



# BREAK O'DAY COUNCIL DRAFT AQUATIC FACILITY FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS SUMMARY REPORT

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Break O'Day Aquatic Facility Feasibility Analysis examines whether it is practical to build a new aquatic centre in the Break O'Day municipal area. This study looks at what the community needs, possible locations, and financial considerations to help the Council and the community make an informed decision about the project's future.

## 1.1. WHAT ARE THE KEY FINDINGS?



### Demographic and Catchment Analysis

The Break O'Day region has a relatively small and rapidly aging population, with forecasts suggesting a 330% growth in residents aged 85 and over by 2053. This underscores the importance of providing accessible facilities designed for older adults. Furthermore, with approximately 15% of the population being between 0 and 17 years old, there is a clear demand for learn-to-swim programs.



### Existing Facility Provision

Existing aquatic facilities, including those at private venues and schools, are either operating at full capacity or failing to meet the needs of the broader community adequately. The development of a new facility would address these gaps by offering essential services, particularly for learn-to-swim initiatives and warm water therapy programs.



### Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Consultation showed broad community backing for an aquatic centre, with priorities including warm water therapy, learn-to-swim programs and lap swimming. Key concerns were accessibility, affordability, and year-round operation.



### Industry Trends

Modern aquatic centres must remain competitive by catering to diverse user groups and providing high-quality services. Trends emphasise the importance of program pools, warm water therapy, and environmentally sustainable design.

## 1.2. WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

To meet the identified needs and address the key findings three facility options were developed with varying components:

### Option One:

Learn to Swim and Warm Water Pool (one pool).

### Option Two:

Learn to Swim and Warm Water Pool, and Lap Swimming Pool (two pools).

### Option Three:

Learn to Swim, Warm Water, and Lap Swimming (one pool).

## 1.3. WHAT WAS ASSESSED?

Social, Economic, and Health Benefit Assessments were completed on each option to project the local and regional benefits to the community. Capital and Operational Cost Modelling was also undertaken to understand the financial implications of each option.

The outcomes of these assessments and modelling are presented in the table below. All options have projected annual operating deficits, with Option Two showing the highest deficit.

ITEM	FACILITY BUSINESS SCENARIO (BASE CASE)		
	OPTION ONE AVERAGE OVER 10 YEARS	OPTION TWO AVERAGE OVER 10 YEARS	OPTION THREE AVERAGE OVER 10 YEARS
Revenue	\$196,000	\$343,000	\$289,000
Expenditure	\$713,000	\$878,000	\$783,000
Operating Surplus/ Deficit	\$-517,000	\$-535,000	\$-494,000
Total Depreciation	\$-338,000	\$-490,000	\$-407,000
Net Surplus/Deficit	\$-855,000	\$-1,025,000	\$-901,000
Visitations (000's)	12,000	23,000	19,000
Total Capital Cost	\$18,500,000	\$27,200,000	\$21,700,000
Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)	0.42	0.33	0.47

In addition to the quantified benefits above, Aquatic centres offer a wide range of **social benefits** including:

- « Community Engagement & Inclusion
- « Social Connection & Mental Wellbeing
- « Educational Uplift & Skill Development
- « Youth Development

The analysis concluded that while the aquatic centre offers health, economic and social benefits, the high capital costs and modest user base result in a net economic shortfall across all options.

Council and the Aquatic Committee identified option three as the most balanced and realistic concept, large enough to meet local and regional needs while still being financially achievable if substantial external funding is secured. While it carries a higher upfront cost, it also delivers the greatest long-term social and economic return.

#### 1.4. WHERE SHOULD A FUTURE CENTRE BE LOCATED?

Two potential sites were evaluated: St Helens Sports Complex and Scamander Sports Complex. St Helens was recommended due to its larger primary catchment population, better visibility, and infrastructure compatibility.

#### 1.5. WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

To fund the required expenditures, Council modelling has indicated that a model fully supported by grants is the only truly sustainable and responsible way to reduce long-term financial pressure, maintain the Council's ability to renew services, and protect property owners from steep rate hikes. In a community facing high social disadvantage and an ageing population, asking residents to bear heavy financial burdens would be unreasonable, unfair, and out of step with the Council's goals for long-term financial stability.

The analysis demonstrates that the Council is unable to finance an aquatic facility of this magnitude independently. Should the community wish to pursue such a project, seeking significant external funding (i.e 100%), preferably from the Federal Government, represents the most viable course of action. Although full external grants may cover the capital construction expenses, ratepayers would nonetheless incur additional costs as a result of higher rates required to address ongoing operational deficits.

#### 1.6. WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS

This report provides a transparent overview of the costs for building and operating various sized aquatic facilities in Break O'Day. Council modelling outlines the financial implications of each option for property owners without making recommendations.

Community consultation on the options and costs will help gather input on affordability and funding, which is vital since Break O'Day faces significant social and economic challenges, including an older population. Future funding is required to avoid increasing long-term financial strain on households.

After consulting the community, Council will decide whether to advance the project to the next stage, which involves preparing a detailed business case with concept designs, refined demand modelling, and cost estimates. This will allow Council to seek Federal infrastructure funding or election commitments for full or partial construction costs.



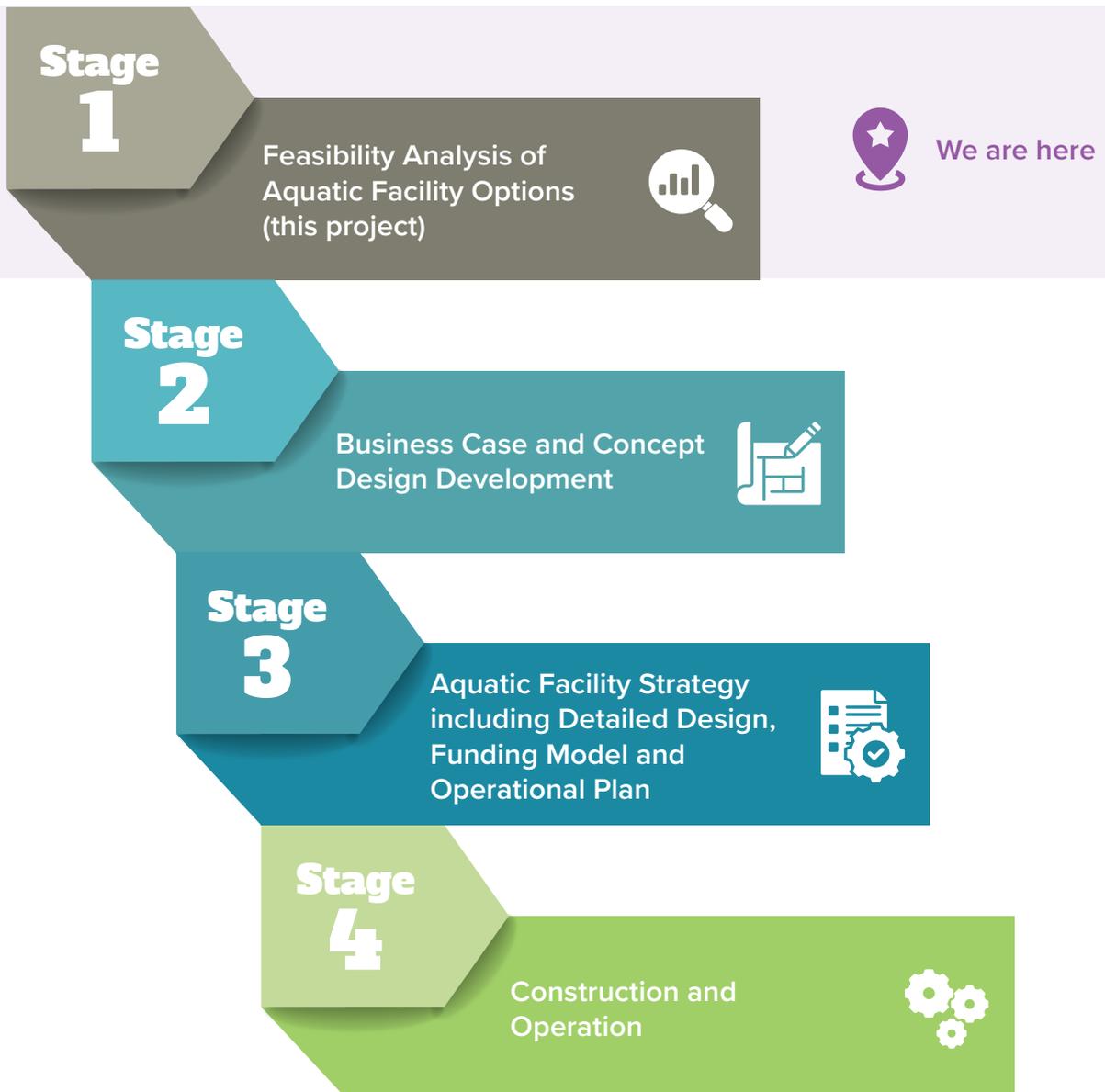
## 2. INTRODUCTION

This project aimed to complete a comprehensive feasibility study for a new aquatic centre in the Break O’Day municipal area. The study examined whether the project is possible at a high level and provide the Break O’Day Council (Council) with valuable information to enable a decision on the aquatic centre's direction. This is a summary document designed to enable further community feedback on the Draft Feasibility before it is finalised.

### 2.1. PROJECT STAGES

This project is Stage 1 of a “gated” methodology, enabling the Council and community to make informed decisions before progressing to the next stage. The staged approach to the overall project delivery is presented below.

Figure 1: Stage Approach to Project Delivery



## 3. MARKET RESEARCH

### 3.1. BENCHMARKING

Research benchmarking was completed on various Tasmanian and Victorian rural and coastal aquatic and leisure facilities servicing similar and larger-sized catchments. The research and benchmarking completed indicates:

- « Significant capital investment is required to construct aquatic facilities.
- « The facilities incur high annual operational losses.
- « Once depreciation is accounted for, the net deficit to Council becomes greater.
- « Attendances at benchmarked facilities ranged from 2.2 to 3.5 visits per head of population.

### 3.2. CATCHMENT COMPETITION

An analysis of the regional catchment indicated that, while St Helens St Helens District High School has a 15-metre heated pool and St Marys District High School has a 25-metre heated pool, these school facilities have limitations, and do not adequately cater to broader community use.

Private learn to swim providers in the catchment do not meet current public-accessible design standards.



## 4. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Consultation for the Break O'Day Aquatic Feasibility Study was conducted in November 2024. The consultation included a wide range of interviews, in-person community workshops, surveys and site visits, including:

- « Councils' website and social media.
- « Online surveys – residents, schools and allied health.
- « Community workshops in St Helens, St Mary's and Scamander.
- « Stakeholder interviews.

### 4.1. WHAT DID WE HEAR?



#### Accessibility

A significant barrier to using aquatic facilities is the absence of a nearby option. Accessibility features and proximity are key priorities.

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#### Demographics

The survey reflects strong engagement from older adults (especially those 60-69 years old). Therefore, the new facility should offer services such as aqua-fitness classes and a warm-water pool.

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#### Popular activities

Recreational swimming, lap swimming, water fitness classes, and rehabilitation therapy are the most popular activities. Features such as affordable membership options, family-friendly areas, heated pools, and therapeutic amenities were mentioned frequently by the respondents. The community's willingness to pay must be carefully considered in pricing strategies.

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#### Barriers to use

High travel distances, cost, and time constraints are significant deterrents. Addressing these issues through an accessible location and affordable options will be critical to increasing facility usage.

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#### Community concerns

While most respondents mentioned no concerns, some mentioned operating costs, admission fees, and long-term sustainability as areas of concern.

The **community survey** results highlight the need for a centrally located, affordable, and well-equipped facility that caters to health, fitness, and family activities, with particular attention to older adults and accessibility.

Both **schools** (St Helens and St Mary's) heavily use their pools for swimming lessons and carnivals, with St Helens also focusing on water safety and PE lessons. Both strongly support a new aquatic facility that prioritises accessibility, school-friendly features, and year-round usability.

The **Allied Health Survey** results recognise a lack of suitable facilities and barriers to accessing warm water therapy in the Break O'Day region. While the current referral rate is low, professionals recognise the benefits and foresee increased demand if barriers such as facility accessibility, affordability and quality are addressed.

**The key themes from the community workshops were:**

- « **Access** to aquatic facilities to Break O'Day residents is limited to school pools only, unless they are willing to travel outside of the municipality.
- « Access to the school pools is **limited to seasonal and outside of school operating hours**. The process is considered prohibitive in some instances due to the ballot system and cost. Neither pool is DDA compliant, and shower facilities are not accessible. Also, due to their location, some residents are required to travel long distances, with transport options and time as factors.
- « **Year-round access** to aquatic facilities was seen as a high need for the community, with other needs relating to physical, mental, and social wellbeing.



A review of the community and stakeholder engagement indicate that the future facility should primarily cater for indoor:

« Warm water therapy

« Lap swimming

« Learn to swim



## 5. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The key findings as they relate to demographics and catchments, existing facility provision, capacity and provision, facility competitors, strategic drivers, engagement and industry trends are:



### Demographics

The area has limited population growth and an ageing population, requiring accessible facilities for therapy and rehabilitation. The area is also one of the most disadvantaged in Tasmania, with lower household incomes and higher rates of overweight and obesity. The ageing catchment is likely to benefit from access to therapy-based aquatic programs. Supporting facilities for these programs may include a warm-water pool for the identified catchment's ageing population



### Access

The absence of suitable and compliant aquatic facilities within a reasonable travel distance creates significant barriers for residents. Existing facilities, including those at local schools and a private provider, are at or near capacity and do not meet contemporary standards. A new aquatic facility would facilitate improved access to aquatic services and programs for all ages



### Strategic support

The Council has strategic support aligned with delivering an aquatic centre in Break O' Day.



### Community and stakeholder engagement

The community and stakeholder engagement identified priority needs for warm water therapy, learn to swim, and lap swimming. Supporting facilities to service these needs may include a program pool (servicing both warm water therapy and learn to swim), a lap swimming pool and a program room.



### Skills Development

The lack of existing facilities limits opportunities for essential water safety and learn-to-swim programs, which are critical life skills for children residing in coastal areas.



### Health Challenges

The community faces high health risk factors, highlighting the need for accessible options for preventative care and low-impact exercise.



### Year-Round Access

Existing options do not provide year-round access or warm water, which is essential for rehabilitation and all-season usage.



### Economic Benefits

An aquatic facility could stimulate the local economy by creating jobs, supporting the existing tourism market, and fostering community spending.



### Social Inclusion

As a community hub, the facility could promote social interaction, inclusivity, and mental wellbeing among diverse demographic groups.



### Young People

Providing a recreational outlet for young people can reduce antisocial behaviour and strengthen community cohesion.



### Partnership Opportunities

Collaborations with schools, health providers, and regional sports organisations could expand usage and create diverse funding opportunities.



### Benchmarking

Benchmarking indicated significant capital investment is required to construct aquatic facilities and high annual operating deficits.

The low population catchment and high capital and operational costs present challenges; however, the strong community and strategic support highlight the long-term value and identified need.

## 6. OPTIONS AND BENEFITS ASSESSMENT

Aquatic centres are complex facilities that require careful planning and design to ensure they meet the community's needs and are financially sustainable. The cost to construct the facilities is high, often one of the largest infrastructure investments of a council, and the cost to operate and subsidise the facilities can also be significant if the correct balance of high revenue yield components is not provided to offset the high-cost aquatic components.

The needs assessment provides the Council with three options for facility components to address the key findings. The three options are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Service direction options

OPTION	PRIMARY SERVICE GAP	KEY FACILITY COMPONENTS REQUIRED
One	1. Learn to swim 2. Warm water therapy	« One program pool shared for both learn to swim and warm water therapy.
Two	1. Learn to swim 2. Warm water therapy 3. Lap swimming	« One program pool shared for both learn to swim and warm water therapy. « One four lane x 25m pool for lap swimming and programming.
Three	1. Learn to swim 2. Warm water therapy 3. Lap swimming	« One six lane 25m pool shared for lap swimming, learn to swim and warm water therapy

Social, Economic, and Health Benefit Assessments were completed on each option to project the local and regional benefits to the community. Capital and Operational Cost Modelling was also undertaken to understand the financial implications of each option.

The outcomes of these assessments and modelling are presented in the table below. All options have projected annual operating deficits, with Option Two showing the highest deficit.

Table 2: Base Case – Comparisons

ITEM	FACILITY BUSINESS SCENARIO (BASE CASE)		
	OPTION ONE AVERAGE OVER 10 YEARS	OPTION TWO AVERAGE OVER 10 YEARS	OPTION THREE AVERAGE OVER 10 YEARS
Revenue	\$196,000	\$343,000	\$289,000
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Council and the Aquatic Committee identified option three as the most balanced and realistic concept, large enough to meet local and regional needs while still being financially achievable if substantial external funding is secured. While it carries a higher upfront cost, it also delivers the greatest long-term social and economic return.

Further financial analysis by Council shows the Council cannot fund an aquatic facility of this size alone. If the community wants to proceed, obtaining full external funding, ideally from the Federal Government is necessary. Even with grants covering construction, ratepayers would still face higher rates due to ongoing operational deficits.

## 6.1. BENEFITS

An economic and social benefits assessment for the proposed aquatic, was undertaken evaluating the three development options. The analysis covers both the construction phase and a 10-year operational period.



### Construction Phase Impacts:

Job creation ranges from  
**28.9 to 35.4 FTE jobs,**  
depending on the option.

Regional income generated during  
construction spans

**\$4.86M to \$7.29M.**



### Operational Phase Impacts:

Annual user numbers vary from  
**11,000 to 23,000,**  
depending on facility size.

Over 10 years, total economic and social  
benefits are:

**Option 1: \$8.92M**

**Option 2: \$12.35M**

**Option 3: \$13.04M**



### Regional Economic Impacts:

Jobs supported annually range from  
**6.4 to 7.5 FTE.**

Regional income over 10 years ranges from

**\$4.89M to \$5.60M.**

Visitor spending contributes an additional

**\$96,000 to \$234,500**  
**annually.**



### Benefit-Cost Analysis (7% Discount Rate):

All options yield Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCR)  
below 1, indicating that the quantified  
benefits do not outweigh the total costs  
over 10 years:

**Option 1 BCR: 0.42**

**Option 2 BCR: 0.33**

**Option 3 BCR: 0.47**

The benefits assessment outcomes occur primarily because for each pool option, capital costs are high, and the projected number of annual users is low due to the population size and demographics of the Break O'Day LGA.

## Other Benefits

Aquatic centres offer a wide range of social benefits that positively impact individuals and communities such as:



### Community Engagement & Inclusion

- « Aquatic centres serve as community hubs, fostering social interaction across diverse groups
- « Features like accessible pool entries promote inclusivity



### Social Connection & Mental Wellbeing

- « Participation in group activities at aquatic centres enhances bonding with family and friends, improving social wellbeing
- « Group-based aquatic programs are more effective than solo activities in reducing stress, anxiety, and improving self-esteem



### Educational Uplift & Skill Development

- « Centres provide platforms for swimming lessons, water safety education, and lifeguard training, which are vital life skills
- « They support volunteer opportunities and community service, contributing to educational and civic engagement



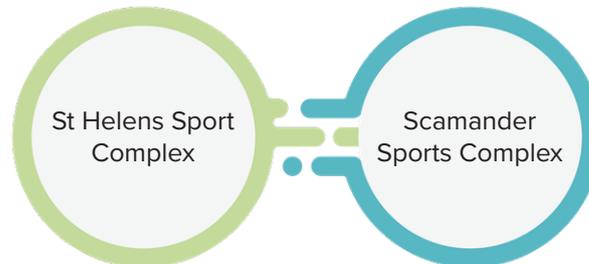
### Cultural & Recreational Value

- « These centres can host community events, and recreational activities that build community pride and identity



## 7. SITE ASSESSMENT

The two locations identified throughout the engagement activities with supporting land planning details provided that could be considered to develop an aquatic centre in Break O'Day were:



A tailored site assessment tool was developed to assess sites against the following criteria:

1. Location to Catchment Population
2. Size of Site Meets Development Requirements
3. Public and Active Transport Access
4. High Visibility of Site
5. Land Suitability
6. Place (Transformative Place Making)
7. People (Transformative Place Making)
8. Access to Land and Timing of Development
9. Site Services
10. Site Geology
11. Site Access
12. Impact on Current Users
13. Compatibility of Site
14. Future Facility Expansion Capability
15. Planning/Zoning
16. Environmental Impact
17. Steep site contours
18. Site contamination
19. Value of Site
20. Capital Cost of Development.

### 7.1. SITE ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

As the major town in the Break O'Day area and the East Coast, and following the site assessment, St Helens is considered the best site for any future aquatic centre as:

1. St Helens is more highly and densely populated in the primary catchment. St Helens has the largest population within proximity and travel time (0-10 mins) to the township, where most users are expected to be drawn from i.e. larger population in the primary catchment.
2. Active transport is more favourable in the St Helens location.
3. The St Helens location (on the Tasman Highway/Tully Street/Young Street corner) is more visible/prominent.
4. The St Helens location has greater future facility expansion capability.
5. St Helens also features a hospital, numerous accommodation options, a District High School offering kindergarten to grade 12, a Trade Training Centre, a Neighbourhood House, a Business Enterprise Centre, a Regional Jobs Hub, Residential Aged Care, numerous restaurants and cafés and retail outlets.

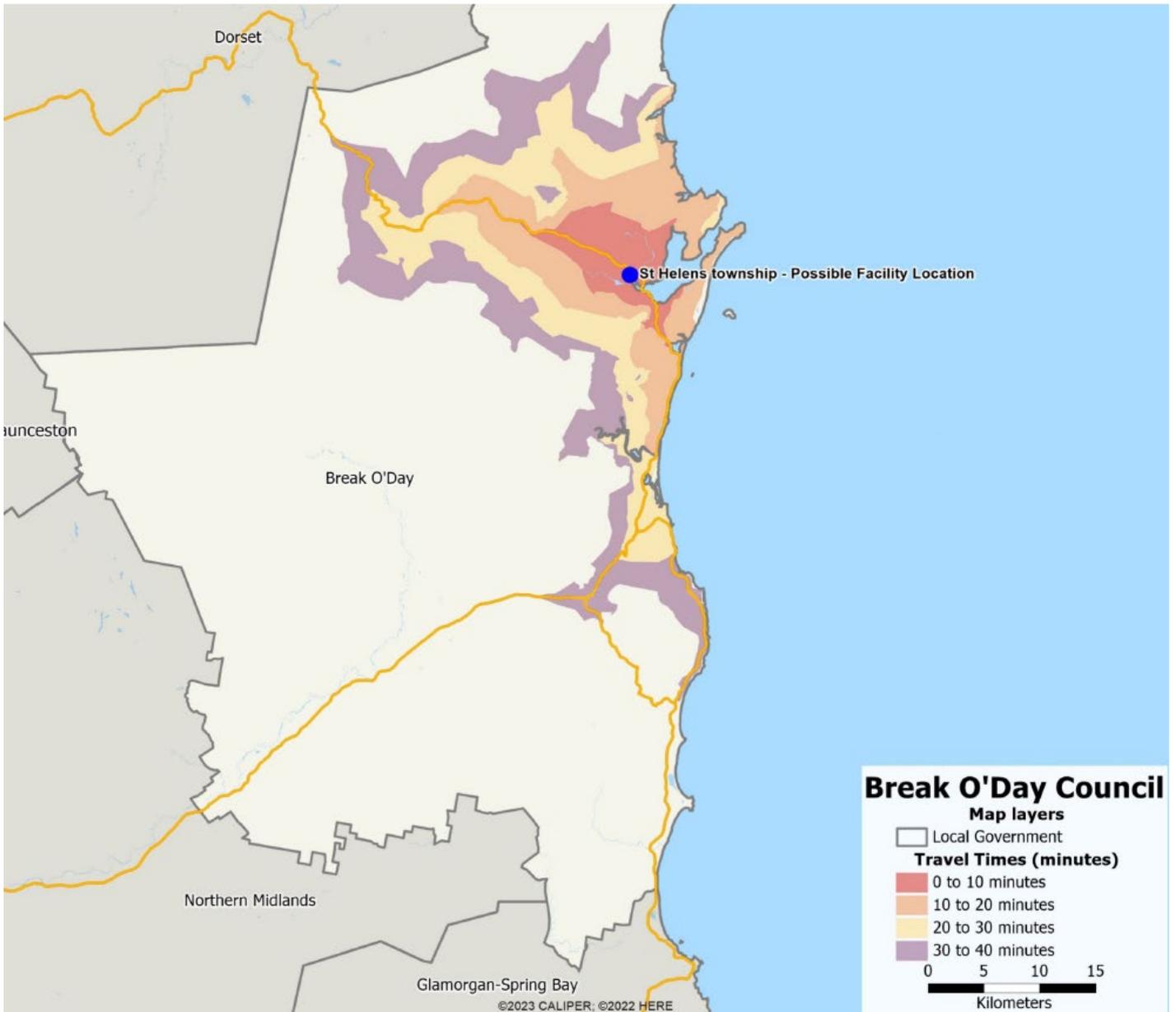
## 7.2. ST HELENS CATCHMENT ANALYSIS

From our industry analysis and benchmarking of many aquatic, leisure and recreational health and fitness facilities and aquatic membership databases, we know that, in general, approximately 75% to 85% of regional facility users will reside within a 0 -10-minute radius of a facility, with the remaining 15% to 25% coming from areas outside of the 10-minute travel time.

Several factors will influence the size and shape of the catchment area, including the range and quality of facilities and services offered, natural and built barriers, travel times, and the availability of competing facilities. Individuals' willingness to travel to leisure centres generally also diminishes with distance.

The figure below presents the St Helens catchment area.

Figure 6: St Helens 40-minute Travel Time Catchments



## 8. WARRANTIES AND DISCLAIMERS

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group Pty Ltd (Otium) has applied their experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence', and these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

Otium's advice does not extend to, or imply professional expertise in the disciplines of economics, quantity surveying, engineering or architecture. External advice in one or more of these disciplines may have been sought, where necessary, to address the requirements of the project objectives. There will be differences between projected and actual results because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected, and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite, or guarantee the projections' achievability, as it is impossible to substantiate assumptions based on future events.

This report does not constitute advice, investment advice, or opinion and must not be relied on for funding or investment decisions. Independent advice should be obtained in relation to investment decisions.

Accordingly, neither Otium nor any member or employee of Otium undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than the client in respect to this report for any errors or omissions herein arising through negligence or otherwise caused.



# APPENDIX ONE: WHO IS OUR COMMUNITY?



## POPULATION



**+12.4%**



The Break O'Day Council had an estimated resident population of 7,075 in 2023. The population has increased since 2016 by 877 persons (12.4%).



0 TO 17 YEARS

14.8%

19.9%

60 YEARS  
AND OLDER

43.9%

29.1%

Break O'Day Local Government Area

Northern Tasmanian Region

Overall, 14.8% of the population in Break O'Day was aged 0 to 17 years, while 43.9% were aged 60 years and older, compared to 19.9% and 29.1% respectively in the Northern Tasmania Region. This indicates that a considerable portion of the population consists of individuals aged 60 years and older.



Over half the population live in three towns:

St Helens

33.8

St Marys

11.2%

Scamander

10.5%



While the resident population is growing (slowly), it is ageing rapidly (hyper-ageing).



Population growth is sourced from internal migration, predominantly from within Tasmania and in older age cohorts.



## FUTURE POPULATION



Over the next 30 years (to 2053), the Break O'Day Local Government Area (LGA) is projected to grow by 10.2%, reaching 7,795 people, a modest increase from 7,075 in 2023. This represents an **annual growth rate of 0.34%**.



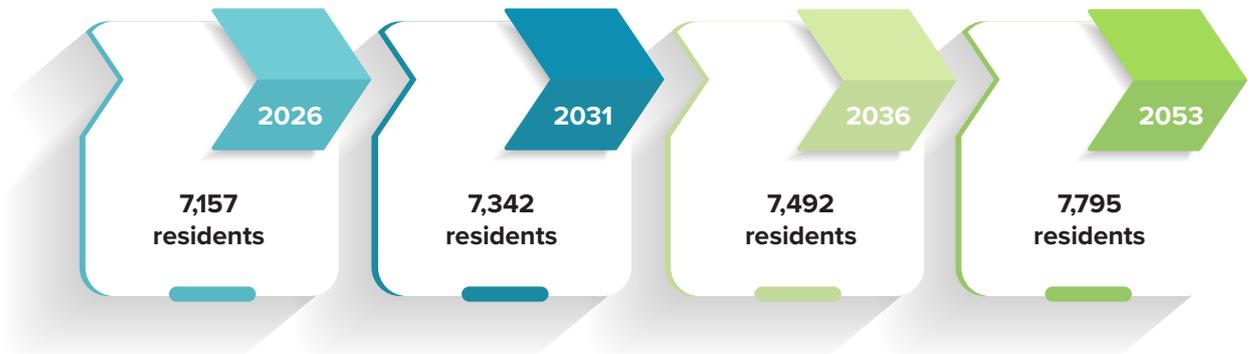
Despite the small overall growth, the population structure will shift significantly, with a notable increase in **85 years and older individuals**. By 2038, the number of people aged 85+ is expected to grow by 200%, and by 2053, it will rise by over 330%, making up **10.1% of the population**.



The LGA's population is ageing rapidly, and the **median age is expected to rise to 61.1 years**.

The figure below summarises the projected future population in Break O'Day:

Figure 2: Estimated Population of Break O'Day 2026-2053



Source: Population projections for Tasmania and local government areas (LGAs) (medium series). Tasmanian Government

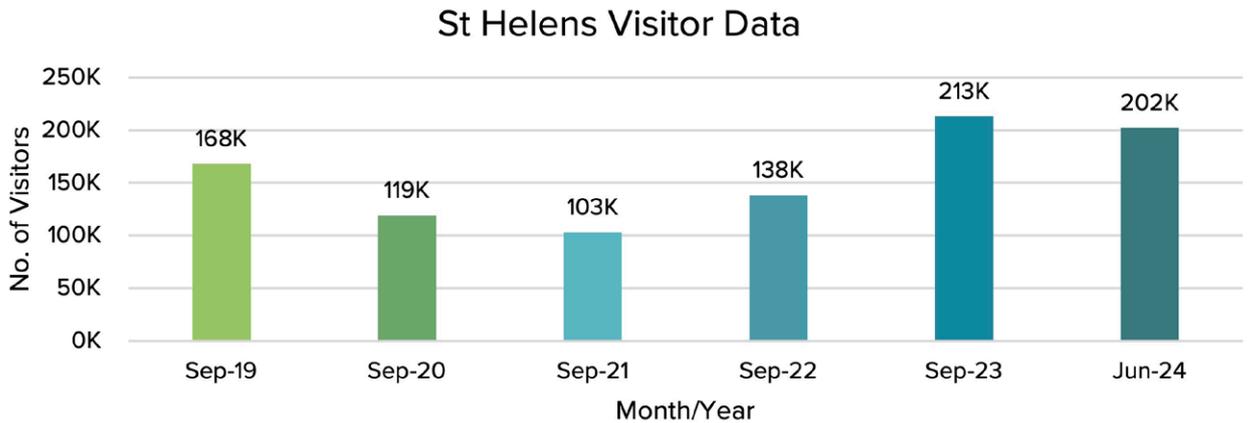


## SEASONAL POPULATION

### Visitation

According to the Tourism Tasmania visitor data, a total of 202,000 people visited St Helens in 2023-24. The following graph illustrates the visitor count through the six years from 2019 to 2024.

Figure 3: Visitor Data to St Helens 2019 to 2024



The main purpose of the visits was for a holiday (77%), followed by visiting friends and family (13.3%) and business purposes (6%).



## HOUSING

Of the 4,850 dwellings in Break O'Day, almost **two-thirds (65.0%) were privately occupied** at the time of the 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing – permanent residents. **Nearly a third (31.3%) were unoccupied**, suggesting that the dwelling is not the owner's primary residence, and **visitors occupied 3.3%** at the time of the Census.



## SEIFA INDEX OF DISADVANTAGE

The Break O'Day area is the **sixth-highest disadvantaged community in Tasmania**, according to the SEIFA indexes. Break O'Day has a higher level of disadvantage compared to the rest of Tasmania, including less weekly income per household, and higher levels of overweight/obesity.

# APPENDIX TWO: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## BREAK O'DAY STRATEGIC PLAN

The Break O'Day Strategic Plan (2017-2027, revised March 2022) established the Council's vision as:



A naturally beautiful environment that speaks to our heart. A diverse and thriving community; a place of opportunity. A place where everyone feels safe, welcome and connected.

To realise the vision, the Strategic Plan focuses on three objectives:



Two further objectives, Infrastructure and Services, underpin these three objectives and are the foundations upon which the community is built and survives.

There is strong strategic alignment to develop an Aquatic Centre in Break O'Day with the following Council objectives:

Figure 4: Proposed Aquatic Centre Alignment with Council Objectives



### Services

To have access to quality services that are responsive to the changing needs of the community and lead to improved health, education and employment outcomes.



### Infrastructure

To provide quality infrastructure which enhances the liveability and viability of our communities for residents and visitors.



### Community

To strengthen our sense of community and lifestyle through opportunities for people to connect and feel valued.



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