

THE Photovoice Project

REMOTE ABORIGINAL
SWIMMING POOL RESEARCH



Royal Life Saving
THE ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.

Principal Community
Partner



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1 Executive Summary

The Remote Aboriginal Swimming Pool (RASP) program is managed and run by the Royal Life Saving Society of Western Australia (RLSSWA) in six remote locations across the state. This program aims to increase Aboriginal participation in aquatic activities while achieving improvements in the realms of health, education and employment, benefits frequently associated with having swimming pools in remote communities. While previously conducted research has identified a number of positive outcomes provided by remote pools, to date, no formal evaluation of the key enablers and barriers to swimming participation in these RASP communities has been undertaken.

The purpose of this study was to gather community feedback on the effectiveness of the RASP program and to work with community members to make improvements to the scheme. In particular, the study aimed to explore social benefits associated with having swimming pools in remote communities, barriers to pool use and the effectiveness of using pool access as a reward for school attendance in three of the six RASP communities. A multi-method study was designed using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and was guided by a participatory action research approach, which allowed community members to contribute to the research process. Interviews were conducted with community members while school aged children took part in a Photovoice project, taking photos of aspects of the pool environment they found positive or negative and exploring their photos in class workshops. Attendance data was also collected for a sample of students to determine whether the No School, No Pool (NSNP) policy had an effect on school attendance rates.

Participants identified a range of benefits of the RASP program including cultural appropriateness, community participation, positive effects on health, swimming ability, social and emotional wellbeing and the promotion of good behaviour among youth. Suggestions for improvements included increased employment opportunities for local community members and infrastructure changes. Quantitative evidence indicates that the pool encouraged younger students to attend school; however pool participation decreased with age.

While there were a number of limitations with this research, collated results indicate that the RASP program is not only effective in achieving its key performance indicators, but provides a number of additional benefits previously not identified. Further research should focus on confirming the health implications of long term pool exposure and further quantifying the effect on school attendance.

2 Introduction

Swimming pools have been built in many remote communities throughout Australia to provide safe and cool recreational opportunities for community members living in these very hot locations. While many possible benefits of remote pools, including health, social and educational have been identified, reviews of these facilities have suggested that poor management and under-resourcing often limit pool use.¹⁻³ The Remote Aboriginal Swimming Pool (RASP) program run by the Royal Life Saving Society WA (RLSSWA) and funded by the Western Australian (WA) State Government and BHP Billiton is unique in Australia in that it is a long-term remote pool management program that is fully-funded with dedicated pool managers living and working in each community.

The 274 Aboriginal communities in WA have historically experienced political and infrastructure challenges resulting in significant economic, educational, employment and health inequalities.^{4,5} In an effort to lessen these disparities, the RASP program works with six remote communities in the north-west of WA for nine months each year to deliver safe, efficient and effective aquatic facilities and programs. The pools are utilised by the local schools for in-class activities and for special events, as well as after school as a reward for daily school attendance. In total, approximately 45,000 visits are recorded each year across the six communities. Detailed records of program delivery and participation are kept and reported annually by pool managers. Community consultation and engagement is ongoing throughout the year with additional debriefing meetings held with the pool managers at the end of each season, to which community representatives are also invited.

Thus far, research on swimming pools in remote communities has largely focused on measuring the association between regular swimming and its impacts on ear, skin and eye health among children; the results of which have been mixed.⁶⁻¹¹ In a systematic review, Hendrickx et al.¹² concluded that access to swimming pools in remote communities improved rates of skin infection; however were unable to determine decisive benefits to ear and eye health.¹² Three studies^{1, 7, 9} have examined the effectiveness of offering pool access as a reward for school attendance (commonly referred to as the 'No School, No Pool' policy) with inconclusive results.

While it is apparent that swimming pools have many broader health and social benefits for remote communities, limited formal investigation has been conducted in this area and there is an identified need for further research to document these outcomes. Furthermore, a formal appraisal of the RASP program was required to determine its overall effectiveness and acceptance by community members and identify areas for improvement.



NO DIVING

3 Community Profiles

The six RASP pools are located in communities within the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions in the north-west of WA, varying in population with between 150-700 primarily Aboriginal residents. These transient individuals often leave the community for extended periods to attend cultural and sporting events, leading to large fluctuations in community populations. Each community is very remote; many only have one access road and range from 130km to 470km from the nearest town site. These regions follow a 'wet' and 'dry' seasonality, with rainfall and hotter temperatures occurring during the summer months, and cooler, drier weather during the winter. Each community is diverse with uniquely ingrained history, cultural practice and language groups that cement local identity. Natural water locations such as rivers, creeks and the ocean are located close to each community and are frequent swimming places; however are prone to flooding, unsafe conditions and encounters with crocodiles and jellyfish. Each community has high rates of acute and chronic illnesses with local health services providing a range of individual and community preventative health programs.

The majority of RASP pools are designed in a manner that ensures access for at-risk groups such as the elderly, and all are built using robust materials that can withstand the harshness of the remote location. The pool location within the community was primarily determined from initial feasibility study outcomes, consultation conducted with the community and by the Department of Housing and Works. Each pool operates with a specific aim to encourage local community members to utilise the facilities in a safe and appropriate manner. Different programs are run targeting the specific needs of each individual community and rules are put in place to ensure these goals are met. Community consultation has been the key to ensuring the success of each pool, with this maintained primarily by the pool managers, certifying local accountability and responsibility for this service. In addition, these pools operate as a method of encouraging students to attend school through the 'No School, No Pool' policy. Under this program, only students who have attended school that particular day are eligible to swim in the afternoon.

Three of the RASP communities in WA participated in this study. In each community, the managers of the pools live and work in the community during pool season (mid-September to mid-May) and during the study period all pools were open daily except for Monday, averaging 30 hours of operational time a week. Primary school aged children are the most common pool patrons; however all pools run a variety of programs targeted at different age groups to encourage participation. These include water polo competitions, ladies only water aerobics, midnight swimming opportunities and the 'Swim for Fruit' program, providing healthy rewards to children who participate in structured aquatic activities, primarily lap swimming. Swimming and water safety lessons are also run intermittently between the summer terms. At each pool, children aged under the age of five must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Those under ten are also expected to be supervised by an adult or older relative. These rules may vary from pool to pool if the relevant pool manager is confident in the swimming abilities of younger children.

Profiles presented below do not identify the community by name; rather provide general information on demographics, infrastructure and running of the RASP program.

COMMUNITY ONE

The pool in Community 1 was built in 2006 and is located in the Kimberley. Local infrastructure is extensive due to its relatively large population and facilities include a clinic, general store, police station, primary and secondary school, retirement home, youth centre, arts centre and swimming pool. Nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers are accessible at all times with visiting GP services provided through a nearby town. Almost 200 students are enrolled in the local school with 60 of these being secondary students.

Presently a female pool manager oversees the running of the swimming pool and one local community member is employed to fulfil duties such as cleaning, supervision, management of the kiosk and various administrative duties. Four community volunteers also assist with supervision during busy days and when the pool is open at night. Opening times for the pool are posted at the pool, the shop, school, office and clinic. Presently, school swimming lessons are run once per week for six weeks.

This community has also recently adopted a more positive message, utilising the phrase 'Go to School, Go to Pool' in turn of the NSNP policy. Here, children receive a stamp at the end of the day to signify their day long attendance at school.

COMMUNITY TWO

Community 2 is located in the Pilbara region. A single school provides education from kindergarten to Year 12 level, with six teachers for a student enrolment of 92 children, of which a third are secondary students. The community also has a shop, an education and training centre and sporting facilities. The local clinic is well equipped to deal with acute and chronic health conditions with two nurses, a GP, an Aboriginal Health Worker, and a Health Promotion Officer, whilst being frequently visited by specialists. One third of those in this community are under four years of age.

The RASP pool is managed by a female pool manager without assistance from volunteers or employed local community members. This community was one of the first in WA to receive a RLSSWA managed remote pool, with it having been in operation since mid-2000. The NSNP policy is upheld by teachers giving pool passes to attending students, which are then presented to the pool manager after school. In this community, a pool pass can be gained even if the student did not attend school for the whole day (i.e. only came after lunch). As well as the NSNP policy, children who attend school for five days a week go into a draw, with four students weekly receiving a \$10 voucher to the local shop. Children are also enticed to attend school to be eligible to go on class excursions.

COMMUNITY THREE

Community 3 is located in the Kimberley. It has a large population that has undergone extensive growth over the last decade, fuelled especially by the development of smaller Aboriginal communities in its immediate vicinity. A single school caters for 250 students, with over half being in high school, while smaller primary schools operate in the nearby vicinity.

As a common stop for tourists travelling through the Kimberley, this community is well serviced with a number of shops, a hospital, aged care facility, primary, high school and adult educational facilities, visitor centre and additional facilities. Different health services focus on disease prevention and health promotion, initiatives decided upon by local residents. A number of non-governmental and governmental organisations operate to improve employment, health and additional community needs.

This pool is also utilised by neighbouring communities for swimming and water safety lessons during the warmer months and they also have access to it for school functions, swimming carnivals and fun day swims. The partner of the pool manager oversees lifeguarding and swimming lesson responsibilities, assisting where required.

4

Study Aims and Objectives

Identifying a need to improve knowledge of the social benefits associated with having swimming pool facilities in remote Aboriginal communities and the usefulness of the No School, No Pool (NSNP) policy, this study gathered data and feedback from community members of three WA Aboriginal communities with RLSSWA managed swimming pool facilities on the effectiveness of the RASP program. Specifically, the study explored community perceptions of the swimming pools and barriers to pool use as well as the effectiveness of using pool access as a reward for school attendance. This research was conducted with the purpose of better understanding the key drivers and barriers to participation at the swimming pool facilities, while collating data to make improvements to the RASP program utilising the viewpoints of community members. We aimed to address the following four key research questions:

- How does having a swimming pool impact on the wellbeing (health and social) of remote Aboriginal communities?
- What barriers exist to pool use across all groups in the community and how can they be addressed?
- Does the school-pool reward policy and the use of the pool by the school help children and young people to overcome barriers to school attendance?
- Do children and young people who often miss school still make use of the swimming pool and derive benefits from it?



Yarning interviews were conducted with parents, school staff, community support workers and general members of the community. Student school attendance data was also linked with individual swimming pool usage. A novel method utilised was Photovoice (photography activities) with school students to explore their own viewpoints about the RASP program. Ethical approval to complete this research was granted by the WA Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC) and the WA Department of Education.

5 Methods

A mixed methods study design was employed for this project, utilising qualitative and quantitative modes of data collection and analysis. This allowed for the collection of a broad range of information relating to community perceptions of the pools, utilisation rates and the influence of the NSNP policy.

QUALITATIVE METHODS

Photovoice and 'yarning' were selected as both are considered culturally appropriate methods for conducting research with Aboriginal people, while allowing participants to be actively involved in both the collection and implementation of research outcomes. Photovoice participants represent issues or views in their community by taking photographs and detailing the stories or narratives behind them.¹³ Photovoice is increasingly being used when conducting research with marginalised groups,¹⁴ including with Aboriginal young people.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Yarning refers to the Aboriginal way of having a conversation through the respectful sharing of ideas and stories and has been shown to be a useful research tool in this group.^{18,19} Qualitatively, yarning is simply an interview about a particular issue conducted with one or more respondents and a data collector.

PHOTOVOICE

In November and December 2014, Photovoice activities were conducted with students in each community. School principals were invited to nominate which classes they would like to participate, with four high school and three primary school classes selected in total across the three communities.

The Photovoice activities were designed and delivered in close partnership with the participating teachers and included introductory and photo taking lessons facilitated by the teacher and a discussion workshop run by the research team.

The content covered in the introductory lessons included the purpose of the project, how photos can be used to convey meaning, instructions on how to use the cameras, and how to respect privacy and seek permission to take photographs. During the photo taking lessons, students were asked to take photos of things that they liked, found interesting or did not like about the swimming pool and to write captions explaining their three to five favourite photos. Researchers visited the communities to run a discussion workshop with each class where the narratives behind the photos and opinions of the school-pool reward policy were explored. Not all participating students had the opportunity to take photographs so these students either created drawings or selected photos taken by other students to write captions for. Students also completed written worksheets during this session depending on their age, literacy levels and collection of photos (Appendices One, Two and Three).



Parental and student consent for data to be used in the research was obtained for 49 students who ranged in age from 8 to 16 years old with 55% of participants from high school classes. After initial approval for involvement in the study was provided by the relevant Principal, informed, written consent for students to participate was obtained from parents and guardians in a three stage process:

1. School staff provided primary caregivers with project information sheets and collected their written consent for students to participate in Photovoice and for attendance data to be collected.
2. After photo taking had been done and prior to the in-class discussion workshop, RLSSWA researchers approached primary caregivers for permission to use, display and publish the photographs. Permission was sought for both the photographer and any person pictured in the photos.
3. At the beginning of the photo discussion workshop facilitated by RLSSWA, students were given verbal information in appropriate language and were asked to provide signed consent.

After students had selected three to five photographs and consent was obtained, a total of 109 photographs and 40 drawings were included in the research analysis. This summary can be seen in Table 1. After data collection was completed an exhibition of the students' work was held at each swimming pool and a Photobook was presented to each school.

YARNING

Individual and group yarning was conducted with community members and stakeholders identified by the pool managers including police, health, school and other key organisations. The yarning sessions were conducted with one of three RLSSWA researchers and either with individual participants or in groups of two to four.

Bessarab and Ng'andu^{18, 19} provide much practical advice on yarning and the approach used in this study was closely guided by this. The yarning facilitators followed a flexible question guide (Appendix Four) that aimed to promote a relaxed and open conversation directed largely by the participants. Written, informed consent was obtained from each participant and their permission was sought to audio record the session. Through yarning, participants shared their thoughts and experiences of the swimming pool and its programs and explored solutions to any perceived issues. Feedback was also gathered on the appropriateness and effectiveness of using pool access as a reward for school attendance. At the end of the yarning interview participants were asked to identify other community members who could be invited to participate utilising a snowball method of sampling²⁰ to increase response rates.

A total of 27 yarning interviews were completed and 40 community members participated. A mix of both male and female and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people participated and a diverse range of roles within the community were represented (Table 2). Many of these participants also had children or grandchildren living in the community.

Table 1: Summary of Photovoice participants

	Number of classes	Number of students	Number of photographs
Community 1	2 (high school)	16	25
Community 2	2 (primary school) 1 (high school)	21	47
Community 3	1 (primary school) 1 (high school)	12	37
TOTAL	7 (3 x primary school, 4 x high school classes)	49	109

Table 2: Summary of yarning participants

	Number of participants	Types of people who participated
Community 1	16	School staff (Principal, Teacher, Administrator, Attendance officer), Health staff (Nurse), Police officer, Community staff (Services manager and Youth officer), Pool employee, Parents
Community 2	11	School staff (Principal, Teacher, Administrator, Education Assistant), Health staff (Doctor, Nurse), Police officer, Community staff (CEO, Employment), Department for Child Protection, Parents
Community 3	13	School staff (Principal, Teacher, Education Assistant), Health staff (Nurse, Health Promotion Officer), Police officer, Community staff (Youth organisation), Young adults, Parents
TOTAL	40	

DATA ANALYSIS

The yarning transcripts and the written Photovoice data (including caption and worksheet answers) were coded manually by two researchers for emerging categories and key themes and thematic analysis²¹ was conducted based on these codes. The audio and video recordings of the Photovoice research workshops were not able to be transcribed due to their poor quality. Some content analysis was used to summarise the visual work from the students.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Daily school and swimming pool attendance data was collected for each individual student with consent to participate in the study for the 2014-15 season (September 2014 to May 2015). A list of these students was provided to the relevant pool manager, who recorded which students attended the swimming pool on which days. Days on which the pool opened varied across each community during this time due to school holidays, community events and unexpected closures, as did the applicability of the school-pool policy (days both the school and pool were open). This can be seen in Table 3.

A unique de-identified code was generated for each student's name and the school and pool data was linked. Through this method, the linked data was coded to detail 47 potential possibilities of both school and/or pool attendance for each child across the given days of analysis. The percentages of each possibility were calculated in IBM SPSS Statistics²² for the days the school-pool policy applied and across the season as a whole and the means for each possibility calculated among the sample. Additional analyses were undertaken to determine variability across age, gender and community to determine if these factors influenced pool use. The following topics were explored using this data.

- Average weekly pool use by children.
- The relationship (if any) between school attendance and pool use.
- If the pool is utilised more on non-school days than school days.
- How well the NSNP policy is upheld.
- Which groups utilise the pool more.

Table 3: Participation of students, length of pool season and applicability of NSNP policy

	Number of students tracked	Days of pool season*	School-pool policy applied
Community 1	16	223	80
Community 2	21	225	80
Community 3	11	229	89
TOTAL	48		

* Inclusive of days in which the pool was closed during this period

6

Summary of Qualitative Results

The results of the yarning with adults and Photovoice activities with students from all three communities have been combined and presented together. Where there were themes or issues specific to only one community these have been identified.

APPROPRIATENESS OF THE SWIMMING POOLS AND THEIR PROGRAMS

VENUE

Participants in all communities were overwhelmingly positive about the swimming pool facilities, often referring to them as being good quality and well maintained. In particular they were described as being very clean, safe, fun, well-resourced with play equipment and aesthetically pleasing places that are enjoyable to spend time at. However several students and one adult from a community where the swimming pool is more than 10 years old did identify minor maintenance issues such as broken pipes.

Most participants spoke about the pool as being a place to cool off in a very hot climate.

“Obviously it is hot, and you gotta go for a swim but you have a bit of greenery here and you can get something from the shop, it’s keeping them cool... it is that safe environment for kids and just a pleasant place on the eyes... the pool is a nice place to be, there is shade where you can sit down. In some of these communities just geography wise there is just dust.” (Nurse)

In their work, students frequently wrote about the swimming pools as being fun and enjoyable places to spend time, especially to cool off in hot weather. Many of the students’ photographs and drawings were of the trees or shade cloth at the swimming pools which were described as being important and a number of students expressed a desire for further shade.

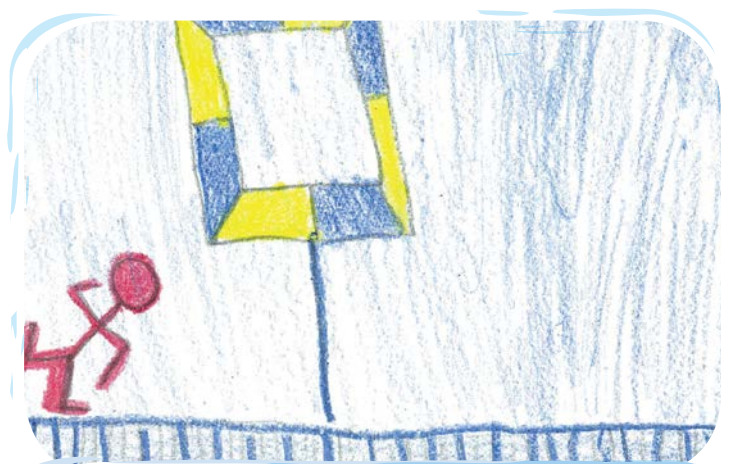
Play equipment such as basketball hoops and inflatable devices featured often in the students’ visual work. This equipment was described as being fun and providing a diverse range of activities. A popular suggestion from students in one high-school class was for the addition of equipment such as diving boards and water slides.



*“I like going swimming when it is hot.”
(Primary school student)*



*"I like the pool for the beautiful water."
(Primary school student)*



*"I like playing on the floating playground."
(Primary school student)*



*[The inflatable is] the thing that's fun...
kids like to play with it at the pool."
(High school student)*

A number of adult participants made suggestions for improvements to the swimming pools which mainly related to making the venues more suitable for social interactions. Suggestions included adding more tables, chairs, trees and shade, building permanent barbeques, expanding the grassed areas and adding playgrounds to make the venue more diverse and family friendly. Several adults and students, primarily from one community, identified the depth and size of the swimming pools as either a current limitation or a suggested improvement.

One participant spoke about how the use of local children in imaging displayed in the centre helped the community to feel ownership over the facility.

"They're [community] kids on those banners there, the local imaging... people look up and say 'that's our kids, that's our pool'." **(Nurse)**

Locally created artwork was also important to students from one community where students had recently completed decorative paintings at the swimming pool. These were often provided as examples of things that they liked about the swimming pool.



"I think [this painting] is awesome! ...The high school girls put a great effort in." **(Primary school student)**



"[The rangers] travel everywhere." This is important to me because "I like the Ranger photos at the pool." **(Primary school student)**

ACCESS

The swimming pools were described by adult participants as inclusive places that are accessible to everyone in the community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Free entry was seen as an important factor in this.

"The fact that it is free makes a huge difference, I came up from the Wheatbelt and a lot of people there were not accessing the pool because it was \$4.00 a person and when you have a family and you are on a restricted income it is not accessible." **(School teacher)**

Four adult participants spoke about the convenient locations of the swimming pools as being within walking distance for most community members particularly in comparison to other swimming locations such as the beach and river.

"Sometimes it's very difficult for people to take their family up to the beach because they don't have any transport... [the swimming pool is] within the community side, they will eventually come and then they will be here probably until the end of the day." **(Swimming Pool Employee)**

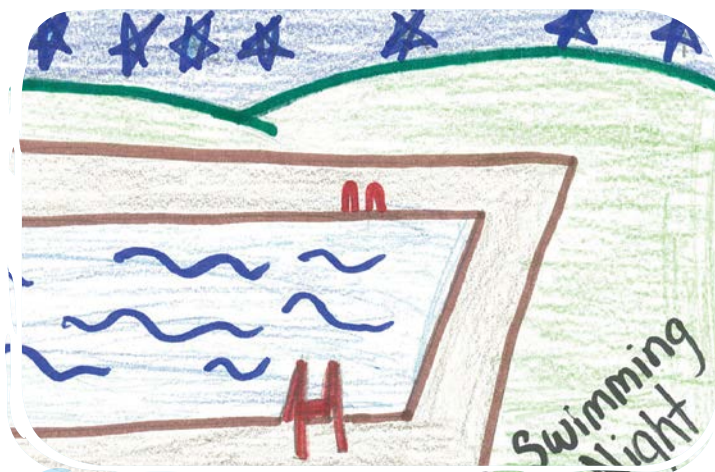
However, two adult participants, both from a community where the swimming pool and school is located at the outer edge of the town, felt that the non-central location was a barrier for some groups including older teenagers who tend to socialise in the centre of town and community youth and employment organisations who would be better engaged at the swimming pool if it was located nearby.

The location of the swimming pool was not discussed by any of the students.

Generally participants spoke about the current opening times of the swimming pools and activities on offer as being convenient, flexible and appropriate for the community and gave examples such as early morning swimming before work, opening late for community movie and swim nights, and afternoon sessions coinciding with the end of the school day.

“Everyone can go down there, different things for different people and [the pool manager is] really flexible... opening earlier, closing early so that she can have a night swim for people and we had some of the discos there in the summertime.” (Social Worker)

“I like this pool because it is always open after school so me and my friends can go for a swim when it’s hot.” (High school Student)



*Something interesting about the pool:
“When we have night swimming.”
(Primary school student)*

When adult participants were asked how the swimming pool could be improved a common response mainly from non-Aboriginal participants was to open the swimming pool all year round. A variety of reasons were given for this suggestion including personal preference for swimming when weather is cooler, capitalizing on the major tourist season, and the potential to involve the local football clubs. One adult participant felt that the swimming pool should be open year round regardless of the number of patrons attending much like the school. Most of the participants however acknowledged the challenges of doing this including that attendance would likely be very low amongst local Aboriginal people in colder months and that heating and additional qualified pool staff would be needed.

While four students also suggested opening the swimming pool on more days of the year, another four students identified cold temperature as being a barrier to attending the swimming pool.



This is a photo of "me in the pool cold ...I don't like being cold." (High school student)

SUPERVISION POLICY FOR CHILDREN UNDER 10 YEARS

A strong theme that emerged from adult participants was the low rates of parent and carer attendance at the swimming pools to supervise children under 10 years of age. This was identified as an issue in each community and participants described this as a barrier for young children wanting to use the swimming pool.

*"I have seen little ones waiting at the gate because there is no-one to take them in."
(Administration Officer, School)*

Adult participants spoke about the culture in the broader community of relaxed attitudes to adult supervision of children as the main barrier to the implementation of the policy. A small number of participants from one community where the pool manager supervises unaccompanied children under 10 years for one hour each day after school to provide these children access to the swimming pool suggested that stricter enforcement, stronger promotion and increased parental responsibility in regard to the policy were needed.

However, several participants also gave positive examples of adult supervision at the swimming pools by parents, particularly younger ones, grandparents and also older siblings. One participant noted that parental supervision is more common at the swimming pool than other community settings such as the river and felt that the rule increased adult participation at the swimming pool as young children encouraged carers to attend with them. Participants were accepting and supportive of the rule and no one suggested it should be removed.

*"[Adults] like to come with their kids, because most of the kids really need to be supervised, especially the youngest ones."
(Swimming Pool Employee)*

Four high school students expressed concern for young children getting into trouble in the water or wrote about the need to supervise young children at the swimming pool.

*"I do not like when little kids go into the deep."
(High School Student)*

*"At the pool we learn how to listen to the pool manager when she/he tells us to mind our little ones so that they don't drown."
(High School Student)*

POOL MANAGER

While the swimming pool managers were pictured in some of the students' drawings and photographs, very few comments were provided therefore the results in this section relate almost entirely to adult participants.

Overall participants from each community gave very positive feedback on the current pool managers in their community and were supportive of their approaches to management of the swimming pool and its programs.

Participants spoke about the pool managers as being approachable and accommodating, responsive to community needs and expectations, operating in culturally sensitive ways and fostering welcoming and inclusive environments. One student stated that 'the kind managers' were one of the things they liked about the swimming pool.

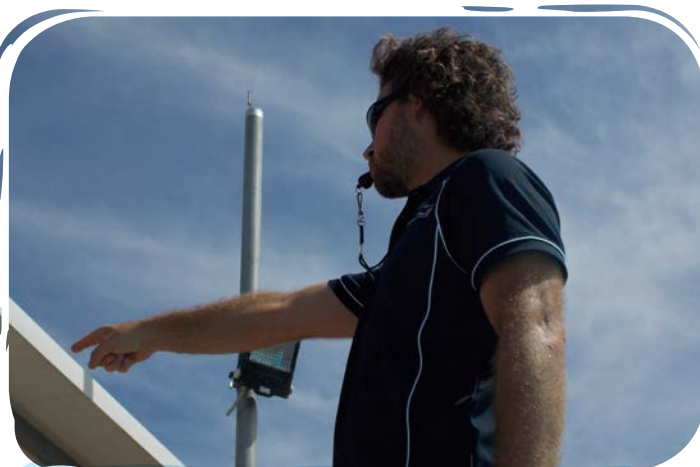
"Sitting on that bench there is what is good about this pool as well. The fact that a black fella and a white kid can sit down... enjoying each other's company, having a chat and a swim and just sharing some time together. And that's to do with the management and I think [they] are doing a fabulous job."
(Youth Organisation)

"A few times I've gone there and [the pool manager has] been cooking up veggie patties with the kids and they seem to enjoy that. When it's too cold she is doing colouring with them and they just hang out there and they're just happy to have somewhere to go so I think she does a really good job."
(Police Officer)

"[The pool managers] have done a great job in encouraging everyone to be involved."
(School Teacher)

A strong theme that emerged from participants was that having a positive and strong relationship between the pool manager and the children, adults and organisations within the community was important for the success of the swimming pool. The pool managers were described by participants as having good relationships with the local children; knowing them well and making them feel comfortable to attend the swimming pool. Several participants also provided examples of the pool manager working with local organisations to deliver programs and events at the swimming pools.

"[The pool manager] is doing a really good job. She is working in with the school, even with the community. And because...they have sort of shut down the rec centre so they don't have the discos and stuff there. [The pool manager] is allowing them to have pool discos there."
(Administration Officer, School)



This is a photo of "[the pool manager] trying to act bossy... it's really funny when he does this... [he] knows how to make us laugh."
(High school student)



Pool manager at the canteen.
(Primary school student)

One participant noted the extent to which the current pool manager and their family had become accepted community members and the positive impact this had for the swimming pool.

"[The pool manager]... is a part and parcel of the town, the kids know him, the kids respect [the Pool managers]...I think they're family and the kids see [them] and their two kids. I myself and the community see that as a bonus, as a plus and [their children] are always here and they are part of the extended family in [the community] which makes a big difference as well." (Nurse)

A participant in one community where the pool manager had only been employed for three months felt however that relationships between the pool manager and community members, particularly with local Aboriginal people, could be further strengthened and would increase participation at the swimming pool. He acknowledged though that these relationships take time to develop and are a long term investment.

Generally, participants expressed their support for the manner in which the pool managers enforced swimming pool rules and managed inappropriate behaviour and described them as having a firm but balanced and personal approach.

"[The pool manager] is awesome, she suits the job, she is great with the kids, she is not a pushover but she is never harsh, she has a well-balanced level of how to deal with the kids ...she knows all the kids' names, she knows their personalities...she knows their family history, personal situation." (Employment Organisation)

"You have to get to know people. Like what [the pool manager] is doing now she doesn't go and tell the kids off for things straight away...she walks over and says to them just settle down a bit....she doesn't just sit in that office part there all the time and that's where she stays, she goes and walks around and talks with the kids." (Administration Officer, School)



This is a photo of [pool manager] taking a slam dunk into the water.

However participants from one community described how some parents did not approve of measures taken by the pool manager such as banning misbehaving children or closing the swimming pool for short periods and that the pool manager had experienced some angry responses.

In contrast to the current pool managers, four participants also spoke about their experiences of past pool managers who had taken authoritarian approaches to management and how this had discouraged attendance at the swimming pool. One participant suggested that new pool managers should undertake training that fully prepares them for working in a remote Aboriginal community setting and provides them with the skills to develop positive relationships with the local people.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Employment and training at the swimming pools was a common discussion point for adult participants but was not raised by students.

A number of adult participants spoke about the employment opportunities at their local swimming pool and noted current or recent examples of local Aboriginal people working and volunteering at the venues. Three participants felt that increasing the number of local Aboriginal people employed at the swimming pools would be beneficial. One of these participants explained that employment of Aboriginal locals at the swimming pool would improve the appropriateness of the programs and would promote community participation.

"...having Indigenous people employed at the pool at any kind of level, it might be 2 hours a day. It would be a big resource for the kids here... the local people have all the contacts, they are probably related to most of the people here and any of those kind of questions on how to engage or how to further participation... they will have the insight on how to make that happen." **(Nurse)**

Several participants also acknowledged that the current pool managers were already working full time hours and any additional programming or extension of opening hours would require more trained staff to be employed.

"[The pool managers] open the pool for a lot more hours than they get paid for I am sure and that is fantastic. But it would be great to have a pool of qualified local people who could work under these guys, so that the pool does not have to shut on a Monday...they can have their Friday night off and someone, say an Aboriginal person with a pool manager certificate, can be here to keep the pool open, so the hours can be extended." **(Youth Organisation)**

Two participants from one community described the potential for the swimming pools to provide both aquatic industry specific training to young people as well as broader skills that can be applied to any job.

"[The pool manager's] desire to engage and try to employ Indigenous people here has been really good. I would love to see this pool as a training centre for Indigenous guys ... and go 'right let's stay here and do a CERT 1, 2 or 3 that has a bronze or a pool manager or lifeguard certificate' or whatever they want to do and use this place as the base to do it." **(Youth Organisation)**

"We had a kid got into lifeguarding last year and he enjoyed it and since got an apprenticeship as a mechanic but given the right kids...that can get here okay...and don't need to rely on transport, it could be really valuable as a career path. You might not necessarily want a job in sport and rec but the experiences so [inaudible] doing leadership all those life skills that you get, you can use in any job." **(School Teacher)**

While participants were enthusiastic about the employment and training opportunities at the swimming pools they also acknowledged that many barriers exist to local employment and participation in training both at the swimming pool and in the community generally. Participants identified challenges including; limited access to transport, family and cultural pressures, lack of confidence, history of lack of local employment opportunities and high achieving students leaving the communities to complete their studies.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

ADULTS

The swimming pools appear to be highly valued resources by community members with all adult participants describing them as being good for their communities. Generally, adult participants spoke about the swimming pools as being open to and utilised by, although to varying degrees, all groups within the communities.

"You see just about everyone there at one point or another." (Social Worker)

"Well it is pretty much open for everyone isn't it? I don't see an issue there. Kids obviously love it because they can just run amok and swim, splash and play. But when I have been in there I am always bumping into someone doing laps, so people are using it for fitness other than just fun as well." (Health Promotion Officer)

In contrast to this however, when adult participants were asked if they personally used the swimming pool or to identify less frequent users it emerged that adult participation was comparatively low. While a number of adult participants reported regularly swimming at the pool, those who did not primarily spoke about having limited time and energy as a result of work commitments as their main barrier. Participants felt that some adults may not attend because of self-consciousness about appearance or poor swimming ability, preferences for other recreational activities, being uncomfortable interacting with the opposite gender and seeing the swimming pool as a place for children where adult activities would be limited.

While a common reason given for adult attendance at the swimming pools was to accompany and supervise young children a number of participants also noted the opposite that adults often did not attend with their children.

"I have seen a lot of changes [since the swimming pool opened] and it's very good and even the kids go back to their parents and say 'oh we have to go back to the pool later Mum, you take me' ... They like it and it is safer too." (Education Assistant)

Early morning lap swimming was identified as a popular program by participants but primarily for non-Aboriginal service providers such as school teachers and nurses.

Each swimming pool runs a female only aqua aerobics class and these programs were noted by participants as being appropriate and popular. A number of female participants reported attending these sessions. These female only classes were described by participants as being successful because they are social, provide time away from children and culturally, the local Aboriginal woman do not feel comfortable participating in such activities in front of men.

"Community [aqua aerobics class is] on Wednesday nights, the ladies only. Because if you have men there you won't get the women coming [laughs]." (Administration Officer, School)

Participants often identified adult men as being infrequent users of the swimming pools although did not appear to have a clear understanding of the reasons behind this and suggested cultural barriers in regards to interacting with women and children, self-consciousness and general lack of interest.

"The men would probably be the only group that you don't see there very often but I'm not sure if that's through any fault of the pool... I'm not sure if there's a cultural barrier there or if the men just aren't interested." (Social Worker)

One participant explained how an employer had been successful at encouraging his male staff to attend the swimming pool together after work but this had only lasted a few months. In another community, one participant mentioned that an adult only swimming night was previously trialled however few or no men had attended. The participant also noted that there was interest from local men in participating in a male only exercise class however the female pool manager did not feel comfortable with running this.

CHILDREN

Students, both primary and high school, clearly value the swimming pools in their communities as they frequently referred to them as fun, good and nice places to be. Several students wrote about missing the swimming pool or not liking when it was closed or when they were unable to attend. Cooling off on a hot day, participating in sport, playing with equipment and socialising with friends and family were the key things that students noted enjoying at the swimming pools. Students reported looking for other ways to cool down when the swimming pools were closed including spraying themselves with a hose or swimming at the creek.

"It is good at the pool...the water is nice and cold. I like myself at the pool because it is fun." (Primary school student)



This is a photo of "a happy boy at the pool smiling... this photo makes me happy and I want other people to be happy and have fun." (High school student)



"I don't like when [the pool manager] closes the pool." (Primary school student)

Adult participants identified children, particularly primary school aged, as the most frequent users of the swimming pools. They described children as valuing the swimming pools highly as something fun to do in a hot location that has few other options for entertainment.

"All the kids love the pool and they are ready to go, they just come, they love the pool."
(Swimming Pool Employee)

"[My children] would go every day if I let them... obviously there's not a lot to do here, in the community."
(Administration Officer, School)

One adult participant illustrated the extent to which local children value the swimming pool by describing how vandals were identified by peers so that the swimming pool could be reopened. The Swim for Fruit program and events such as discos, movie nights and night swims were seen as being popular amongst this young group. Some barriers to attendance for this group noted by adult participants were the NSNP policy, the supervision rule for children under 10 years and preference for swimming at other locations such as the beach and river.

High school aged children were identified by adult participants as being less frequent users compared with younger children. The main reasons suggested for this was that preferences change with age and local teenagers probably prioritise other activities and possibly see the swimming pool as 'uncool' because it is a place for younger children to play.

"It's preference... and whether they want to hang around where lots of little kids are... I think it is perceived as a young kids place."
(Youth Organisation)

However several adult participants also described positive examples of teenager participation at the swimming pool for example during school lessons, at aqua aerobics classes, and attendance at youth events such as movie nights. Furthermore the high school students themselves appeared to value access and participation at the swimming pools highly and no strong themes emerged around barriers to attendance in this group.

"You can go to the pool and have a good time with your friends." **(High school student)**



This is a photo of "me cooling down in the pool... I like to relax beside the swimming pool, it's cool and a great place to be...I love being in the pool." **(High school student)**

"I like [swimming and playing games at the swimming pool] because it's fun and [I] love to enjoy my time at the pool."
(High school student)

Adult participants spoke about targeted methods to better engage older children which included holding more aquatic sports competitions and creating dedicated spaces at the swimming pool for these groups to own and socialise within.

Competitive and organised sport as well as socialising with friends were both frequently described by high school participants as enjoyable things to do at the swimming pools.

“We are having lots of fun [at the swimming pool].” This is important to me because “I can spend time with my friends and have swimming races.” (High school student)

“I like to play basketball at the pool and have a little competition with the boys and swim around to look [at] everyone having a good time.” (High school student)



I took a photo of this because “it was fun under water and it has [my school] logo... I had fun with friends and family.” (High school student)

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The local schools and other community organisations were also identified as major users of the swimming pools to run their programs and hold social events.

Participants noted many school activities run at the swimming pools including swimming carnivals, swimming and water safety lessons, physical and outdoor education classes, additional rewards for school attendance, supervised after-school program for students under 10 years and school fun days. Participation in swimming and water safety lessons was mentioned frequently by students. Two participants mentioned that the close location of the swimming pool to the school facilitated this high level of use by the school.

Staff from one school described how a weekly, whole-of-school, free-play session at the swimming pool allowed the school to reconnect as a community and was used by school teachers to encourage good behaviour at school; bad behaviour by students resulted in reduced time in the swimming pool. Another teacher at this school explained that she holds parent barbeques at the swimming pool at the beginning of each year as a way for parents to get to know each other in a non-threatening setting.

“We had our Kindy parents barbeque there because it is a nice comfortable place for everyone to meet for the first time, it offers a bit of community meeting place... it is familiar to everyone, everybody goes to the pool, everybody is happy there so...it was on mutual territory and wasn't in anyone's house and it was not at the school so it was really good.” (School Teacher)

Adult participants also gave examples of the swimming pool being utilised by other community organisations such as services for youth, elderly care services, day-cares, health services and the Police to run their programs and events.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY BENEFITS

HYGIENE AND INFECTION

The cleansing nature of the swimming pool emerged as the strongest theme amongst adult participants in regards to physical health benefits. Generally, children were described by adults as being cleaner and having better overall hygiene as a result of swimming in the pools. One participant also felt the swimming pool policy of requiring patrons to shower before entering the water educated children about the need for good hygiene habits.

“Like showering and that sort of stuff isn’t pushed so much [in the community], I think the pool seems to encourage that. When it’s open the kids don’t seem to get as much issues...to do with skin sores and stuff. The overall hygiene is probably a bit better when they are able to jump into some chlorinated water and kill off some bugs.”
(Health Promotion Officer)

Several students showed awareness of the swimming pools’ requirement to shower before swimming and most were supportive of it. Five students wrote about the outdoor showers as something they liked to do at the swimming pool.

The swimming pools were noted to be good for nose, ear, eye and/or skin health by several adult participants who often shared their personal observations of reduced prevalence and severity.

“Ears, eyes, noses, sores. Clear up rate. Much better than in the communities with no pool, chlorine in your ears kills bugs... whenever there is a pool you find a lot less otitis external ... or ‘glue ear’... Sores, it clears up sores so it’s good.”
(Nurse)



“You need to use the showers so you can swim...the showers are important for hygiene while in the water swimming...using showers are good for keeping the pool and everyone clean.”
(High school student)



This is a photo of “me having a shower before I swim... I like showers in the sun... people need to have a shower before they swim.”
(Primary school student)

“It’s totally beneficial, to their health. Because when the pool is shut, it’s just awful. [Inaudible] scabies and head lice...In the office we’re always doing medicals, when the pool is here it’s like hardly do anything.”
(Administration Officer, School)

"I notice the kids in [the community] during pool weather are heaps cleaner and we don't get as many reports for sores... as we usually do. Whereas the other communities [without swimming pools] it's pretty consistent around getting the sores and the cleanliness issues...."
(Social Worker)

Health professionals personally reported or were identified by others as promoting swimming in the pool as being good for health and particularly for cleaning and clearing up sores. Three adult participants spoke about the complex factors beyond swimming pool use that contribute to skin health for example seasonal influences, overcrowded living conditions and limited access to daily washing.

SAFE AND CLEAN RECREATION

More generally, participants described the swimming pools as delivering a safe and health promoting environment for the community. The swimming pools are seen as providing community members with access to a clean and safe place to swim. In contrast to the swimming pools, adult participants noted the dangers of natural swimming locations such as venomous jellyfish, lack of supervision, rough conditions and contamination with bacteria or other organisms. The role of swimming pools as an alternative swimming location to prevent sickness and injury was a strong theme amongst adult participants.

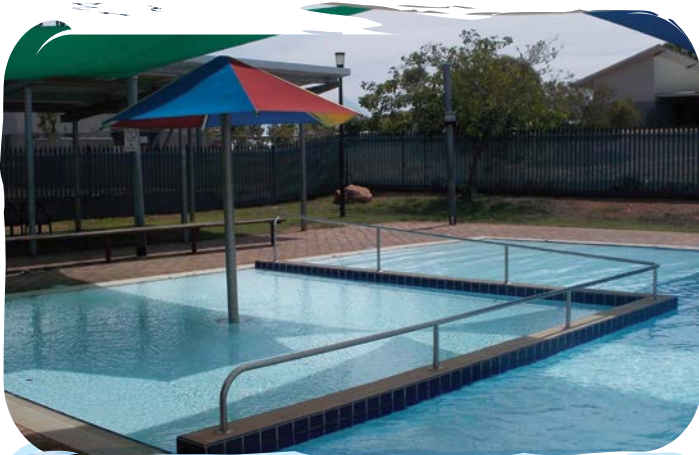
"I reckon the swimming pool is very good, it's very helpful. And we need that... Better than going down to the river where it's still water because they are getting sick down there... But ... when you have a swimming pool then they can go there and even the parents can take the kids there, they can relax... it's much better than being down on the still water because you hear a lot of stories saying 'oh that kid got sick'... You want water where kids can go enjoy the water when it is running." **(Education Assistant)**

[The swimming pool water] is important to me because "it is nice and clean."
(Primary school student)

While students did not contrast the swimming pools to other locations they did describe them as safe places by referring to things such as floating devices, ladders, shallow baby pools and being able to play basketball into the water without getting hurt. Several high school students took photographs or drew pictures of the safety signage and rules at the swimming pool such as No Diving, No Pushing and No Fighting. Most of the students were very supportive of these rules and noted that injuries could occur if the rules were not followed. One student stated that he did not like the signs telling him what to do but went on to explain that they were important because they could prevent injury.



This is a photo of a sign of what you should not do in the pool...I don't like when it tells you everything about the pool rules..." This is important to me because "you could cause injury or death." **(High school student)**



This is a photo of “a baby pool...it’s a safe place for the babies to swim.” This is important to me because “I have little cousins that can be safe.” (High school student)

“These kids are really good swimmers for kids from the desert.” (School Principal)

“A lot of the kids here know how to swim now since it has been opened...staff working there have been teaching them how to swim... it’s really good.” (Nurse)

“We used to take our kids to swimming lessons even though the pool was in [a nearby community], but we found that when we had our swimming carnival we then had enough kids who were good enough to compete in the local comp and we actually won.” (School Principal)

“It has been proven that the swimming lessons have helped when you see them in their carnivals and they’ve improved and they are getting faster and the strokes are better.” (School Teacher)



“[Pushing is] dangerous and if you slip when someone pushes you, you could bang your head and you could bleed... “I want people to be safe in the pool.” (High school student)

However several participants expressed concerns about local children’s ability to swim safely at natural locations such as rivers and creeks that were often dangerous and unsupervised and these participants spoke about the importance of children learning to swim because of the popularity of these natural waterways. Swimming at these types of locations was also mentioned often by students.

LEARN TO SWIM

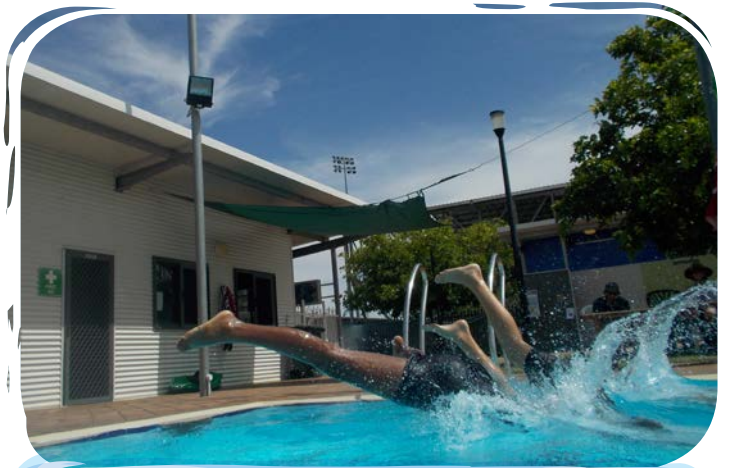
A common theme that emerged from adult participants was that the swimming and water safety lessons provided by the pools were effective at teaching local children how to swim. The school principals in particular felt that learning to swim was important and two referred to swimming as being a part of the school curriculum.

“There’s a lot of water around here for 2, 3 months of the year and a lot of the young kids just wander around by themselves. But I have been at the pool and seen kids this big come up to the edge of the pool and I’m like ‘oh be careful’ but they jump in and they’re just straight across the pool [laughs]. They’re just natural born swimmers so to have swimming lessons to just hone their skills is pretty good.” (Employment Organisation)

“Growing up in WA I just thought that every child knew how to swim and that every child did swimming lessons as part of their schooling. And I got up here [before the swimming pool was built] and I had an upper primary class and I took them to the river and they were extremely confident in the water but very few of them would have been able to swim to save themselves and they did not have a lot of water safety strategies either. So that really scared me actually and I am just so pleased that we have a pool for the kids to have regular swimming lessons and learn how to enter the water safely, big kids are often taking the little kids to the river so for them to know some safety procedures and some survival skills so I think it is so important for the community.” (School Teacher)

However one participant felt that the swimming ability of the children in her community would be even more improved if swimming and water safety lessons were run in intensive blocks outside of school hours rather than only on one school day per week as part of their sport class.

Swimming and particularly lifesaving education delivered by the swimming pools was discussed frequently by the students. Students valued learning rescue and first aid skills so that they could help others if they were injured or in trouble. One student saw swimming and water safety lessons as important because they also swim at the river.



“This photo is interesting because there is swimming lessons at the pool. Swimming lessons are important because we have the river.” (High school Student)



This is a photo of “me doing frog kick. We were doing swimming lessons. I liked doing swimming lessons every day.” (Primary school student)

“People/kids/teenagers can learn to do other things like to rescue kids when they drowned under the water or when they even slide or trip, also bang their heads.” (High school student)

"It is important to learn about how to save my family and friends, I like learning about life saving, I like people learning about saving someone." (Primary school student)

"I like every Wednesday we do swimming lesson." (High school student)

Two adult participants from one community also described adult community members as having poor swimming ability and that the weekly adult swimming lesson class attracted very few participants. One of these participants thought that embarrassment at not learning how to swim as a child was probably the main reason for the low participation.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

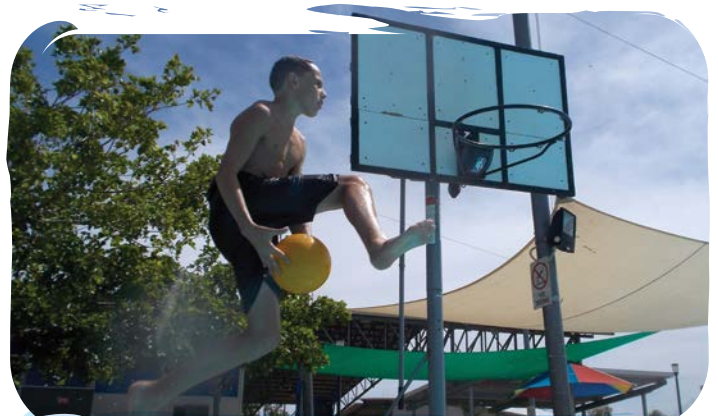
The majority of participants identified physical activity and fitness benefits provided by the swimming pool through both formal and informal activities.

The most common fitness activities adult participants reported participating in were lap swimming and women's aqua aerobics. The latter in particular was seen as being effective at encouraging female community members to participate in exercise and was strongly supported by participants.

"I saw ladies in the pool that I'd never seen in the pool before so it was really good to encourage them to do [aqua aerobics] and they were encouraging the more teenage girls to come along and do that too. I mean the teenage girls go in the pool but they were actually focused on doing exercise at the classes so I was impressed by that." (Police Officer)

"I have heard a few of the older ladies have said 'oh I've been in the swimming pool swimming and when I got out and got home I feel much better now that I can get up and do my home activities' because of the exercise they had at the pool." (Nurse)

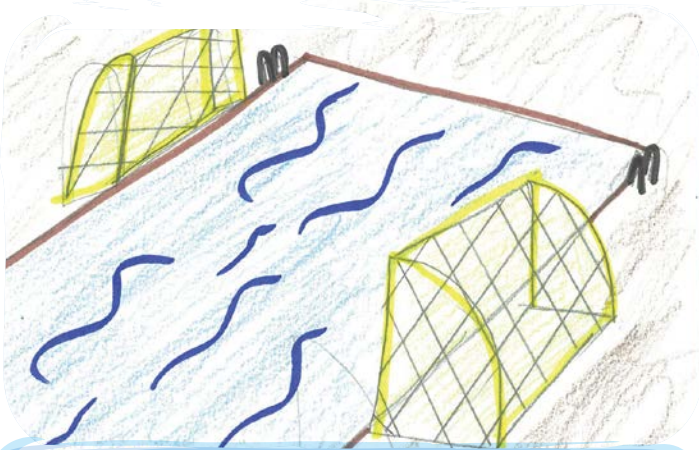
The majority of students either took photographs of, drew pictures of or wrote about participating in active play or sport at the swimming pool. The most common types of activities were swimming and playing in the water, playing on inflatable play equipment, or participating in more competitive or organised activities such as basketball, volleyball, water polo and lap swimming races. Four students explained that these opportunities for physical activity were important to them to keep healthy, fit or active. The students wrote about participating in active play or sport at the swimming pool very positively and it was commonly described as something students liked about the swimming pool. When students were asked what they liked to do when the swimming pool was closed, responses included active pastimes such as fishing and swimming in natural waterways however several students reported watching TV or playing on the computer suggesting the swimming pool does encourage participation in physical activity.



"Basketball is a big sport in [our community] and everyone likes playing basketball after a nice swim...playing sport is something I like and [it] will keep you healthy." (High school student)

*"You can play basketball at the pool." This is important to me because "you get active."
(High school student)*

*"I like swimming lesson because it keeps us fit."
(High school student)*



*"I like playing water polo."
(Primary school student)*



*"The inflatable is fun to play on. It is fun to walk on, slide on and more then to do."
(High school student)*

The physical activity benefits for children also emerged as a strong theme amongst the adult participants. One participant, a school principal, saw physical activity at the swimming pool as particularly beneficial for improving strength and respiratory health in children with a physical disability.

*"[Children] are very active in the pool...so it does provide them with a source of physical activity, I mean they're in there for hours. So I think there is a benefit from that... they really work it when they're in the pool so that's good."
(Doctor)*

FOOD AND NUTRITION

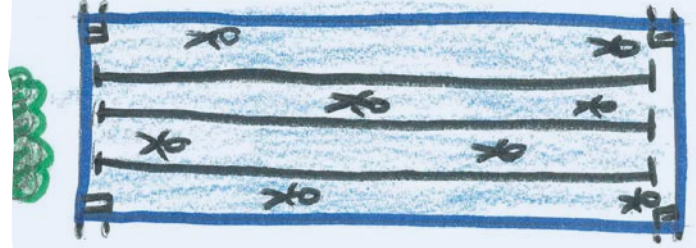
The role of the swimming pools in providing access to food and promoting healthy diets was also a common theme. A number of adult participants identified the canteen snacks, free community barbecues, and the Swim for Fruit programs (fruit as reward for swimming laps) as well as a cooking program provided at one swimming pool as a significant source of food in the communities particularly for children. One participant showed support for the restrictions on sugary drinks sold at the pool canteen.

*"Glad [the pool manager's] not doing cans, she's trying to promote...more healthy living."
(Community Services Manager)*

Another participant highlighted the impact a recent school holiday cooking program at one of the swimming pools had on the children.

"[The pool manager] did a kids feeding kids [program]... and quite a few of the kids really enjoyed it...I heard some saying to mum 'oh mum why don't we cook like this at home'... so it's really the trickle up effect I suppose, the kids teaching the parents." **(Social Worker)**

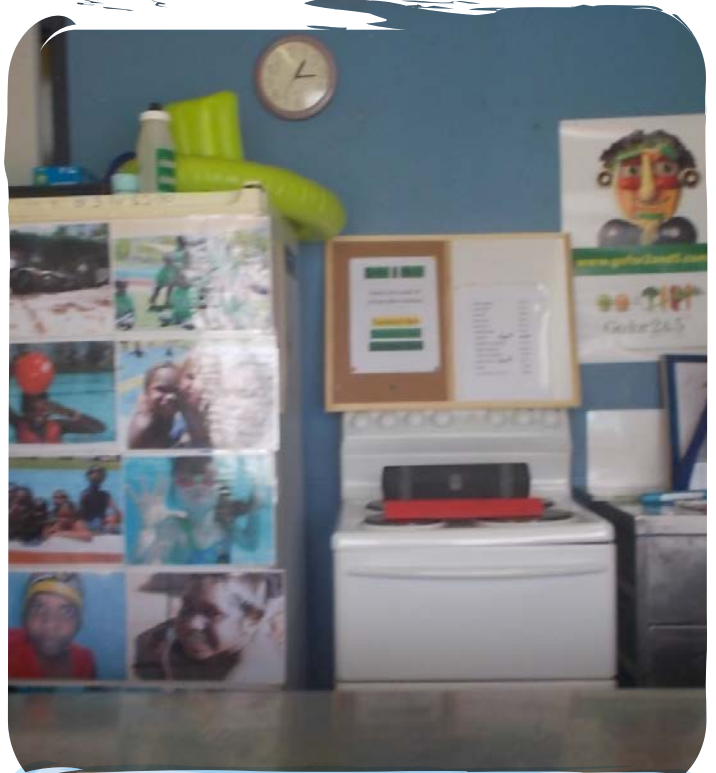
The swimming pool canteens featured frequently in the students' work. Three primary school students described liking being able to buy snacks from the canteen at the swimming pool. When asked what they would change if they managed the swimming pool, five high school students made suggestions to improve the type and variety of food sold at the canteen, for example hot food. One student noted that they like participating in the Swim for Fruit program.



I like doing laps for fruit."
(Primary School Student)



This is a photo of "me near the canteen at the pool...I like buying cool drinks, chips and cookies...I can buy anything for the day." **(Primary School Student)**



This is a photo of "[the pool manager's] shop... it is good...I can buy something."
(Primary school student)

BENEFITS FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

COMMUNITY COHESION

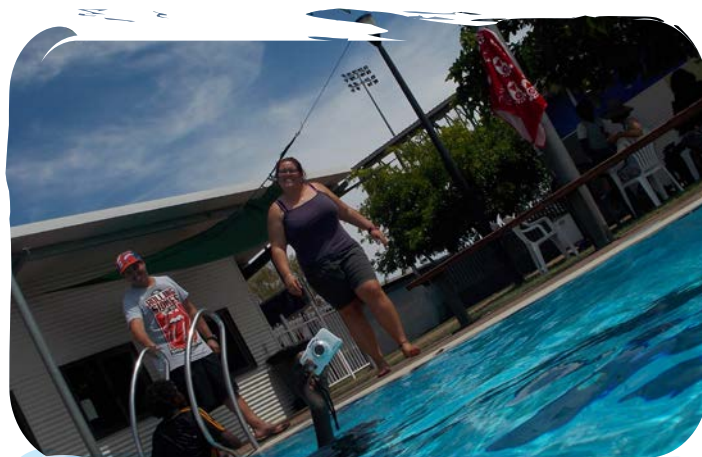
The swimming pools were frequently identified by both adult and student participants as social gathering places where positive community interactions take place. Several adult participants described the swimming pools as being a focal point in the community.

“The swimming pool is like a kitchen in a house. It is where all the activity is, and everything happens, and a meeting place.”
(Community Services Manager)

Adult participants often referred to the swimming pools as places to meet new people, socialise with friends and get to know other community members better, particularly for non-Aboriginal service providers, such as school teachers and police officers to develop relationships with local Aboriginal people.

“You see the women go there with the kids but you don’t ever really see them swimming. They are always there meeting and chatting.”
(Employment Organisation)

“[Aqua aerobics] allows you to get to know [the community women] on a more personal level because obviously that’s what we’re here for.” **(Police officer)**



“It’s interesting seeing teachers at the pool...teachers can have fun at the pool as well.” **(High school student)**

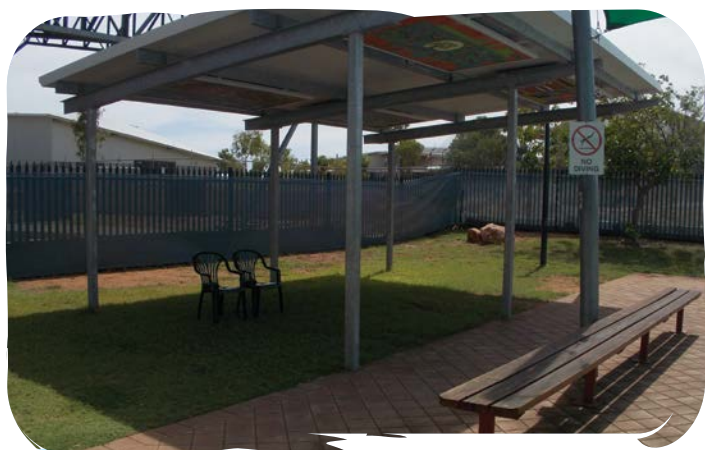
One adult participant felt that the swimming pool, as the community’s primary recreation centre, had a key role to play in bringing the community together.

“Because our sports and rec centres have shut down then the pool has to be it, to bring the whole community together.”
(Community Services Manager)

Many adult participants spoke positively about the social events held at the swimming pools such as community barbecues and suggested improvements often related to improving infrastructure to better facilitate social gatherings, for example by adding more tables and chairs, and holding more community events.

The swimming pools were also described by adults as being family friendly places that are beneficial for families to socialise and foster strong relationships.

“You see a lot of positive imaging happening. Dads interacting with their sons, Mums interacting with their kids and families interacting together inside the pool area. I know you can get that everywhere else and people go bush and get all that stuff but we see it happening all the time down here. I dare say families walk away at the end of the day and say ‘we had a good day at the pool’. People come and when they leave the kids have had a good swim and a snack and it is a good feeling.” (Nurse)



“I like this part of the pool because you can have a BBQ and birthdays with your friends and family.” (High school student)

However, it was also clear that attending the swimming pool was not always a family activity as a number of adult participants identified that some parents often did not attend the swimming pool to supervise their young children.

Adult participants also raised the social and emotional benefits provided to children through attending the swimming pools. The swimming pools were seen as places where children could relax and play with friends and learn to interact with one another in a positive way. One participant noted that the swimming pool provides a much needed break for some children from unpleasant situations at home.

The students themselves described the swimming pools as places to have fun, be happy, laugh, relax and socialise with friends. Four students explained how it is also important to them that others around them experienced these types of benefits.



“We’re swimming in the pool, diving under water, playing in the water... I like to see people feeling happy all the time.” (Primary school student)



"[He] is enjoying himself...it's good to see other kids enjoying themselves."
(High school student)

"People having fun is the best thing for me but when my family [is] having fun [that] is the greatest." **(High school student)**

The importance of social interaction with family and friends at the swimming pools also emerged as a very strong theme amongst both primary and high school students and it appeared to be a key part of what makes attendance at the swimming pool fun. One student explained that he would find the swimming pool boring if he went on his own.

"I like going to the pool with friends so we can race and play basketball together. It's boring going by yourself because you have got no one to play with." **(High school student)**

Students primarily identified interacting with others through sport, general play and at social gatherings at the swimming pool such as barbecues and birthday parties. Six high school students described the swimming pools more generally as places to hang out, spend time and yarn with friends and family. One of these students stated that the swimming pool is a place where new friendships can be formed. However in contrast to this, adult participants generally did not see the swimming pools as social hubs for all children as teenagers in particular were often noted by adult participants as preferring other settings to socialise with friends.

"It makes me feel happy when I'm having fun and spending time at the pool with my family. It's fun and you make new friends."
(High school student)

What things do you miss when the pool is closed? "I miss going to the pool and having a yarn with my friend." **(High school student)**



This is a photo of “my friend and I ...chilling and taking selfies...I love spending time with my friends... [they] are important to me!”
(High school student)

PROMOTING GOOD BEHAVIOUR

A strong theme that emerged from adult participants was that there are limited things for children to do in their communities besides the swimming pools and several examples were given of other recreational programs for youth being shut down in recent years. A number of participants, including the police officers in each community, spoke about this lack of activities for young people leading to boredom and often to anti-social behaviour or crime and that the swimming pool plays a role in preventing this.

“Most of the time when we’re dealing with them, ‘why did you do that’ ‘I was bored’ so [the swimming pool] gives the kids something to do.” **(Police Officer)**

“...[the swimming pool] wasn’t open and it was really difficult because the kids had nothing to do so they started committing crime and breaking into the rec centre, with no school so they were bored beyond compare, they went a bit silly.” **(Police Officer)**

“We are looking at possibly attempting to extend the hours of the pool, because it is seen as one of the things that can occupy youths in town...so the later that’s open the more likely they are to go there and tire themselves out and go home and sleep rather than breaking into places.” **(Police Officer)**

However the police officers also identified the complex reasons for crime and anti-social behaviour in the communities and that the impact the swimming pool has is both difficult to measure and not able to influence many of the broader contributing factors.

One police officer mentioned how they run youth disco and barbecue events at the swimming pool if children had been well behaved in the community. This participant also noted that she had observed parents using access to the swimming pool as a behaviour management tool with their children.

“I’ve spoken to parents and they’ve used that as well like ‘no going to the pool’ or... It’s like a diversion thing ‘you can go to the pool but you’re not allowed to do this’” **(Police Officer)**

Three adult participants mentioned that how children were generally better behaved and got along well with each other at the swimming pool in comparison to when they were out in the community.

NO SCHOOL, NO POOL (NSNP) POLICY

SUPPORT

Overall, participants showed great support for the NSNP policy at their local swimming pools and the contribution it could make to improving school attendance.

Broader community support for and acceptance of the policy emerged as a theme amongst adults with participants in each community describing it as a partnership between the school and the community. As a demonstration of community support, several participants spoke about similar approaches to encouraging school attendance that the community had in place such as no access to the shop during school hours for school aged children and prevention from participating in youth sport activities if school attendance was low. While participants identified some limitations of the policy it was still considered worthwhile and no participant suggested it be removed. A number of participants stated that they knew of children who attended school directly because of the policy and that alone made it worthwhile.

"They're not throwing rocks at each other... there is the social interaction with the kids that possibly wouldn't get along with each other but put them in the pool all together and then they're happy." (Doctor)

Five students took photographs or drew pictures of other students fighting at the swimming pool and described it as something they did not like. Two students gave reasons for this which included the risk of injury and wanting people to be happy at the swimming pool.

"I don't like it when people play fight at the pool because someone might get hurt during the fight." (High school student)

"It is unsafe to punch kids and bully them. I don't like it when kids bully you or other kids." (High school student)



"I don't like when girls fight at the pool" (Primary school student)

"I sway to the No school, No pool [policy] because it is such a carrot for kids and it is the reason that some kids come to school. And that has got to be a good thing." (Deputy School Principal)

Students were generally also very supportive of the NSNP policy with 69% answering in an in-class worksheet that they thought it was good. However students did not view the policy as simply as this and went on to discuss the various negatives and positives of it.

EFFECTIVENESS

The NSNP policy was described by adult participants as one initiative amongst others that plays a role in encouraging children to attend school and contributes to increases in school attendance rates.

"From my understanding school attendance does increase when there's a footy program on or when the No School, No pool is on, [which is] pretty much [for] the whole population, the kids really start to come more often."
(Social Worker)

"When the pool is not open, that has been our worst attendance. This term the pool is open and the attendance has popped up...I can only put it down to because they have the pool after school. But again I don't know that for sure, all I can say is that there is a correlation between it being open and attendance being better."
(School Principal)

"You do see increases in attendance in those 2 terms [when NSNP applies]. I think it goes hand in glove with air-conditioning as well... there is breakfast, fruit and lunch provided and they have cold water and those things. So they all add up along with the No school, No pool policy...and some of that can be attributed to do the swimming pool I am sure."
(School Principal)

Overall, students thought the policy was effective with 70% answering in an in-class worksheet that they thought it made students want to go to school more. One student stated that access to the swimming pool was the reason they went to school every day.

"I go to school every day because I want to go to the swimming pool."
(Primary school student)

Adult participants primarily saw the NSNP policy as being effective because of the attractiveness of the swimming pool as a reward for children which in many cases caused them to think through the implications of not attending school. Several adult participants spoke about the swimming pools as being highly valued by most children and that they feel disappointed, jealous, embarrassed or like they were missing out when they could not go to the swimming pool.

"In their mind they're then rethinking the next day 'oh maybe I should go to school because everyone had a lot of fun yesterday.'"
(Social Worker)



This is a photo of "me swimming underwater... it is fun to go under the water."
(Primary school student)

The students themselves valued the swimming pools as places for having fun, being physically active, keeping cool and socializing with friends and family.

High school students in one community were asked how they felt when they were not allowed to use the swimming pool because they did not attend school. Their responses included feeling sad, lonely, bored, angry, hot, like they were missing out, that it was not fair. One of these student stated that it made them think that they should have gone to school and should go the next day.

How do you feel if you can't go to the pool because you didn't go to school? "Sad and upset. Like you should've gone to school. Go to school tomorrow." (High school student)

Adult participants described the policy as being clear, consistent, well understood, associating positive rewards with school attendance and providing a strong message to children that their community sees education and school attendance as very important.

"It teaches our kids to really attend school and it makes them understand that you're not in school so you don't come [to the pool]... its bringing our kids to understand school is where we have to learn." (Swimming Pool Employee)

The NSNP policy, including the rationale, did appear to be very well understood by students with many explaining that access to the swimming pool was used as a reward for school attendance in order to encourage them to attend school. Several students also wrote about school attendance being important because it enabled them to learn and receive an education.

Why have teachers made the No school, No pool rule? "To help kids come to school and get a good education." (High school student)

Several adult participants saw the NSNP policy as a tool used by some parents to encourage their children to attend school. Two participants thought the policy was an attractive incentive for parents to encourage their children to attend school because it would provide their children with an afternoon activity. Consistent and strong enforcement of the policy by both the pool manager and the school was seen as key to the policy being effective.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations to the effectiveness of the NSNP policy were also raised by participants. A strong theme that emerged from participants, particularly adults, was that the policy is not effective for all children at all times. Adult participants identified high school aged children and other children who do not value access to the swimming pool or view it as desirable as being less influenced by the policy. Four high school students from one community felt that the NSNP policy had little or no effect on school attendance. The reasons given for this were the availability of other swimming locations such as the river and that some students are neither concerned if they miss school or are prevented from accessing the swimming pool. Access to other swimming locations was also noted by adult participants as a limitation of the effectiveness of the policy.

"Some of the kids they don't go to school, they don't go to the pool, it doesn't bother them." (Youth Officer)

"Maybe hanging out at the pool is not their priority... the kids that I have spoken to, like the upper school boys, about why they don't come down to the pool and they just say 'I have other things to do.'" (School Principal)

Does the No school, No pool rule make kids want to go to school more or less? "They don't really care if they don't learn more or go to the pool." (High School Student)

The School Principal from the community where the swimming pool was relatively new (less than 5 years old) also thought that the policy had limited effect for high students but felt it was probably establishing patterns of school attendance during primary school years that might then continue into later years when the swimming pool becomes less of an incentive.

One school teacher thought that the policy had little effect for students aged less than 10 years who must be accompanied by an adult and who often do not have anyone to take them after school. However, this teacher considered that these young students were at lower risk of not attending school compared with older students who often make their own decision about attending school but who are targeted by the policy. A participant from another community where the pool manager supervises young children for one hour after school felt that this initiative allowed the NSNP policy to target these young patrons.

Four adult participants raised concerns that the NSNP policy prevented some children from sharing in the health and social benefits provided by the swimming pools, however each felt the policy was worthwhile because of its role in increasing attendance at school. These participants spoke about the importance of school and ensuring local children received a good education. They also noted the other opportunities, such as weekends, when children had open access to the swimming pool unrestricted by the NSNP policy and that promoting attendance at school also promoted use of the swimming pool so children could receive the benefits of both.

"I think [the NSNP policy] is really good because we need the children to be in school and it's not fair in other ways like if the child doesn't go to school and then can't go to the pool...I mean education is more important but we need to convince the kids to go to school first and then go with the ticket to the pool. I think it's really good how they set it up."

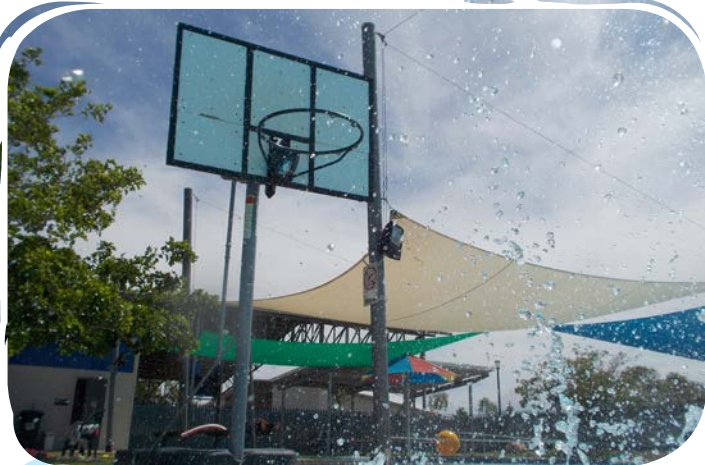
(Nurse)

"I could see that argument [NSNP policy prevents access to swimming pool benefits] being pretty valid and legitimate but at the same time those kids can take advantage of [the swimming pool], it's not like they're being blocked from doing it they just need to go to school as well which I don't think is fair that the kids are missing out on the educational aspects of their life either and if there's not something being done to entice them to go to school then if they're still going to get the fun... but they can still take advantage of it... there's no rule about the weekend so they can still benefit from it." **(Social Worker)**

The fairness of the NSNP policy was also a common theme amongst the students. A number of students referred to the NSNP policy as being unfair but only one student gave reasoning for this and explained that it was not fair that students who do not go to school miss out on the social and cooling benefits of the swimming pool. However there were other students who spoke about access to the swimming pool after school as a fair reward that was earned through attending school.

How do you feel if you can't go to the pool because you didn't go to school? "It's unfair for people who don't go school and who want to go pool, because you'll be the only one standing there watching people enjoy themselves and you just there standing there hot and bored!" **(High School Student)**

"There are so many other factors, it is also ... fishing time when the pool isn't open, it's travel time ...so people head to other communities and it is a lot colder so it is hard for people to get out of bed. So there are so many other factors that I couldn't find a correlation between whether attendance was directly improving related to the pool." **(Deputy School Principal)**



"I love playing basketball with my friends at the pool because it keeps us cool and we play without getting hurt." **(High school student)**

Other limitations to the effectiveness of the policy identified by adult participants were the need for more promotion and stricter enforcement, little involvement of parents and caregivers and challenges for new pool managers in enforcing the rule when details about the child are unknown to them such as name, age and whether they are a visitor or not.

A number of adult participants spoke about the complex factors that influence school attendance such as frequent travel, participation in cultural and recreational activities, cold mornings and disengaged parents and explained how this makes the effectiveness of the NSNP policy difficult to measure.

"I think anything that can encourage kids to improve attendance at school is a good thing... [The effectiveness of NSNP] is hard to say because there are so many things and... it will enter some kid's minds but not all kids will necessarily make the connection between 'right if I go to school today that means I can go to the pool later'...but even if it is making a small difference..." **(School Teacher)**

7 Summary of Quantitative Results

The results of the linked pool and school attendance data for the three study communities are presented below.

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

There were 48 students across the three communities who were eligible to participate in the quantitative component of this study, with parental consent received for each child. The age of participating students ranged from 8 to 16 years of age, with the average being 12 years. As children participated by school class, the average ages varied greatly across the three communities (14.5, 10.9 and 11.8 respectively). Boys accounted for 54% of the sample with variability of gender high across each community. This is presented in Table 4.

As well as school days, data was also collected when the pool was open on weekends, during school holidays, on public holidays/pupil free days and when it experienced routine or exceptional closures. Visitation was only counted once per day and attendance during school activities such as swimming lessons and

physical education was not recorded. This allowed a better understanding of when students made their own free choice to attend the pool and/or school. As can be seen in Table 5, these variables, as well as the overall length of the pool season and applicability of the NSNP policy differed slightly across the three communities. For the purpose of the analyses, the averages were used to complete calculations.

WEEKLY USE OF THE POOL

Usage of the pool by study patrons over the period of analysis was highly varied. As shown in Table 6, Community 2 experienced the highest rate of patronage with an average of 86 visitations per child across the 182 days of pool opening. This equates to students in this community using the pool almost half the days it was open (47%). On average across the three communities, the pool was accessed 22% of the times it was available.

Table 4: Participating students by gender and community

	Male		Female		Total
	n	%	n	%	
Community 1	10	62.5	6	37.5	16
Community 2	10	47.6	11	52.4	21
Community 3	6	54.5	5	45.5	11
TOTAL	26		22		48

Table 5: Length of the pool season and applicability of the NSNP policy (in days)

	Community			Average
	1	2	3	
Pool closed (1 day off per week)	30	29	32	30
Pool closed (exceptional days, holidays)	10	14	14	13
Weekends when pool open (not in school holidays)	38	35	38	37
Public holidays when pool open	1	4	2	2
School Holidays when pool open (including weekends)	63	62	54	60
Pupil free day	1	1	0	1
School-pool policy applied (Pool and school open)	80	80	89	83
Days the pool was open	183	182	183	182.5
Length of pool season	223	225	229	226

Reasons for the high variability across the three communities may be explained by the differing ages of students included in the study. This sample only analysed the attendance of a select sample of patrons and due to the differing demographic makeup of analysed students in each community, attendance data is diverse. These results are not reflective of the entire patronage of each pool. In addition, the pool visitations in Community 3 are likely to be higher than reported, as attendance data was not recorded for a number of weeks during the study.

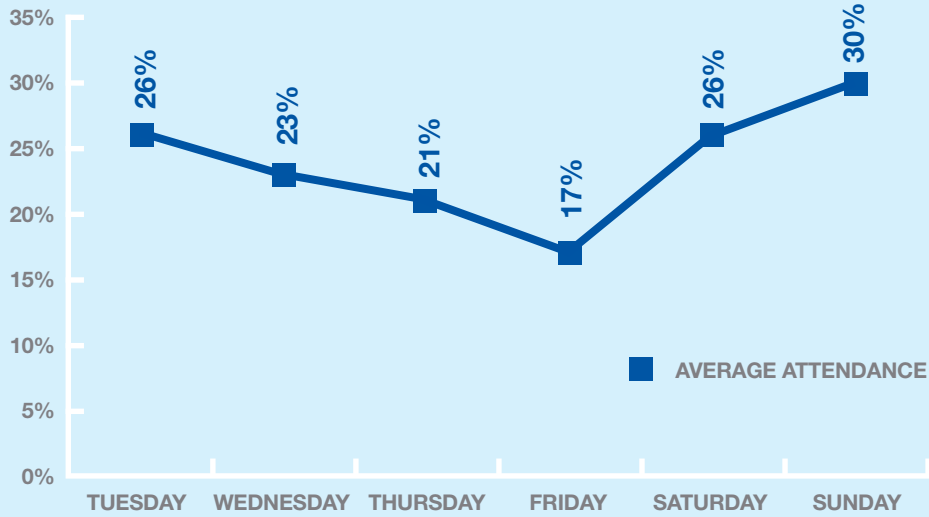
Pool attendance also varied depending on the day of the week. Patronage was highest on the weekend and Tuesdays. This can be seen in Figure 1.

Girls used the pool more frequently than boys with an average of 55 annual visitations (compared to 43 for boys). This accounts to a weekly usage of 2.1 times and 1.6 respectively. As can be seen in Figure 2, weekly attendance also differed depending on the age group.

Table 6: Weekly usage of pool

	Community			Average
	1	2	3	
Days open	183	182	183	182.5
Number of tracked students	16	21	11	16
Total visitations	307	1809	198	771
Visitations per student	19	86	18	48
Amount of time pool was used when open	10%	47%	10%	22%
Visitations per week per student	1	3	1	1.5

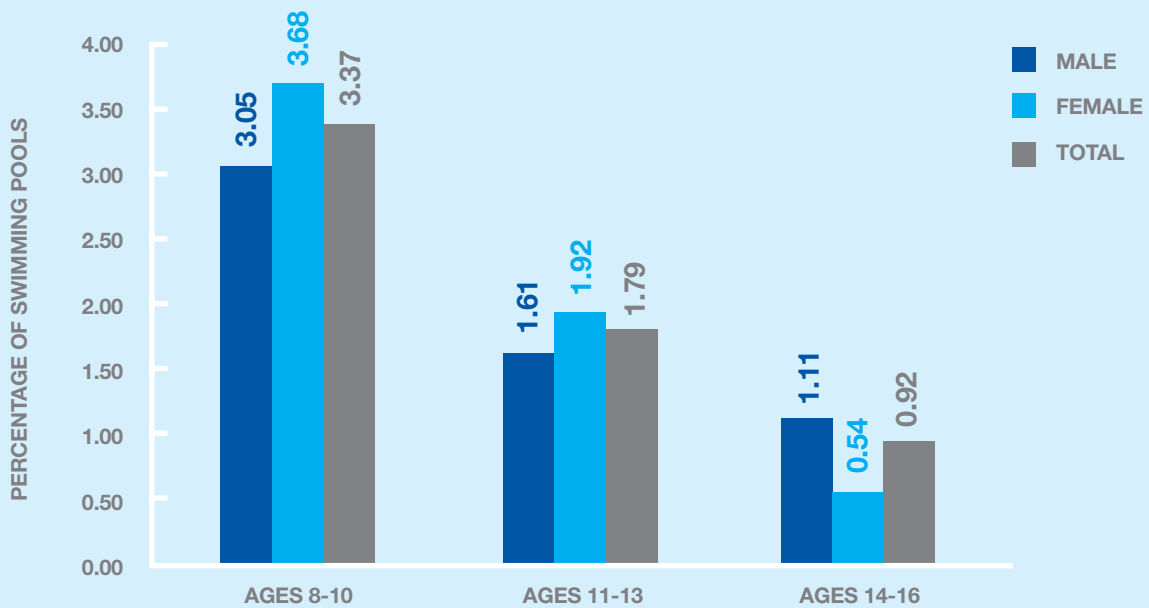
Figure 1: Percentage of pool usage by days of the week



Girls aged 8-10 were the most frequent users of the pool, totalling an average of 3.7 visits a week. This equates to an overall usage of 53%.

Pool usage decreased as age increased with those aged between 14 and 16 using the pool on average less than once a week. Females in this age group were also the most infrequent pool users.

Figure 2: Percentage of weekly attendance by age group and gender

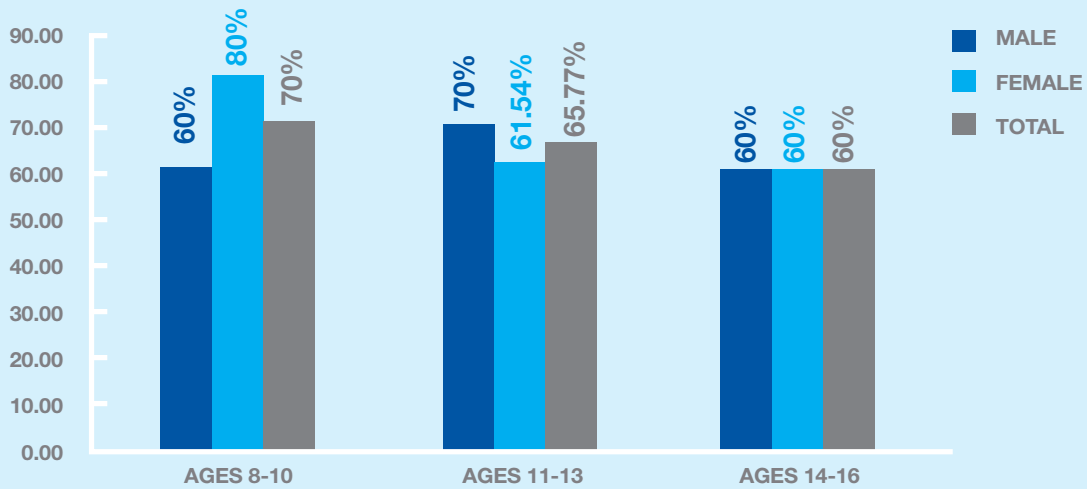


SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

As detailed in the methods, school attendance data was also recorded to determine if the NSNP policy encouraged students to attend school. It was apparent that school attendance differed by age and slightly by gender and average attendance also varied depending on the day of the week.

Girls had a slightly higher attendance rate (68% of given days) compared to 65% for boys. This however did differ by age group, evident in Figure 3. Those aged 8-10 had the highest rate of attendance (70%) and the older age group (14-16) the lowest at 60%.

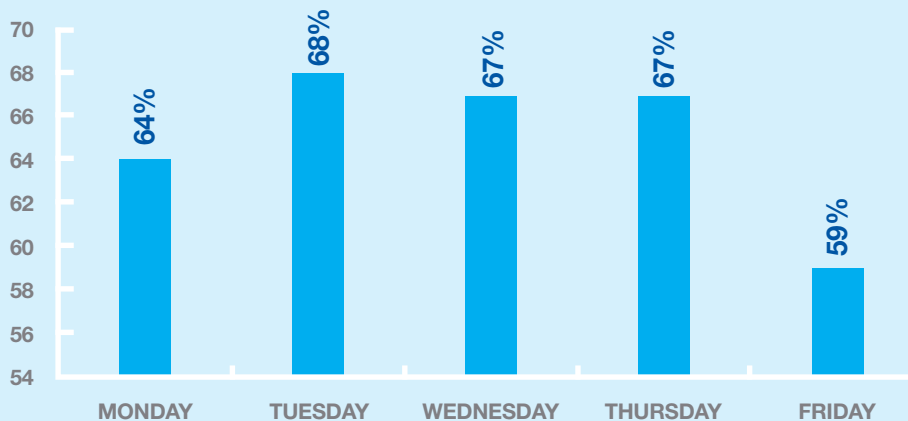
Figure 3: Percentage of school attendance by age group and gender



School attendance was highest on Tuesdays (68%) and lowest on Fridays (59%, Figure 4). This mirrors the trend for pool attendance, whereby the highest and lowest attendances are observed on these given days.

Mondays, when the pool was closed also observed a high rate of absenteeism with only 64% of students attending school on this day

FIGURE 4: Percentage of school attendance by day of the week



INFLUENCE OF THE NO SCHOOL NO POOL POLICY

To determine the influence of the No School No Pool policy on school attendance, attendance rates for both school and pool were analysed together.

This created twelve variables whereby both the school and pool were open across the average of 82 days and the child either did or did not attend school (evident in Table 7).

Table 7: Percentages of possibilities for school and pool attendance

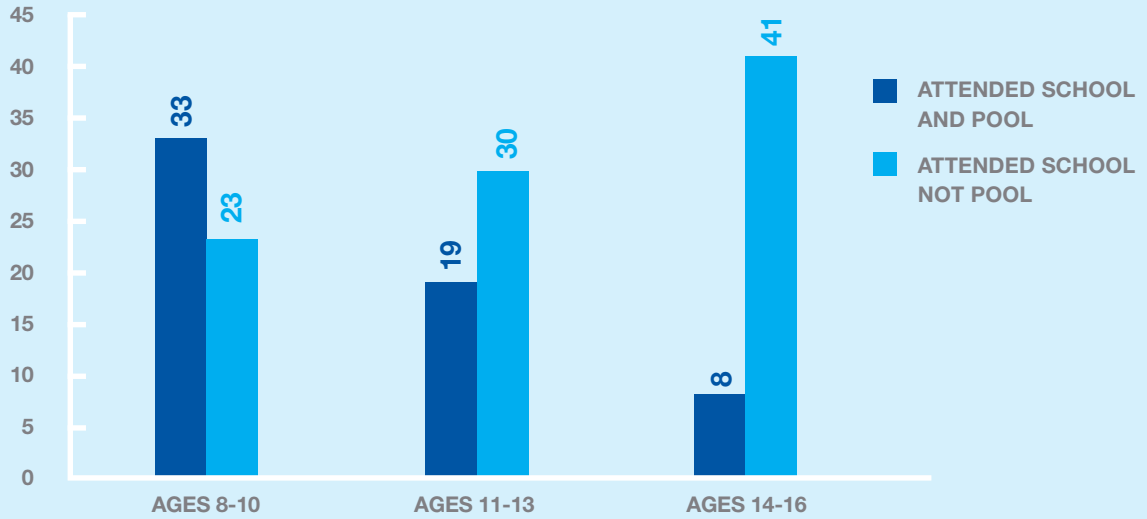
Possibility	%	Days
Attended school and pool	23.4	19
Attended school not pool	38.6	32
Absent from school but at pool	9	1.5
Unauthorised absence from school, absent from pool	19.3	16
Authorised absence from school, absent from pool	6.0	5
At pool, school data not recorded/provided	0.2	0.2
Not at pool, school data not recorded/provided	1.6	1.3
Not enrolled at school, did not attend pool	3.0	2.5
Attended school, Pool data not collected	2.4	2
Absent from school, Pool data not collected	1.3	2
School data not recorded/provided, Pool data not collected	0.3	.2
Not enrolled at school, Pool data not collected	2.1	1.7
	100%	82

On the 82 days that the NSNP policy applied, students attended both school and the pool on 19 days (23.4% of the period). This compared to 32 days on average where students attended school but did not attend the pool.

Evidently the NSNP policy was more effective across the younger age groups, with those aged 8-10 observing the highest rate of both pool and school attendance.

This age group attended both the school and the pool on 33 days across the period (41% of days) compared to days where they only attended school (23 days, 28%). Those aged 14-16 took advantage of the pool on only 8 days that they attended school (10%). As can be seen in Figure 5, as age increased, attendance rate at the pool decreased.

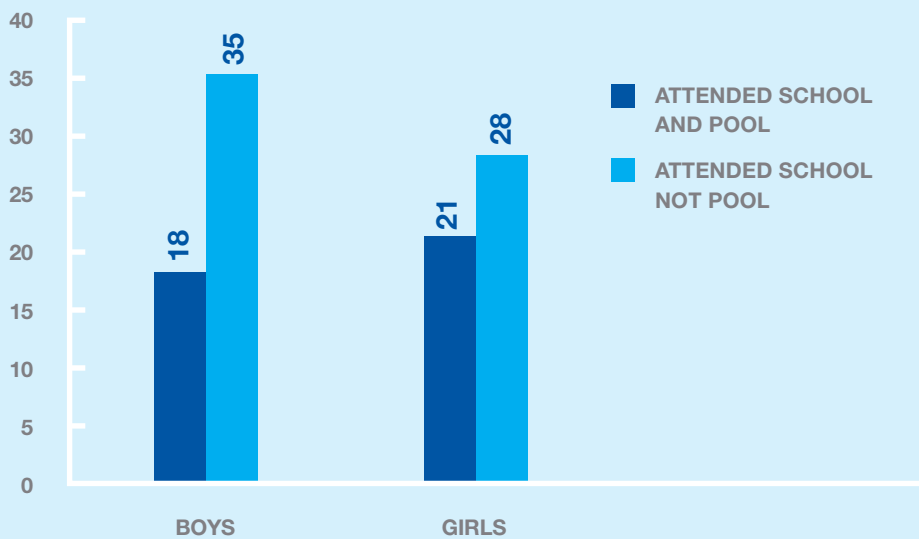
Figure 5: Attendance of school and pool on NSNP days by age group by days



School and pool attendance was slightly higher for girls (Figure 6) indicating the NSNP policy is less effective in encouraging boys to attend school.

Overall, the NSNP policy appears to lose effectiveness as students get older, with peak efficacy in this study observed for those aged 8-10.

Figure 6: Attendance of school and pool on NSNP days by gender by days



8 Discussion

This research aimed to evaluate the RASP program using the perspectives of community members to determine what social benefits, if any, the pool provided and how effective the NSNP policy is in reducing absenteeism. It also aimed to build on previous research undertaken focusing on the health advantages associated with having swimming pools in remote Aboriginal communities. Overall the study identified a number of positive factors of the RASP program, determined community opinions of the pool to be generally optimistic and found evidence to suggest the NSNP policy increased school attendance for certain age groups.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE RASP PROGRAM

PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

A key performance indicator of the RASP program is the continued, stable participation of Aboriginal locals. Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the swimming pools in their community. A number of factors fostering this community engagement were identified through the research. This included a strong relationship between the patrons and the pool manager, the implementation of local employment opportunities and strategies that encouraged parents to attend and supervise their children. Respondents also noted the fact that the usage of the pool was free of charge ensured availability for all community members. Alternative promoters of participation included activities targeted at specific demographics, such as women or the elderly; flexible opening hours of the pool and community ownership over the pool environment through the instalment of artwork in the general vicinity. Respondents also stated that the pool was a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment and they felt comfortable attending. Future programs should capitalise on these identified attendance motivators.

The community reported that the swimming pool was highly valued with most people in the community utilising the facility, although to varying amounts. Children were identified as the main users of the swimming pool, particularly amongst primary school aged children. This study also found that girls were more frequent pool patrons than boys, a finding that contrasts with previous evaluation and discussions with pool managers. One reason for this observation is the increase in programs developed within the researched communities to encourage girls to swim, as well as the implementation of specified programs and exercise classes. Positively the results yielded indicate the success of such interventions. It was also observed that young males have other roles in the community relating to family roles, responsibilities and participation in cultural events, and therefore have less time to visit the pool.

This research also highlighted a number of barriers to participation including a range of cultural barriers, self-consciousness, lack of swimming ability, the pool being perceived as only for young children and a general lack of interest amongst some groups. Participation was reportedly lower amongst adult men and high school aged community members.

While this is not dissimilar to participation trends at public swimming pools at other locations throughout WA, it does highlight the need to better understand these barriers and develop programs and activities that are both culturally relevant and specific to the needs of these non-user groups. There were some reported successes in engaging low user groups through the provision of women's only programs and working with local men's groups which has resulted in greater participation. These case studies should be used to inform future programming for these groups.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Community members reported observing an array of positive health benefits that the pools provided, stating the occurrence of infections of the ear and skin were common during the months that the pool was closed. While this was beyond the scope of this project and therefore was unable to be assessed clinically, the surrogate measure of observation provides greater evidence for a research area of which results have been mixed.^{1,8-11} However information gained from this study supports previous research conducted by the Telethon Kids Institute^{9,12} which highlighted the health benefits associated with regular use of swimming pools in remote communities of WA.

This research provides a unique community perspective to aspects of enduring health that may be difficult to longitudinally clinically establish. Furthermore, community members in this study identified a number of positive health practices supported by the pool that have not been explored thus far in the literature.

This included the promotion of physical activity through ongoing programming, safe swimming practices, healthy eating and improved hygiene through access to clean water and the requirement to shower before and after swimming. This demonstrates that swimming pools in remote communities have the ability to provide broader health benefits in addition to the prevention of infectious diseases.

IMPROVED SKILLS

Aboriginal children are over represented in the drowning data in WA. Of those aged 0-4 who drowned in Western Australia between 2003 and 2013, 20% were Aboriginal.²³ Results were similar in the 5-14 age group with Aboriginal children accounting for 28% of all drowning incidents in this age group.²⁴ This is despite Aboriginal Australians totalling approximately 3% of the state population.²⁵ The RASP program specifically targets these age groups, allowing for water familiarisation and the development of swimming and survival skills in a safe and controlled environment.²⁶ This was reported by many interviewed to be one of the most encouraging aspects of the RASP program, as without the program, many children in these communities would not be able to access these programs and develop the essential swimming and water safety skills needed for safe participation in aquatic activities.

Participants identified that all of the studied communities and many within the RASP program have water sources such as rivers, creeks and the ocean in the nearby vicinity that many community members regularly use. In contrast to the swimming pool participants noted the dangers that exist at these natural waterways including strong currents, rough conditions, jellyfish and lack of adult supervision and highlighted the importance of having access to a safe venue for the community to enjoy. This emphasises the need for all children in these communities to be taught swimming and water safety skills so that they can be confident and safe when in the water. While many respondents said local children were 'naturals' when it came to swimming, this was juxtaposed by one interviewed pool manager who said there was a marked need for formal lessons and safe swimming sessions which are delivered at the pool to hone underdeveloped skills, ensuring safety when children swim in other environments.

Each community included in this study reported having a range of strategies in place to ensure the adequate supervision of children under the age of ten in line with current legislation and standards. These differences were primarily due to the individual pool manager, their knowledge of the swimming abilities of each child and the diverse rules they enforced to ensure overall safety. As stated by one pool manager, there is a need to find the balance between guaranteeing welfare while allowing all children the chance to hone their swimming skills to essentially further their own wellbeing in such environments. In addition, the Watch Around Water²⁷ program was reported to be in place in all communities, promoting safe supervision messages and requiring parents to actively supervise young children while at the pool. The enforcement of this program has the potential to translate to better supervision in areas that aren't as controlled, such as the river, dam or beach frequented by local families. The distribution of affirmative messages in an enabling manner within the pool area yield benefits for appropriate water safety regulation among older students and parents alike.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

This research also highlighted a number of social benefits associated with having a swimming pool located in remote communities including the prevention of crime, improved social cohesion in the community and the promotion of good behaviour. Community members identified that there was a lack of activities in the community, particularly for young people which often lead to boredom and anti-social behaviour and/or crime. Having activities run at the pool has provided alternatives and something for young people to do which has in turn reduced anti-social behaviour and crime in the communities. Respondents reported common delinquency and petty crime within the community to be reduced during the pool season, especially when programs such as the midnight swimming programs were running. Such benefits have been testified in government reports in WA and nationally when remote pools have been evaluated,^{28, 29} highlighting the positive effects of the pool on all aspects of community welfare. Of course, it is difficult to measure the direct link between this reduction and the pool as there are many other factors that influence these behaviours, but it is evident that the pool plays a significant role. In addition, the pool was recognised by students especially as encouraging good behaviour, stating they felt implored to act at a high standard within the pool area while minimising fighting and rule breaking, something palpable in previous research.⁹

Respondents also reported that the swimming pools enhanced social cohesion in the community. It was commonly identified as a social hub and gathering place where positive community interactions took place. This was particularly strong for children who viewed the pool as a fun and relaxing place where they could be happy and have a break from unpleasant situations at home. This is an important finding as Aboriginal communities suffer much higher rates of poor social and emotional health and wellbeing which contributes to overall poorer health outcomes.

Through advocating for remote community health, mediating with stakeholders and enabling individuals to take action for their own wellbeing, the RASP program follows the ideals outlined by the Ottawa Charter for health promotion.³⁰ The program works specifically to create supportive environments, strengthen community action and develop individual personal skills that promote health in a unique and fun manner. It is clear that the RASP program has succeeded in achieving not only its stated aims but instilled constructive changes within communities aided by local appreciation for the pool.

Research participants identified that employment of locals at the swimming pool increased community ownership of the facility and contributed to improvements in overall social and emotional health and wellbeing through improved self-esteem. Some felt that increasing employment and training opportunities for locals would provide further benefits to the community. Patrons were specific in detailing their feelings that allowing more locals to serve in paid positions with the pool, be it cleaning, supervising or preparing food, would increase local autonomy of the pool. There are obvious limitations with many pool roles requiring strict qualifications and the transient nature of these communities making it difficult for long term employment outcomes to be achieved. In addition, a number of training opportunities were made available in these communities but have been cancelled due to a lack of interest. Strategies to identify suitable community members for further training and employment opportunities and better promotion of the opportunities that are available to increase involvement at the pool have been put in place by RLSSWA.

EFFECTIVENESS OF NO SCHOOL NO POOL POLICY

Overall, participants showed great support for and acceptance of NSNP and reported that the pool was seen as an attractive incentive for children to go to school. This research showed that school attendance was lowest on Mondays and Fridays, a trend that may be probable for a number of reasons.

In all communities the pool was closed on a Monday, presenting the possibility that children are less likely to attend school without the reward of being able to visit the pool. However, it is difficult to establish whether school attendance was low due to the pool being closed, or the fact that it was the first day back after the weekend when students would largely be less inclined to return as students generally travelled out of the community during this time. Low attendance at both the pool and school on Fridays could be explained by similar means with many people leaving the community early for the weekend. Conversely, children may be less inclined to go to the pool on a Friday as they know it will be open on the weekend, thus diminishing the incentive to attend school. We also detected a decreasing trend in pool attendance that did not mirror the attendance rate of school. Potentially this is due to the pool decreasing in 'novelty' among students across the week. Special pool programs should be targeted to the latter end of the week to ensure students continue to be encouraged to attend both the school and the pool. Further research into this area can be undertaken by determining school and pool attendance rates across the week when the pool is closed on different days, allowing for a greater relationship to be determined.

This research also found that the NSNP policy was more effective amongst primary school aged children. This age group is the biggest user of the swimming pool and see the pool as an attractive reward for school attendance, The attractiveness of the pool decreased with age as older children assumed other roles and responsibilities within the community and began to prioritise other activities over visiting the pool; therefore the NSNP policy was less effective in older age groups.

While the NSNP policy targets younger age groups who are more at risk for fatal and non-fatal drownings, there is the possibility that the strategy restricts truant children from developing their swimming skills and accessing the associated health and social benefits of regular participation by limiting their access to the pool.

This highlights the balance between maintaining the incentive of the pool for school attendance while ensuring children have access to swimming education, something that is safeguarded in the studied communities with the pool open on the weekends and school holidays for all. High rates of participation were recorded at the pool on weekends amongst both primary and high school aged children which addresses these concerns regarding the NSNP policy, meaning that even if children aren't able to attend school through either authorised or unauthorised absence they still access the pool and its associated health and social benefits on the weekend.

It is important to note that not all school absences are unauthorised. A number of students are frequently unable to attend school due to health-related issues, family or personal reasons and these were classed as authorised absences; on average amounting to five days during our study period for each child which could have had an impact on the NSNP policy. This means that the overall effectiveness of the NSNP policy is likely to be underestimated in this study and further research is needed to better understand this.

METHODOLOGICAL STRENGTHS

This study was methodologically tailored for the target population. Through the qualitative methods of Photovoice and yarning, a sound community perspective in regards to the remote swimming pools was able to be developed. Yarning is an Aboriginal term for 'talking', allowing interviewers to approach community members about the research in a manner that was both culturally understood and appropriate. Geia et al.³¹ suggest that the utilisation of yarning provides a deeper understanding, complementing a two-way research paradigm for collaborative research.³¹ Yarning is an increasingly common mode of conducting research in a participatory manner with Aboriginal populations and this research was effective in ensuring that community viewpoints were established in a relaxed and innocuous environment. This participatory practice continued when interacting with students, with Photovoice regarded as an effective way to bridge the perceived power gap between the researcher and participant.³²

Photovoice was also useful in assisting young children or those who may be overwhelmed in an interview situation to better express their thoughts in a fun and interactive manner through self-taken photos by which a story can be told;³³ something that worked very well in this study. The success of these research methods provides justification for their further use in conducting research with Aboriginal communities and/or groups, especially in the realm of health where children are concerned.

The utilisation of both quantitative and qualitative methods in this study provided the opportunity to conduct broad evaluation of the RASP program. Themes that emerged through yarning and Photovoice were able to be explored and supported by the quantitative pool and school data. While causation is difficult to establish in such research, this study was able to deduce correlation between a number of variables, giving weight to the findings. Further research in this field should adopt a mixed-methods approach to ensure the attainment of both breadth and depth of data.

SUMMARY

This research showed that the RASP program has been successful in reducing health issues among children, improving community cohesion and increasing school attendance amongst primary school aged students. It also found a number of additional benefits previously unexplored in the literature, highlighting the potential for additional exploration and research. This is the first evaluation of RLSSWA managed remote pools of its kind to be conducted and while avenues for further research have been identified, the results are very positive and demonstrate the importance of this program in WA.

9 Limitations

There were a number of limitations with our study. The first relates to the quality of trust between the interviewer and respondents. In such a short interview period, it was difficult to gain respondent trust in confidentiality and the aims of the research. While it may have skewed answers to focus primarily on the positive aspects of the pool instead of suggesting improvements, it was minimised by the long-standing relationship RLSSWA has with these communities. In addition, the assistance of pool managers who supported the completion of the research increased the base level of trust.

Furthermore, a number of participants stated that they were concerned that the research outcomes could lead to the closure of the pool if the evaluation found the program to be ineffective. This highlights an inability to appropriately translate the research aims to the whole community and may have been another potential factor that contributed to positively biased responses. This was conversed by the multitude of respondents who provided constructive and useful feedback during the data collection phase, ensuring the improvement of the RASP program in the long term.

Interview quality was also affected by a limited sample focused primarily on educators and employed individuals. We were unable to conduct interviews with the unemployed, those completing home duties and carers due to a combination of our chosen method of snowball sampling and the lack of availability of these individuals. Aboriginal people were disproportionately represented in our levels of participation, with interviews occurring primarily with non-Aboriginal community members. These combined limitations may have led to a reduction in collated perspectives about the pool and NSNP policy.

While the variability between communities allowed for a comparison of how different programs contributed to overall success, the disparity specifically of age groups and the enforcement of the NSNP policy prevented the achievement of research depth. Pertaining specifically to the quantitative element of the research, this prevented an adequate analysis of the sample as a whole and instead meant each community was presented as a case study. However, the inclusion of communities of varying size, location and infrastructure allowed for breadth to be obtained, permitting the achievement of a greater understanding of which age groups use the pool, how well children were encouraged to attend school by the school policies and for whom the NSNP policy was the most effective.

Quantitative data was also limited by incomplete records in all communities on certain days for both school and pool attendance. This suggests observed attendance, especially for the pool may be higher than reported. Participant demographics were not recorded when conducting yarning which would have allowed for a more detailed description of who took part in the research and how they varied from community to community.

In regards to the Photovoice component, while this was an appropriate method for use in these communities, it presented varying challenges. Younger children had difficulty in completing worksheets provided, which may have affected the quality of answers and resulted in simplified responses. Students who struggled were more likely to copy the answers of a friend, restricting results. Children were also asked to come up with something positive, negative and interesting about the pool, which may have skewed answers either way. Whether or not results were affected by these limitations is however difficult to adequately ascertain.

The study also had a large number of participants who were in high school. This age group is known to use the pool less than younger students and as a result, overall results may have been affected and incorrectly suggest pool usage is lower than average. This did allow a conformability of pool manager reports of teenagers being a low participating age group, leading to the potential for the development of programs to increase attendance. However it also allowed for comparison between the differing age groups which highlighted a trend of declining attendance as age increases. Students in high school did provide more detailed and meaningful photos, captions and worksheet responses which assisted us greatly in collating the qualitative results.

Although the results suggest that the pool was a valued incentive and encouraged school attendance for primary school aged students it was difficult to quantitatively determine if NSNP was the sole contributor to improved school attendance as there were other initiatives in place in each of the communities to encourage children to go to school. While, there was a positive correlation between school attendance and pool use with the qualitative component of the study suggested students are encouraged to attend school by the enticement of the pool no causation is able to be inferred.

The research team experienced difficulties in gaining consent from parents to allow students to participate in the research which resulted in small sample sizes. Regular attendees were more likely to be included in our study as they had more opportunities to return signed consent forms. Additionally, classes and participating students were selected by school staff which further limited our sample size and may have introduced selection bias. While the final sample appeared to be adequate for our qualitative research questions, the quantitative component was limited which may have affected overall results.

Lastly, while mixed-methods qualitative research allowed us to draw out the key themes, they frequently overlapped due to the nature of people's responses.²¹ This meant that more than one theme may have been presented in a single sentence, affecting the ability to appropriately code answers. This was overcome by presenting results generally where possible, highlighting consistency between the communities. Where issues were specific to one community, these were identified.

While it is important to note these stated limitations to ensure the success of future research in this field, we are confident that previously discussed advantages and achievements of this study allowed for the study aims to be met in a culturally appropriate and effective manner. The research was conducted in a methodologically sound way that capitalised upon community consultation to maximise the content rich data we obtained and we are encouraged by the breadth and depth of findings.

10 Conclusion

Swimming pools in remote Aboriginal communities have significant roles to play in reducing many of the challenges faced by these groups. These include but are not limited to social and emotional health and well-being issues, poor health, a lack of community cohesion, high rates of school absenteeism and unemployment. This research shows that the RASP program has been successful in achieving its established aims with a multitude of flow on benefits experienced in each community.

This research not only confirmed having swimming pools in remote communities to be an effective endeavour, but allowed for the identification of areas for improvement. The results from this research will be applied to the RASP program in consultation with the communities to better implement and conduct the program in a manner tailored to their individual needs. Specifically, communities will be encouraged to take greater ownership of the pool through increased participation for improved sense of community autonomy and pride; furthering the overall efficacy of the program.

The results of this study provide justification for the expansion of the RASP program to more Indigenous communities around Western Australia. The ascertainment of sustainable and essential services required to deliver the pool effectively in potential communities can be utilised to identify additional locations that will benefit from such infrastructure. Furthermore, a solid and evidence based selection process will not only ensure robust project delivery, but the attainment of organisational key performance indicators and overall community social and emotional wellbeing.



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Appendices

APPENDIX ONE

WORKSHEET COMPLETED AS PART OF THE PHOTOVOICE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS WHO DID NOT TAKE PHOTOS

1. Why I *LIKE* the pool.

In the box below draw a picture or write in words why you LIKE the pool.

2. Why I *DO NOT LIKE* the pool.

In the box below draw a picture or write in words why you DO NOT LIKE the pool.

APPENDIX TWO

WORKSHEET COMPLETED AS PART OF THE PHOTOVOICE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS WHO DID TAKE PHOTOS

Photo 1. File name:

1. This is a photo of

2. I took a photo of this

3. This is important to me because

Photo 2. File name:

1. This is a photo of

2. I took a photo of this

3. This is important to me because

Photo 3. File name:

1. This is a photo of

2. I took a photo of this

3. This is important to me because

APPENDIX THREE

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OLDER STUDENTS AS PART OF ADDITIONAL WORKSHEET

1. What do you like to do when the pool is closed?

2. If you were the boss of the pool what would you change to make it better?

3. Is the No school, No Pool rule good or bad?

4. Why have teachers made the No School, No Pool rule?

5. Does the No School, No Pool rule make kids want to go to school more or less?

APPENDIX FOUR

GUIDE FOR YARNING WITH INDIVIDUALS

Introduce yourself.

Have a chat - put them at ease.

Explain the purpose of the yarn

- Want to find out if you think the swimming pool is a good thing for your community.
- Past research has shown that swimming pools are really good for improving health and school attendance.
- This time we want to speak with the people and listen to what you have to say about the pool.

Give them the project information sheet and explain it verbally.

What will be done with the information we collect?

- Used to make changes to the way the swimming pool is run to make it better.
- Write a report. We will show this report to community and check that the community is happy with it before we show the report to anyone else.
- All the information will be kept safely. No names of any person from will be used in the report.

During the yarn:

- You don't have to take part if you want - leave or sit quietly if you like
- No right or wrong answers
- You don't need to worry that we are going to shut down the pool if you something is bad about it - we just want to keep it open
- If you are happy, we will record the yarn just so we don't forget all the important things you have said.

Ask if they have any questions.

Sign consent forms

Use the following list of questions to guide your conversation in a relaxed way:

1. How long have you lived in the community and what is your position/role?
2. Do you see the pool as a good thing or a bad thing for your community? Why?
 - a. What is good about it? What is bad about it?
3. Have you seen any changes in the community since the pool opened?
 - a. [UNPROMPTED] If yes, what changes?
 - b. [PROMPT IF NECESSARY] Social, crime, health, school attendance...
4. Do you use the pool? How often? What do you do when you are at the pool?
 - a. If yes, what do you like most about it? What don't you like about it?
5. Are there any people or groups or families in the community who don't use the pool? Why or why not?
 - a. [PROMPT IF NEEDED] Women, men, teenagers etc.
6. How do you think the pool could be changed to be made better for your community? What could be changed to make more people want to use the pool?
 - a. [PROMPT IF NEEDED] local Aboriginal person work at pool, organized sport etc.
7. Are you aware of the No School No pool policy?
 - a. If yes, can you explain to me how it works?
 - b. [REMIND IF NOT FAMILIAR]
8. Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing for the kids in your community? Why?
9. Do you think the policy encourages kids to go to school? Why or why not?

APPENDIX FOUR

GUIDE FOR YARNING WITH INDIVIDUALS

10. How do you think the no school no pool policy could be changed to make it better at encouraging kids to go to school?
11. Do you have any further comments you would like to make regarding the pool, its programs or the no school, no pool policy?
12. Who else do you think we should talk to in your community to about the swimming pool and the No-school, No pool policy?

Thank you!

Explain the next steps in the research project.

How report will be communicated back to community.





Royal Life Saving

THE ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY WESTERN AUSTRALIA, INC.

Principal Community Partner

