver of health and wellbeing and social gathering place in East Reservoir. The community has a strong attachment to RLC and values its welcoming, inclusive, and affordable nature, even if the facilities are a bit dated.

The scoping study findings, including feedback from the community, questions the need to transform RLC into a large, regional facility. Rather, the community has expressed a desire to maintain its community-focused identity and continue serving as an accessible, affordable space that caters to the needs of local residents, while embracing opportunities to strengthen its role as a neighbourhood hub that brings together community services and programs.

Key priorities for the redevelopment include enhancing the aquatic facilities, modernising the gym and fitness areas, and improving the outdoor spaces to create more opportunities for social connection and community gathering. There is also a strong emphasis on addressing mental health, physical activity, and access to affordable healthcare through the redevelopment.

While the facilities require upgrades, the community is clear they do not want the essential character of RLC to be lost. The redevelopment needs to balance redevelopment with preserving the welcoming, inclusive atmosphere that makes RLC an integral part of the East Reservoir community.

The scoping study provides a solid foundation to guide Council's decision-making and future planning for the RLC redevelopment. Careful consideration of long-term demographic trends and financial viability will be necessary to ensure the facility remains sustainable and meets the community's needs.

The opportunity for Darebin

The redevelopment of Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) presents a significant opportunity for the City of Darebin.

Strengthening community connection and wellbeing:

- The engagement process has highlighted that RLC is a vital community asset and social gathering place for the East Reservoir area.
- Redeveloping RLC provides an opportunity to enhance the facility's role in supporting mental health, social connection, and access to affordable healthcare for the local community.
- By preserving the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere of RLC, the redevelopment can continue to foster a strong sense of community identity and belonging.

Addressing evolving community needs:

- In the short term, opportunities should be explored to modernise the facilities and amenities at RLC to better meet the needs of the community.
- By future-proofing the redevelopment, Darebin can ensure RLC remains relevant and responsive to the changing demographics and needs of the Darebin community over the long term.

Strengthening partnerships and service integration:

- The redevelopment process provides an opportunity for Council to engage more deeply with local stakeholders, service providers, and community groups.
- This can lead to the development of new partnerships and the integration of complementary services and programs within a redeveloped facility, further enhancing its role as a community hub.
- Leveraging these partnerships can help address the community's priorities around mental health, affordable healthcare, and targeted programming.

Demonstrating council's commitment to the community:

- The redevelopment can showcase Council's commitment to investing in the north of the city and responding to their needs.
- By delivering a modernised, community-focused facility, Council can strengthen its relationship with residents and demonstrate its commitment to supporting the wellbeing and quality of life of the local community.

Addendum - Engagement findings

RLC Scoping Study engagement findings

This section presents the findings from the community engagement process conducted between August and September 2024 as part of the RLC Scoping Study. While key findings and implications have been integrated throughout the main report, this section provides detailed engagement results and demographic analysis that informed the study's recommendations.

Key findings

Community input highlighted the Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) as a valued community hub that supports social interaction and promotes health and wellbeing. However, there is a strong consensus on the need for significant modernisation to meet current standards and address issues such as mental health, social isolation, and physical inactivity

Key priorities include enhanced aquatic facilities, upgraded gym and fitness areas, and improved inclusivity and accessibility. There is also a desire to transform RLC into a multi-functional space that serves a diverse community.

The engagement process emphasised the importance of inclusivity, with feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, and local service providers. There is a call for culturally safe spaces, programs that foster intercultural connections, and services that cater to the varied demographics of Reservoir and Darebin. Stakeholders also highlighted the potential for co-locating services within the RLC to better support community health and wellbeing. The engagement also captured specific needs from the LGBTQIA+ community, who emphasised the importance of inclusive facility design, including gender-neutral changing facilities and dedicated programming opportunities.

Community feedback on potential for a 50m pool centred around swimming needs versus maintaining the centre's community focus. While many respondents referenced NARC as a quality benchmark, there is a desire to preserve RLC's distinct community character rather than replicating NARC's regional facility model.

Engagement approach

Areas of enquiry

Our engagement approach was designed to ensure comprehensive community input, focusing on the following:

- **Community priorities:** Identifying the top priorities for features, components, facilities, services, and programs to be included in a redeveloped RLC.
- **Participation barriers and enablers:** Understanding the key factors that either hinder or facilitate community participation in RLC activities.
- **Health and wellbeing outcomes:** Exploring how a redeveloped RLC can best support health, wellbeing, and social inclusion outcomes for the Reservoir community.

Level of community influence

To strategically guide the engagement process and manage expectations, we identified which aspects of the project were open to community influence and which were predetermined by Council constraints.

Negotiable (can be influenced by the community)	Non-negotiable (cannot be influenced)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and prioritisation of components and services to be included in a redeveloped RLC. • Feedback on community health and wellbeing needs and aspirations the RLC redevelopment could address. • Ideas for overcoming current barriers and increasing accessibility and inclusion at RLC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council’s decision-making process and criteria for determining the final scope and timing of the RLC redevelopment. • The funding envelope available for the redevelopment and the need to make trade-offs within financial constraints. • The long-term timeline for the redevelopment to be funded and delivered (approximately 10 years).

Engagement overview

Online engagement

- **Survey:** An online survey gathered community input on RLC use and redevelopment aspirations letters were sent to over 23,000 residents and property owners.
 - 764 survey responses from 731 unique contributors
- **Information sessions:** Two online information sessions were held:
 - Session 1: Tuesday 3 September 2024, 4:30pm to 5:30pm
 - Session 2: Thursday 5 September 2024, 5:30pm to 6:30pm
- Despite receiving a few registrations for the online information sessions, no participants attended. Follow-up was conducted with those who had registered.

Place-based engagement

Three pop-up events were conducted to engage RLC users and the local community:

- Tuesday 3 September 2024, 8am to 11am (Reservoir Leisure Centre)
- Saturday 7 September 2024, 11am to 12pm (TW Andrews Reserve)
- Thursday 12 September 2024, 3pm to 7pm (Reservoir Leisure Centre)

Activities included:

- 68 intercept surveys
- "Stakes in the Ground" responses (ideas cards)
- More than 30 images and stories captured

Targeted community and stakeholder engagement

We conducted targeted outreach to ensure diverse perspectives were captured, including:

- Emails sent to priority groups including RLC user groups, local schools, and sporting/recreation groups
- Engagement with local advocacy groups, such as East Reservoir Neighbours for Change
- Outreach to service providers, including Reservoir Neighbourhood House and Your Community Health
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement through:
 - Engagement with internal stakeholders
 - Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health team from Your Community Health
- Engagement with state peak sports bodies, including Aquatics and Recreation Victoria.

Communication and promotion

To promote the engagement process and drive participation, we implemented a multi-channel communication strategy that included:

- **Direct mail:** A letter was sent to all residents of Reservoir and Kingsbury
- **Digital outreach:** A comprehensive social media campaign was conducted
- **Local visibility:** Posters were displayed in Council premises, including libraries (TBC)
- **RLC promotion:** Invitation to participate to the RLC database (3,000+), in centre and social media.

Findings

Community value and current usage

The Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) is highly valued by the community for its:

- Accessibility and proximity to residents' homes
- Affordability
- Friendly and welcoming atmosphere
- Diverse range of services and facilities

Current usage patterns:

- 37% of survey respondents use RLC (18% regular users, 19% occasional users)
- Most popular facilities: 25m heated indoor pool (70%), spa/sauna/steam room (39%), gymnasium (31%)
- 62% of current users visit at least once a week

Community priorities for redevelopment

Top priorities identified across all engagement methods:

- Enhanced aquatic facilities
 - Improved pool facilities, including better temperature control
 - Dedicated lap lanes and expanded water play areas
 - Upgraded hydrotherapy and spa facilities
- Modernised gym and fitness areas
 - Expanded gym space and updated equipment
 - Improved group fitness rooms and class offerings
- Overall facility modernisation
 - Upgraded changing rooms and showers
 - Improved cleanliness and maintenance
- Enhanced outdoor spaces
 - Revitalised outdoor areas for recreation and relaxation
- Community hub features
 - Addition of a "proper café" for social interaction
 - Multi-purpose spaces for community activities and programs

Barriers and enablers

Main barriers to RLC use:

- Poor condition of facilities (70% of survey respondents)
- Preference for other facilities (32%)
- Uncomfortable or unwelcoming environment (25%)

Factors that would encourage increased use:

- Modernised and expanded facilities
- More diverse programming options
- Enhanced accessibility features
- Improved family-friendly amenities (e.g., childcare options)
- Affordable access and targeted programs for low-income residents

Health and wellbeing priorities

Key community health challenges identified:

- Mental health issues (72% of survey respondents)
- Social isolation (52%)
- Obesity and lack of physical activity (50%)
- Limited access to affordable healthcare (48%)

Respondents emphasised the potential for a redeveloped RLC to address these issues through:

- Expanded mental health support programs
- Spaces and activities that foster social connection
- Diverse physical activity options for all ages and abilities
- Partnerships with local health services

Inclusivity and accessibility

Strong support was expressed for:

- Culturally safe and inclusive environments
- Programs catering to diverse community needs (e.g., women-only swimming sessions)
- Improved accessibility features for people with disabilities
- Intergenerational activities connecting older and younger community members

The Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre (NARC) was frequently mentioned as a benchmark for quality and amenities. Many respondents expressed a desire for similar facilities at RLC, emphasising the need for equitable investment across Darebin.

Demographics and representation

Online survey demographics compared to overall population

An analysis of demographics of survey respondents compared to Darebin's overall population identified areas of under and over representation. Please note that these comparative figures do not take account of input provided through activities other than the online survey.

Gender representation showed a significant skew, with women making up 66% of respondents compared to 51% of Darebin's population. Men were underrepresented at 31% versus 49% in the population. The survey also captured responses from trans and gender diverse individuals (2%).

Cultural diversity appears underrepresented, with only 20% of survey respondents speaking a language other than English at home, compared to 32% in Darebin overall. Conversely, people with disabilities were overrepresented, making up 11% of survey respondents versus 7% of Darebin residents needing assistance with core activities. Consideration should be given to the different definitions or interpretations of survey questions compared to the Census.

Geographically, 84% of survey participants were from Reservoir (postcode 3073), indicating a heavy concentration compared to the broader Darebin population distribution.

Age comparisons were not possible due to limited responses to the age-related survey question, highlighting a gap in demographic data.

These disparities underscore the importance of considering potential biases in the survey results and suggest that targeted outreach may be required to underrepresented groups in future project stages.

Representation

The survey received 764 responses from 731 unique contributors, out of Darebin's total population of 155,683, representing about 0.47% of the population. While this sample size provides insights into views of the community, several factors need to be considered in interpreting the results:

1. Significant demographic skews exist in the survey responses compared to the overall population:
 - Women are overrepresented (66% vs 51%)
 - Reservoir residents are heavily overrepresented (84%)
 - Non-English speakers are underrepresented (20% vs 32%)
 - People with disabilities are overrepresented (11% vs 7%)
2. The voluntary nature of the survey may have led to self-selection bias.
3. Lack of comparable age distribution data for survey respondents limits assessment of age representativeness.
4. Missing data on several core demographics (e.g., education, income) further limits evaluation of representativeness.

While the survey provides valuable insights, these factors suggest it cannot be considered fully representative of the total Darebin population. The significant demographic skews, particularly in gender and location, indicate that the results may not accurately reflect the views of the entire community.

Targeted findings

Targeted engagement, analysis and research identified valuable insights and recommendations for different groups in the community for the RLC redevelopment.

Engagement with **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** community representatives emphasised the need for culturally safe environments and targeted programming, suggesting long-term, relationship-based engagement strategies and exploration of free or discounted passes for specific programs. RLC was also encouraged to consider its role in supporting broader community issues.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community feedback highlighted the importance of affordable and accessible facilities, with social isolation and mental health identified as significant concerns, particularly for older members. Recommendations included developing programs fostering intercultural understanding, providing multilingual information, and creating spaces for cultural celebrations.

LGBTQIA+ community feedback emphasised the importance of creating safe and welcoming environments through inclusive facility design and policies. Recommendations included implementing gender-neutral changing facilities and developing dedicated LGBTQIA+ events and social connection opportunities, with emphasis on supporting broader community inclusion and wellbeing.

Older residents are a significant and growing demographic in the Reservoir area. Their study highlights the need for inclusive, age-appropriate programs that support physical health and social connection, as well as accessible spaces that make participation easier for those with mobility challenges.

For **people with disabilities**, the engagement findings point to three primary areas of focus: improved physical access throughout the facility, including accessible changing rooms; fitness programs designed to be inclusive of varying abilities; and ensuring that services remain affordable to all.

For **young people and families**, the findings underscore the importance of creating family-friendly environments that include spaces and programs tailored to children and parents. Community members expressed interest in better outdoor spaces for kids to play, expanded programming options that promote intergenerational interaction and recreational activities that engage both children and adults. The focus on more child and family friendly spaces and activities will become increasingly important as the number of young families in the area grows.

Stakeholder feedback

Local health and community service providers expressed interest in partnerships and potential co-location of services within a redeveloped RLC. They recognised the centre's role in supporting broader community health initiatives and recommended exploring service integration opportunities, developing clear referral pathways, and establishing consistent communication channels.

Aquatics and Recreation Victoria (ARV) provided sector-wide insights, noting ageing infrastructure as a common issue and a shift towards community hub models integrating various services. They recommended considering innovative approaches to facility development and funding, adopting a place-based approach to make RLC unique to Reservoir, and focusing on developing community partnerships.

Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) advised that no capital funding is currently available for the development or redevelopment of aquatic centres. However, planning funding of up to \$50,000 is available. SRV expressed strong support for creating a broader "hub model," which aligns with recent trends in new leisure facilities. Recent leisure projects have successfully sourced funding through election commitments.

Feedback related to the provision of a 50m pool

Through the online survey, the community provided mixed feedback on the inclusion of a 50m pool, with 37 mentions in the survey, from a total of 760 responses.

People advocating for a 50m pool cited:

- Need for competitive swimming facilities in Reservoir
- Desire for increased lap swimming capacity
- Preference for outdoor 50m option for summer use

Those opposed noted:

- Existence of 50m facility at NARC (15 minutes away)
- Preference for wider lap pool with more lanes rather than longer length
- Priority for other facility improvements over pool length.

Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre (NARC)

Comparisons with NARC were raised 64 times in the online survey, with many respondents using Northcote as a benchmark for quality and amenities. An analysis of the comments identified the desire for equivalent facility quality and features in Reservoir and equity concerns about facility standards across Darebin.

However, views were mixed. Appreciation was shown for its modern facilities, family areas, and multiple pool options. The community also shared concerns about accessibility and affordability and the preferences for maintaining RLC's unique community character.

RLC User Survey

The RLC User Survey provided valuable insights into current facility performance and future priorities from regular centre users. With strong response rates across different user groups, the survey revealed generally positive experiences with services and staff, while highlighting infrastructure and maintenance as key areas for improvement. The findings demonstrate RLC's significant contribution to community wellbeing, with particularly strong impact on physical health and social connection outcomes.

Satisfaction and recommendation

- Net Promoter Score showed mixed results with 7.5/10 average recommendation score
- 73% feel welcome at RLC, with an additional 18% somewhat agreeing
- 77% feel safe at the facility, with 16% somewhat agreeing
- 61% consider RLC good value for money, with 22% somewhat agreeing
- 68% find staff friendly and helpful, with 20% somewhat agreeing

Facility assessment

- Infrastructure emerged as the primary concern, mostly related to ageing facilities
- Change rooms and lockers received predominantly negative feedback
- Pool temperature satisfaction was relatively low
- High satisfaction with gym services
- Strong satisfaction with group fitness instruction
- Customer service received mostly positive feedback
- Mixed satisfaction with steam, spa and sauna facilities

Program-specific feedback

- Learn to Swim program received mixed feedback
- Group Fitness class variety rated positively
- Gym services highly rated
- Outdoor pools show limited usage

Wellness impact

- 76% reported RLC contributed to their social connections
- 79% felt RLC helped them feel part of the community
- 96% indicated RLC positively contributed to their physical health

User priorities

Top priorities identified:

- Clean and hygienic facility
- Functioning equipment
- High quality classes & activities
- Great customer service
- Inclusive and welcoming environment

Future services interest:

- Reformer Pilates
- Boxing/self-defence
- Extra sessions for women
- 6-week challenges
- Allied health services
- Strong interest in digital solutions

Appendices

Appendix A: Location of other facilities

This appendix provides a mapping of other relevant facilities, as referenced in the report. The map highlights nearby leisure centres to offer context for the development of RLC as a unique, community-focused facility.

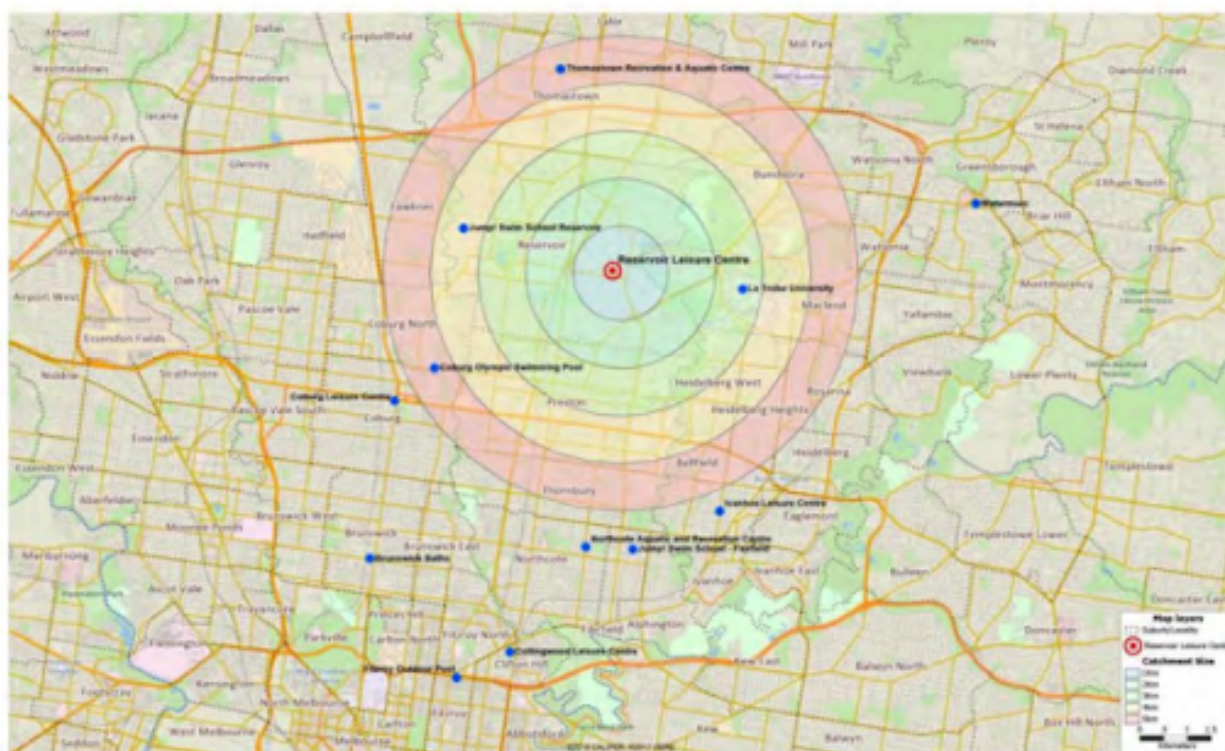


Figure 29 Reservoir Leisure Centre Competitors

Other popular Aquatic Centres were WaterMarc with 24% of people followed by Northcote (23%) and Thomastown (21%) Aquatic Centres. These Centres are also closer to Reservoir than the majority of the others which may be a reflection as to why they are more predominant than the rest.

Note: Sourced from the Reservoir Leisure Centre Feasibility Study completed by Otium Planning Group.

Appendix B: Resident notification letter

This appendix provides a mapping of other relevant facilities, as referenced in the report. The map highlights nearby leisure centres to offer context for the development of RLC as a unique, community-focused facility.

Dear Community Member,

Help shape the future of Reservoir Leisure Centre

Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) is an important facility that offers a wide range of activities and creates connections to help improve the health and wellbeing of our community.

As part of our ongoing investment in our community, we want to understand what's most important to you and how a redeveloped RLC could best work with other services and recreation facilities in Darebin to improve the lives of residents.

We've heard through previous engagement that addressing disadvantage, building social connections, and providing accessible healthcare are top priorities for the community. You've told us that you would most like the RLC to provide expanded pool and water play opportunities, more space for community gatherings, and family-friendly recreation areas.

As the next step in the long-term redevelopment of the RLC, we want your help to:

- Understand why people do and don't use the Centre
- Prioritise health and wellbeing challenges facing your community
- Identify the most important activities and services that could be offered.

While a full redevelopment is some years away, your feedback will help shape our long-term plans and funding strategy.

Get involved by:

1. Completing the online survey at [insert QR code]
2. Joining an online information session
 - Tuesday, 3 September from 4.30 to 5.30pm
 - Thursday, 12 September from 5.30pm to 6.30pm
3. Attending a drop-in session:
 - Tuesday, 3 September from 8am to 11.00am at the RLC
 - Saturday, 7 September from 9am to 12.00pm at TW Andrews Reserve
 - Thursday, 12 September from 3pm to 7.00pm at the RLC
4. Following the project on Your Say Darebin

For more information or to register for an online information session go to Your Say Darebin (QR code above) or contact: Bruce Fordham - Leisure Major Projects Officer 8470 8888
Bruce.Fordham@darebin.vic.gov.au.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on the future of RLC.

Special offer

Not a member of RLC? Bring this letter to the centre for a FREE visit pass! Plus, if you decide to join, we'll waive the \$34 joining fee.

Experience all RLC has to offer and be part of shaping its future.

Appendix C: Online engagement

This appendix presents the information provided on Your Say Darebin and the survey used to gather feedback from the community. The survey questions were designed to capture community needs, preferences, and suggestions for the RLC redevelopment, serving as a foundation for the engagement findings in the report.

Help shape the future of Reservoir Leisure Centre

Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) is an important community facility that brings people together, creating connections and supporting the health and wellbeing of residents of Reservoir and people across Darebin. We understand that a thriving and healthy community is made up of more than a building and what it contains. It's about the people and the long-lasting connections we make, with the support of the services and programs offered at the Centre and in the surrounding neighbourhood.

As part of our ongoing investment in the health and wellbeing of our residents, we are undertaking a scoping study to understand what's most important to our community and how a redeveloped RLC could complement other local services—such as the Reservoir Neighbourhood House and the East Reservoir Senior Citizens Centre—as well as other recreation and community facilities in Darebin, to improve the lives of our residents.

While the Centre will need to be redeveloped at some point in the future, RLC still has plenty to offer, and we will continue to improve it in response to user and community feedback.

What we've heard

We know from previous engagement and research that there is the opportunity to improve how RLC, in partnership with the surrounding community services, can continue to improve the lives of locals.

We've heard that the most pressing needs in the community are addressing socio-economic disadvantage, improving health outcomes, enhancing social inclusion, and providing accessible healthcare.

You've told us that you would most like RLC to provide expanded aquatic facilities, additional health and wellbeing services, more community spaces, and family-friendly recreation areas.

Financial realities

It's no secret that Darebin City Council, like many others in our community, is facing significant financial challenges and the reality is that we will not have the funds to undertake a major redevelopment in the foreseeable future. So, we need to make sure we have a clear picture of what is most important to the community and start to have a conversation about the achievable scope and timing of the redevelopment.

Have your say

As a next step in the long-term redevelopment of RLC, we are now undertaking a scoping study to confirm what is most important to the community and what you would like to see out of a future redevelopment of the Centre. The outcomes of the scoping study will help us develop our long-term plans and funding strategy for the redevelopment of the Centre.

Complete the online survey [[Link to survey](#)]

Timeline

- **August-September 2024:** Community engagement
- **October-November 2024:** Analysis of feedback and development of options
- **December 2024:** Report to Council on engagement outcomes, recommended options and next steps

Contact us

If you have any questions about the RLC Scoping Study or need assistance to participate, please contact:

Bruce Fordham - Leisure Major Projects Officer
8470 8888
Bruce.Fordham@darebin.vic.gov.au

Stay informed

Register for project updates to stay informed about the outcomes of the engagement and next steps for the project. [[Link to register](#)]

Q+As

Why is Council conducting this engagement process for RLC now?

While the existing facility has at least another 10 years of useful life, particularly with the ongoing investment we have planned, there is no question that it will require a redevelopment to continue meeting community needs over the long term. We're undertaking this scoping study to identify priorities for the future redevelopment of the Centre and how we can work with all services in the area to improve the health and wellbeing of the community in the meantime.

Hasn't Council already done studies and consultations about RLC? Why are you asking for input again?

Yes, we've conducted several studies and consultations in recent years. We value the significant community input provided through these processes. This engagement builds on previous findings and focuses specifically on identifying and prioritising features for the future redevelopment. We want to ensure we have up-to-date information on community needs and priorities to inform our decision-making.

When will the redevelopment of RLC actually happen?

The full redevelopment of RLC is likely to be some years away as the existing facility continues to provide value to the community with ongoing improvements. We also need to consider financial constraints and the need for careful planning. This scoping study is an important step in the process. It will help us develop a clear vision and plan for the future RLC, which will inform our funding strategy and timeline for the redevelopment.

How will you ensure this engagement reaches all parts of the Reservoir community, especially those who might not typically participate?

We're committed to hearing from a diverse range of voices, including current RLC users, local residents, community groups, and traditionally underrepresented communities. Our engagement approach includes:

- Online and in-person options for participation
- Engagement activities at RLC
- Targeted outreach to culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Discussions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Collaboration with local community leaders and organisations
- Translated materials and interpreting services where needed

What will happen with the input provided through this engagement process?

Your input will inform the priorities for the RLC redevelopment and Council's decision-making about the future of this important community facility. We'll analyse all feedback received to identify key themes and priorities. This information will be used to develop options for the redevelopment, which will then be presented back to the community for further input.

How will Council balance community needs with budget constraints?

We recognise that the community highly values RLC and is keen to see improvements made. Like many local governments, we're operating in a challenging financial environment with limited resources for major projects. This means that difficult trade-offs may need to be made in the scope and timing of the RLC redevelopment to balance community priorities with financial sustainability. We want to have an open and honest conversation with the community about these challenges and how we can best meet local needs within these constraints.

Will the current RLC remain open while planning for the redevelopment is underway?

Yes, Council remains committed to maintaining the Centre and continuing to offer programs and services to meet community needs in the meantime. We'll continue to invest in necessary maintenance and upgrades to ensure RLC remains safe and functional until the redevelopment can occur.

How can I stay informed about the progress of this project?

We're committed to keeping the community informed throughout this process. You can stay updated by:

- *Following the project on the Your Say Darebin website*
- *Signing up for project updates via email*
- *Attending community information sessions (dates to be announced)*
- *Checking Council's social media channels and website for regular updates.*

Online survey

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on the future of Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC). Your input is valuable in helping us plan for the redevelopment of this important community facility.

1. What is your connection to Reservoir Leisure Centre? (Select all that apply)

- Current member
- Regular user (at least once a week)
- Occasional user (less than once a week)
- Past user
- Never used RLC
- Local resident
- Work or study in the area
- Other (please specify): _____

2. How often do you currently use Reservoir Leisure Centre?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- A few times a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

3. Which facilities or programs do you use most at RLC? (Select all that apply)

- 25m heated pool (indoor)
- Learn to swim pool (smaller indoor pool)
- Toddler play pool (next to learn to swim pool)
- Deep-water pool (outdoor)
- Slide pool (outdoor)
- Toddler play pool (outdoor)
- Hydrotherapy pool
- Spa, sauna and steam room
- Gymnasium with weights and cardio equipment
- Group fitness room
- Cycle room
- Multi-purpose room (for boxing, dance and meetings)
- Seating next to reception (vending machines)
- Other (please specify): _____

4. What do you think have been the most important improvements to RLC in recent years? (Select all that apply)

- Roof upgrades
- Gym reconfiguration
- Facility maintenance and repairs
- New programs or services
- New technology for group fitness activities (screen and app to support virtual fitness options)
- Upgraded airflow in pool hall (to refresh the air)
- Entry and retail area improvements (relocated spaces, external painting, bins, seating)
- I'm not aware of any recent improvements
- Other (please specify): _____

5. What do you value most about RLC? (Open-ended)

6. What are the main reasons you don't currently use RLC? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of interest in available activities
- Prefer other facilities
- Cost
- Inconvenient location
- Inconvenient opening hours
- Lack of accessibility features
- Uncomfortable or unwelcoming environment
- Availability of services designed for different cultures
- Availability of information in community languages
- Availability of specific programs or services I need
- Poor condition of facilities
- Other (please specify): _____

7. What changes or improvements would encourage you to use RLC? (Open-ended)

8. In your opinion, what are the greatest health and wellbeing challenges facing your household and community? (Select all that apply)

- Chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes, heart disease)
- Mental health issues
- Obesity and lack of physical activity
- Social isolation
- Unemployment or underemployment
- Limited access to education and training opportunities
- Food insecurity
- Limited access to affordable healthcare
- Other (please specify): _____

9. What activities, programs, or services would you like to see offered at a redeveloped RLC?

Please select your top 3 priorities.

- Recreational swimming and water play
- Lap swimming and water sports
- Physical rehabilitation and hydrotherapy
- Learn to swim programs (for children and adults)
- Outdoor leisure and relaxation activities
- Mental health support and wellness programs
- Youth-focused activities and programs
- Cultural celebrations and community events
- Health education and nutrition workshops
- Fitness classes and gym activities
- Family-friendly recreation activities
- Inclusive fitness and/or swim sessions (e.g., female-only, gender diverse swimming)
- Access to additional health services (e.g. physiotherapy, nutrition advice)
- Other (please specify): _____

10. In your opinion, what are the most important social issues facing your household and community that could be addressed through a redevelopment of the RLC? (Select all that apply)

- Provide affordable access to health and fitness facilities
- Offer job training or employment programs
- Host educational workshops and classes
- Provide spaces for community support services
- Offer discounted or free programs for low-income residents
- Partner with local organisations to address community needs
- Other (please specify): _____

11. Do you have any other feedback on the redevelopment of RLC or how we can improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Darebin residents? (Open-ended)

Thank you for your participation. Your input will help shape the priorities for the RLC redevelopment and inform Council's decision-making about the future of this important community facility.