10. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Policy 10.19

LITHGOW AQUATIC CENTRE SUPERVISION

Version 1
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OBJECTIVES

To declare and operate Lithgow Aquatic Centre as a low patronage facility.

POLICY

1. A low patronage facility is defined as a facility operating with limited or no lifeguard supervision.

2. Supervision will be provided by the Council based on patron numbers.

3. Patrons participating in programmed swimming conducted by appropriately qualified swimming instructors are not included when determining patronage numbers.

4. Patron numbers determining the level of supervision are as follows:
   (i) For 0-25 patrons in the water, 1 pool attendant will be on duty;
   (ii) For 25-100 patrons in the water, 1 pool attendant and 1 lifeguard will be on duty;
   (iii) Thereafter, a ratio of patrons to lifeguards at minimum 100:1 shall be maintained.

REFERENCES

NSW Government Water Safety Practice Note No 15
Royal Life Saving Association Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations
21 March 2016

General Manager
Lithgow City Council
180 Mort St
Lithgow NSW 2790

Dear Roger,

Submission on Draft Policy 10.19 – Lithgow Aquatic Centre Supervision

On behalf of the Lithgow Swimming Club, I would like to make a submission on the Draft Lithgow Aquatic Centre Supervision Policy.

I understand the background to the introduction of the low patronage policy for aquatic facilities for smaller rural and remote centres, but would question the application of this type of policy at the Lithgow Aquatic Centre.

As a consistent user group at the Lithgow Aquatic Centre, we see firsthand the high visitation at the centre every weekday afternoon. I am not aware of the visitation demands on the centre during school hours.

I am concerned with the application of the draft policy in terms of:

1. If only 1 staff member is present during quieter times, when do all the other duties at the Centre get done? Isn’t that the best time to undertake these tasks?

   The Lithgow Aquatic Centre is one of the best presented and maintained centres that I have visited in recent times. The toilets and concourses are always very clean and the pool water and tiles are always very clean (aside from faecal incidents which is another issue that needs attention). This doesn’t just happen and takes a lot of work on behalf of the staff working at the centre. If the “low patronage” supervision policy is implemented, does that mean that only 1 staff member will be present at the centre at certain times of the day? Or does it mean that 2 staff members will be present at the centre at all times but can be engaged in other duties other than supervision? Duties such as:

   - Manning entry and taking enquiries/answering telephone
   - Taking swim school enquiries
   - Undertaking swim school assessments
   - Cleaning toilets/change rooms and periodic inspection throughout the day
   - Cleaning concourses
   - Cleaning entry/carpets
- Administration tasks/rostering
- Swim school administration
- Staff appraisals
- Cleaning pools/tiles/handrails/filters/windows/tables/chairs
- Manning café/Cleaning café/Stocktake
- Maintaining outside grounds/Maintaining outside concourses
- Water testing indoor/outdoor as required throughout the day
- Periodic checking plant room in both indoor and outdoor pools
- Scheduling programs
- Keeping track of patrons in the facility/manual head counting in both pools
- Supervision of high risk patrons in both pools
- Controlling unruly behaviour in both pools/this can be an issue at any time no matter how many patrons are in the facility
- Ensuring compliance with the rules of the centre. This is particularly an issue with the wearing of swimming nappies on young children 5 and under. Patrons may say that they have a swim nappy but it is evident with the number of faecal incidents in the indoor pool that patrons are not abiding by this rule. This is a major health concern and has significant ramifications for the reputation of the centre, credibility of the operation and economic impact of loss of revenue. These patrons require supervision to ensure compliance with this requirement. Staff need the support of management and each other when enforcing this policy. **No nappy no swim**

2. **Policing and monitoring of patrons in the water.**

Clause 3 of the Draft Policy states that patrons attending programs run by other groups are not to be counted when determining patron numbers. The issue I see is more of a logistical one in that when does a patron become the responsibility of the lifeguard. For example, Swim Club programs might commence at 4:30pm but patrons may enter the facility earlier to have a recreational swim before squads commence. So on entering the facility the patron is a patron for application of the policy. The patron then enters the Swimming Club program at 4:30pm and becomes Swim Clubs responsibility during the squad training. The patron then exits the Swimming Club program at 5:30pm and then stays for a recreational swim after squad training while their sibling has squad training. At no time has the patron left the facility but has changed status in terms of the policy while being at the centre. If one pool attendant is on duty but you have 20 kids doing swim club + parents + siblings waiting to do swim club, and 12 learn to swim patrons + parents + siblings, how is 1 pool attendant supposed to determine numbers when they are also supposed to be manning the administration desk and the entry, checking toilets, dealing with bad behaviour, responding to an injury, fielding questions about programs, making sure patrons are complying with the swim
nappy policy etc etc. The policy sounds easy enough to administer on paper, but in reality it is a logistical nightmare for the poor pool attendant trying to work out who is doing what and at what time as well as doing other duties.

3. **What is the basis for application of the policy?**
   - What data has been analysed to determine when/what periods the centre is currently recording “low patronage” status.
   - Is the policy to apply during the summer months when two(2) pools are operating simultaneously? If so what are the processes in place to control how this happens.
   - Is low patronage supervision only going to apply during the weekdays and during school hours? Again, what is the basis for this policy?
   - What is the mechanism to assess pool usage to determine supervision requirements in accordance with this policy. Head count/infra-red counters/visual count display at entry/exit

4. **Consistency with other Council facilities**
Council operates many other Community facilities that are not financially sustainable but provide a much needed service for the enjoyment or benefit of the community. The Lithgow Library is a facility that does not operate for profit but provide a service to the community. The library is appropriately staffed to provide services at an acceptable standard. Patrons visiting the library are not going to partake in a high risk activity like swimming yet staffing is always maintained at at least two(2) or more staff members no matter how many patrons are present.

5. **Safety of Council staff having regard to:**
   - money on the premises
   - handling chemicals
   - aggressive patrons
   - emergency situation

While I understand that Council is looking at ways to make the Aquatic Centre more profitable, why not look at increasing programs and trying to increase visitation in the quieter times to increase income, rather than adopting the glass half empty approach of cutting service.

Regards

Karen Luka
**PRESIDENT LITHGOW SWIMMING CLUB**