



# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE AQUATICS INDUSTRY

## JUN-DEC UPDATE

Western Australia



**ROYAL LIFE SAVING**  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



LEISURE INSTITUTE OF WA AQUATIC (INC)



## SHAPING WA'S AQUATIC INDUSTRY WORKFORCE POST COVID-19 SHUTDOWNS.

Just over one year ago, aquatic recreation centres faced shutdowns due to COVID-19. RLSSWA has been working hard to track how this disruption has impacted the workforce, aquatic programs, and the broader community.

For the workforce, it was a challenging and uncertain time. Many casual staff were temporarily stood down and full-time staff were redeployed to other areas in their centres or local councils. Noteworthy, local government employees were not eligible to receive the JobKeeper wage subsidy during the shutdowns and since re-opening centres have expressed concern over staffing shortages.

Aquatic programs were hit hard by the forced closures. During this time, it is estimated that more than 50,000 West Australian children missed out on swimming lessons. Initially, there was great fear that many swim schools would be forced to close permanently. However, the industry has encountered a boom of program enrolments and is now struggling to meet state-wide demands. With many programs being cancelled due to a lack of available qualified personnel.

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Aquatic Recreation Centres have been rapidly adjusting to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. To thrive in this 'new normal', centres must remain agile and resilient. RLSSWA is here to help and support centres as they adapt to the rapid changes.

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This report was prepared by the Royal Life Saving Society WA.

RLSSWA would like to acknowledge LIWA Aquatics for their contribution on this report.

# COMMUNITY IMPACT



Despite the hardships faced by centres, the WA Aquatic Recreation Industry is rapidly recovering post COVID-19. Aquatic recreation centres have seen a 23% increase in visitation rates from this time last year despite COVID-19's earlier interruptions.

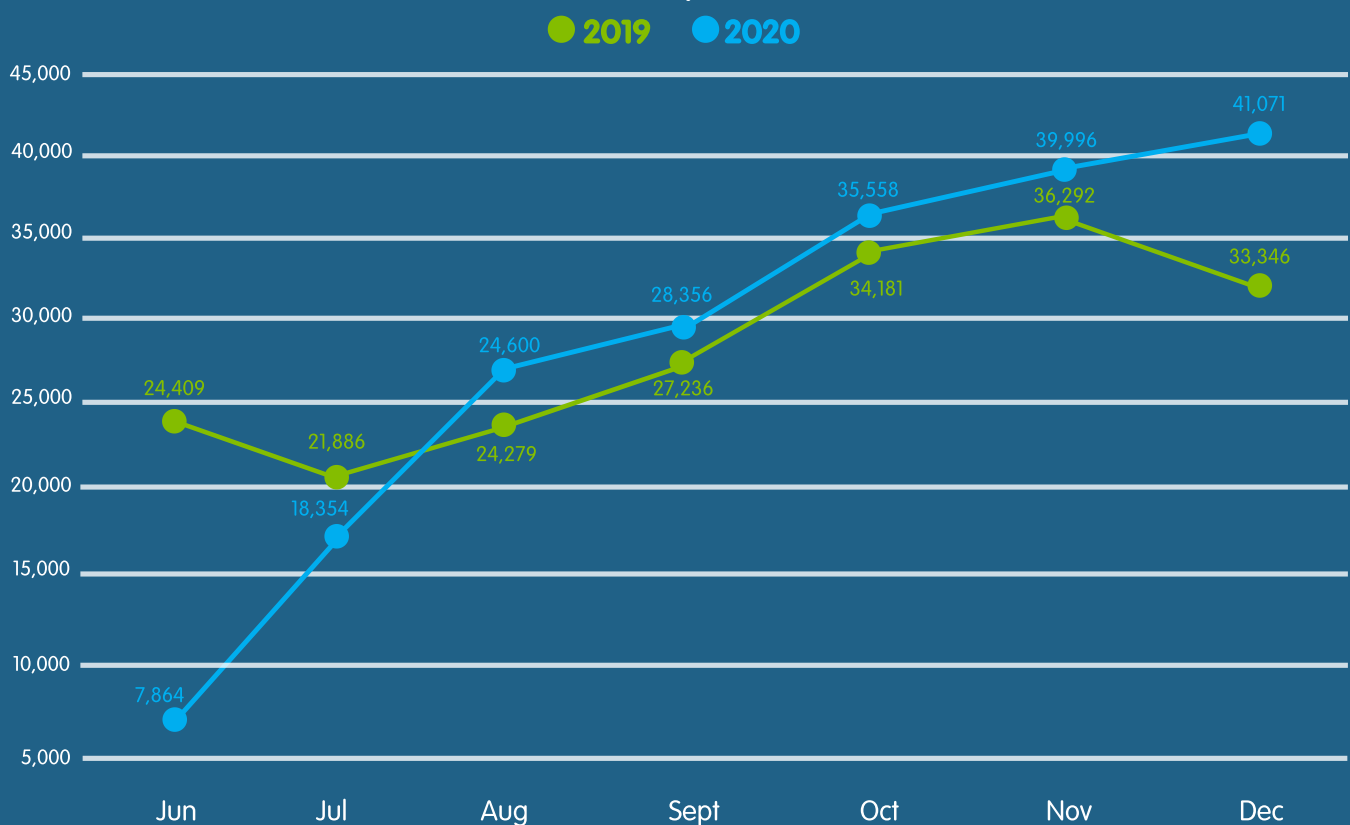
When comparing 2019/20 and 2020/21, endorsed swim school participation we have seen an 8.4% decrease. We believe the decrease is due to the closure of several swim school as a direct result of COVID-19.

There has been a

# 23%

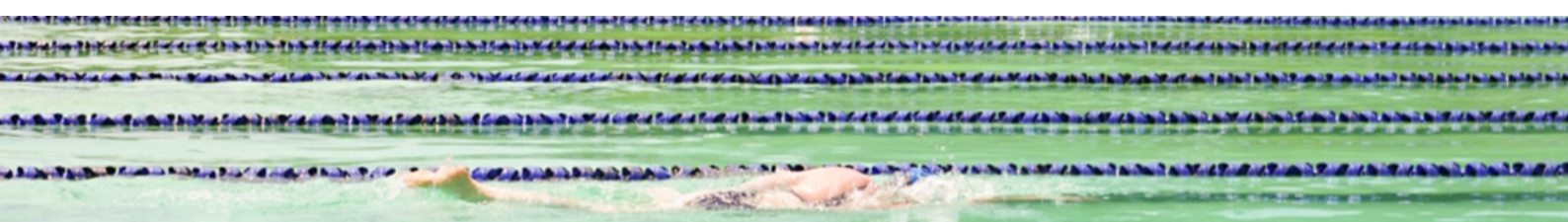
increase in the number of visitations when comparing Dec 2019 and Dec 2020.

## Pool Visitations Comparison, 2019 & 2020



“ We saw approximately six endorsed swim schools permanently close during COVID-19 due to financial pressures and the fast changing circumstances. ”

- Amy Vearing, RLSSWA Endorsed Swim Schools Coordinator

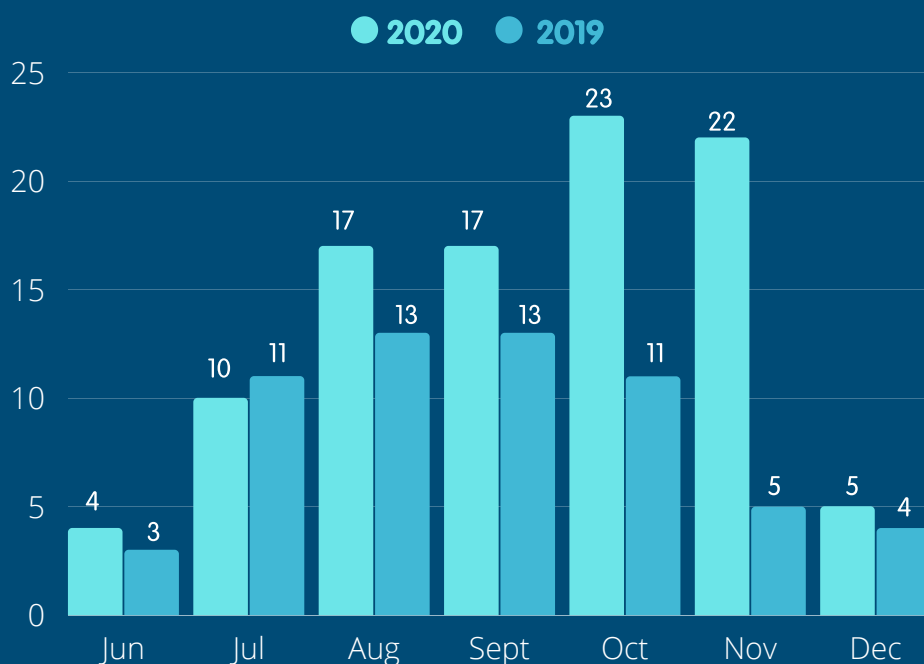


# INDUSTRY IMPACT

RLSSWA has seen an increase in job advertising, a strong indicator that the aquatic recreation industry is experiencing growth and demand for new employees. The most in-demand positions advertised are for Pool Lifeguards, Swim Teachers and Aquatic Technical Operators. These findings align with observations that the aquatic recreation industry is busier than ever.

A content analysis of the Facebook group 'Drowning Lifeguards of WA' was performed to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted staff working in the aquatics industry in WA. Some notable quotes are below:

Number of job advertisements on the RLSSWA jobs board, 2019 and 2020 comparison



A review of the RLSSWA jobs board shows a

**63%**

increase in job ads for the aquatic recreation industry between 2019 and 2020.

“ We resumed lessons in late July. The number of enrolments were down. The next program commencing in October 2020 saw a huge surge in enrolments, and we struggled to find enough instructors to keep up with demand. We are running fewer classes at present due to lack of staff. ”

“ Bring on the end of this crisis so we can shine again & make our patrons happy. Smiles are what I thrive on at any pool I work at! Stay safe ”

## ROAD TO RECOVERY



What began as a health crisis has moved onto impact the economy and the community. RLSSWA is working to regroup the industry and encourage the community to reengage in aquatic programs. Aquatic facilities have a critical role to play in achieving the objectives of the State Government's Pandemic Recovery Plan, in particular "re-grouping as a community to lead active lives". The physical, social and mental health benefits of swimming are widely recognised and these benefits should not be overlooked as an important step to reaching such targets. Aquatic activities can also play a critical role in addressing broader challenges across the life-course, from reducing drowning risk in children to increasing healthy lifestyles for our ageing populations.



- Setting the Scene - "Recovery Areas", Government of Western Australia (2020).

"To ensure a lasting emphasis on the state governments recovery areas, Royal Life Saving WA will continue to advocate for the aquatic workforce and broader community. The workforce underpins community safety in aquatic facilities so ensuring we remain vigilant with training and development will keep us ahead. Participation in aquatic recreation has a range of community benefits, all of which meet state-government objectives, we will continue to advocate for additional funding to support inclusive and targeted participation programs, with a particular focus on regional communities"

- Peter Leaversuch, RLSSWA CEO

# METHODS

This report includes data from WA public swimming pools on the effects of COVID-19 on the Aquatics Recreation Industry.

Data were collected using the following strategies:

- Visitation data were collected from the Aquatic Recreation Centres via provision of own databases and/or providing copies of their reports.

**THANK YOU TO  
THE POOLS  
WHO PROVIDED  
DATA FOR THIS  
RESEARCH.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Royal Life Saving WA would like to thank and acknowledge LIWA Aquatics and the Aquatic Recreation Centres who contributed to the production of this report.

## PARTICIPATING AQUATIC RECREATION CENTRES

- Aqua Jetty
- Aqualife Centre
- Armadale Fitness and Aquatic Centre (AFAC)
- Bay of Isles Leisure Centre - Shire of Esperance
- Bayswater Waves
- Beatty Park Leisure Centre
- Belmont Oasis
- Bold Park Aquatic Centre
- City of Gosnells Leisure World
- Cannington Leisureplex
- Claremont Pool
- Cockburn ARC
- Craigie Leisure Centre
- Fremantle Leisure Centre
- Geraldton Aquarena
- HBF Arena
- HBF Stadium
- Kwinana Recquatic
- Leisurefit Booragoon
- Leisurepark Balga
- Mandurah Aquatic & Recreation Centre
- Manjimup Regional AquaCentre
- Onslow Aquatic Centre
- Riverton Leisureplex
- Rockingham Aquatic Centre
- Scarborough Beach Pool
- Swan Active Ballajura
- Swan Active Beechboro
- Swan Active Midland
- Terry Tyzack Aquatic Centre
- Wanneroo Aquamotion

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