

FRIENDS OF COBURG OLYMPIC POOL END OF SUMMER SEASON 2025-2026 SURVEY REPORT (n127)

May, 2026



Contact Friends of Coburg Olympic Pool (FCOP): via our social media accounts on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

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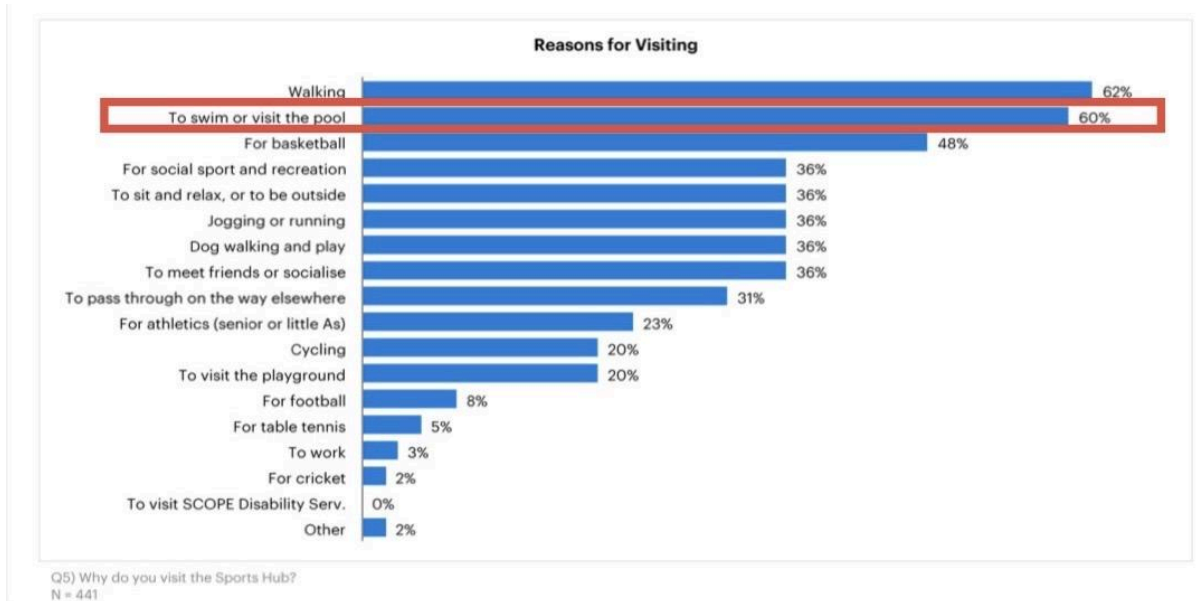
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Exhibit A: Early morning lap swimming attendance figures (2 Dec 2025-1 April 2026)

1. Introduction

Coburg Olympic Swimming Pool (COSP) is a 50 metre, outdoor, seasonal pool located on the banks of the Merri Creek in Coburg North. COSP is a **much-loved and iconic community asset that warrants an investment strategy** but which has no planned expenditure in Merri-bek Council's current [Aquatic Strategy 2018-2038](#)

The **Coburg North Sports Hub consultation** showed the popularity of COSP, with 60% of 441 respondents' stating they visit the precinct to go to the pool.



[Coburg North Sports Hub, Phase One Engagement Report, Feb 2025 N = 441](#)

Local artists know COSP is iconic:



Places of Coburg. Artist: [Lawz Drawz](#)



Card by [Able And Game](#)

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Friends of Coburg Olympic Pool (FCOP) is a group of volunteers who, as [Save Coburg Olympic Pool](#), successfully campaigned in 2007-08 to reopen Coburg Olympic Swimming Pool (COSP) after it was closed for two seasons. We continued to support and advocate for the pool, including co-organising yearly 'Ride to Pool Day' events which got up to 1500 visitors. In recent years we have continued to meet regularly with management, including pre-season.



One of several FCOP co-hosted Ride to Pool Days. Pic: Janet Grigg.

Preceding the 2025-26 season, FCOP requested an **early morning lap swimming trial** be conducted. The trial was implemented from 6am to 8am on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The trial was for December 2025 only but eventually extended through to the end of March due to the very high attendance rates and positive feedback.

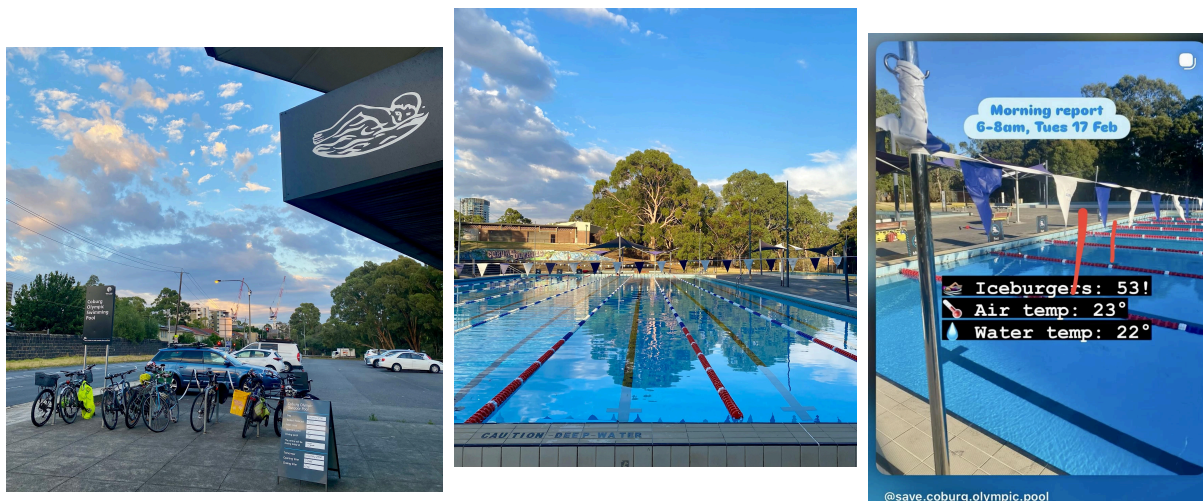
FCOP dubbed the early morning swimmers **Coburg Iceburgers** (leaning into the fact the pool is unheated) and at least three WhatsApp groups were formed by keen Iceburgers.

The early morning season was a joyous experience, with people loving the happy, friendly, community feel and the opportunity to finally be able to swim regularly for exercise and training - at a beautiful outdoor pool. Many got back into swimming for the first time in years and some locals used COSP for the first time!



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FCOP provided updates on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts after each early morning session, including temperatures and Iceburger numbers, and produced a picture series on 'People of Coburg Olympic' (see cover page), all of which helped build interest and community over the summer.



According to data collated by FCOP (see Exhibit A), early morning lap swimming over the season had a **median attendance of 37 swimmers**. The average figure of 35 was brought down by an outlier low number after a cold snap. This is a **very conservative figure** as we didn't include some mornings where numbers were just a staff estimate as opposed to manual counting - these were some big days with estimates from 80-100 swimmers.

Further to this, total aquatic attendance numbers for the season, supplied by Council, show COSP (unheated with limited hours and subject to weather triggers) was **only 5.86% behind the numbers for Coburg Leisure Centre** (heated and open every day for many more hours).

FCOP believes the strong attendance figures indicate the significant unmet demand for outdoor, 50 metre, lap swimming in Coburg. There is also unmet demand for other forms of water exercise, for example three months of *Pop Gymnastics* sold out in minutes.

In order to confidently articulate community demand regarding COSP to decision makers, FCOP decided to conduct an end of summer season survey of Iceburgers and general COSP users.

2. Methodology

The survey was developed on a Google form and was conducted in person on the last two early mornings of the 2025-26 season via hard copies and QR code link. The survey link was also shared on FCOP's Instagram and Facebook accounts and kept open for just under one week (1 April to 6 April). The vast majority of the 127 responses were online with just three being completed on the hard copy.

3. Key Findings

Respondents (n = 127) and their relationship with COSP.

- **70.3% associated with the female gender.**
- Most live locally in **Coburg + Coburg North** (68%), with the majority being on the Cooper Federal electorate side (56.8%) compared to Wills. (Figs. 2 & 3)
- As shown in Figure 4, **A majority (over 65%) rode or walked to the pool** (with a few more using PT or a mix). **More rode to COSP (39.1%) than drove (30.5%).**
- **Exercise** was the most chosen use for COSP (93.8%) followed by 60.9% choosing cooling down in hot weather (see Fig.5)

Early Mornings

“After living in Coburg for nearly 20 years it’s great to finally be able to swim regularly at my local pool and I look forward to it. This would not have been possible for me without the consistent morning opening hours.”

“It’s been a really lovely community and a great way to start the day. Also a joy to swim without worrying about UV!”

Fitness and overall sense of well-being, swimming outdoors in a 50 metre pool by the creek surrounded by trees is good for my body and brain! And I can ride there

“Beautiful start to the day. Close to home so easy to get to. Community, seeing people I know, meeting new people + exercise 😊”

- As Table 1 shows, the most commonly cited reason/ benefit, by far, for attending early mornings at COSP was **mental health and wellbeing**. People also said it was a **great start to the day** and they strongly valued the happy friendly **community** and the **beautiful natural setting**.
- **Access** was a key theme. The early sessions at COSP were a **convenient** time and location with people loving being able to **walk or ride**. The lack of **UV** at that time was a factor for many.
- The **predictable opening** meant people could plan a **regular exercise routine**, including **training**.
- Iceburgers valued COSP being **outdoors** and **50 metres** with some specifically enjoying the **cool water**.
- Iceburgers strongly want **mornings to extend to more days (71%)**, as well as **57% wanting more months** and **46% wanting more hours**. (See Fig 8)
- If COSP was open more mornings, **65.5% indicated they would swim 2 or 3 mornings a week** with a further significant proportion saying they would swim even more often. (See Fig.7)

COSP in general

“Consistency is the key! Esp for exercise and building healthy habits/routine. If the pool was heated there is no reason morning laps couldn’t be all year.”

“I love the outdoor pool but I would love it more if it was HEATED and available ALL YEAR ROUND!”

“The pool is a beautiful and precious resource of the utmost value. It would be great to see it used more and open more.”

“Thanks to everyone who made this happen. I support heating the pool if that would mean it could be open more months. I think options for regularity generally would increase Coburg pool use.”

“The pool needs to have more regular opening hours in summer so you can swim when there is less UV and there needs to be certainty so you can plan.”

“Better comms, longer open hours. Less fickle and confusing rules for opening. Thank you everyone for a great season”

“This pool is an amazing public asset and needs a clear investment strategy for the future. As Coburg and surrounds grows and becomes more populated it is vital for community to be active and stay fit, healthy and connected to their community. I have loved being an Iceburger and would go at least 3 mornings a week if possible.”

- While many early morning swimmers enjoyed the cool water, a significant **67.5% of respondents want COSP heated** compared to 15.9% who do not. (Fig 5)
- Table 2 shows the **strongest results in the general COSP open ended question were people wanting the pool heated and open year round.**
- Pool users want it open more, for longer hours and for a longer season.
- **Consistent predictable hours** was the other strongest response.
- COSP users want **better communication** about variations in hours and opening.
- Respondents view COSP as a **community asset that needs an investment strategy** for the future.
- Users want to see this asset a lot **more activated** and provided lots of good ideas (Table 2)

4. Recommendations

Long term:

1. FCOP recommends Merri-bek Council take all steps necessary to work towards the goal of COSP being a **heated, year-round, outdoor 50 metre swimming pool,**

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including working with the State and Federal Governments and other relevant stakeholders.

Short term:

2. In order to facilitate the goal of a heated, year-round COSP:
 - Include planning and design for a heated year round COSP in the upcoming **Aquatic Strategy**.
 - Implement the **Coburg North Sports Hub** [motion passed unanimously in July 2025](#) for short term action:

*“That the **short term development plan** for Zone 3 includes the **development of concept design options for a redeveloped Coburg Olympic Pool and associated facilities...**”*

- Work pro-actively with State and Federal Governments and other relevant stakeholders to secure funding.
3. Facilities:
 - **Install additional lighting for pool, pool deck and steps for swimming and movement safety during darker early mornings.**
 - Repair the clock or replace it with a new clock that includes a seconds hand.
 - Fix the BBQ (has not been working for two seasons).
 - Add a power point to the women’s changing room for hair dryers.
 - Add a coffee machine.

Next Season:

4. **Increase community access to early mornings sessions:**
 - **Add at least Saturday morning**, preferably more, bringing the lap swimming sessions up to **at least three per week** preferably more.
 - **Extend the early morning season** by trialing November to April.
 - **Trial extended hours** (until 9am or 9.30am).
5. Increase access to COSP in general by:
 - **extending the season and trial a November start.**
 - looking at ways to have more **consistent and predictable hours**.
6. Management:
 - **Improve communication regarding hours and opening**, including to ‘Iceburgers’ if there are issues opening the pool early.
 - Set up an **Instagram** account for COSP linked to the Facebook account
 - Update the Active Merri-bek website.
 - **Better activate the COSP facility**, for instance aqua aerobics, exercise classes on the grass, swimming training and stroke correction, more community events, monthly breakfast, regular bi/triathlons.
 - **Better promote events to the community.**
 - Look at ways to provide **more food, and coffee!**

5. Results

Figure 1

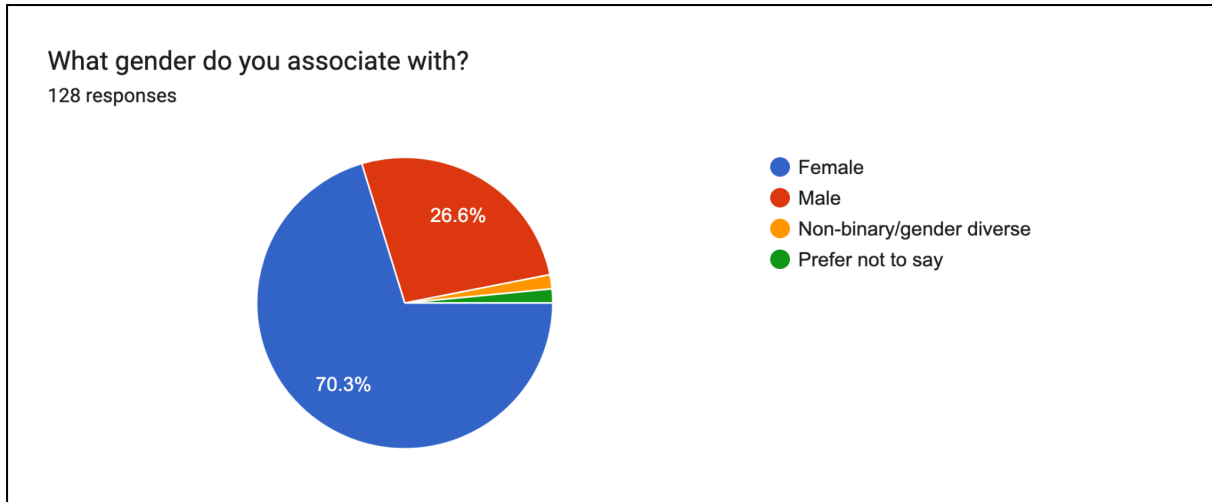


Figure 2

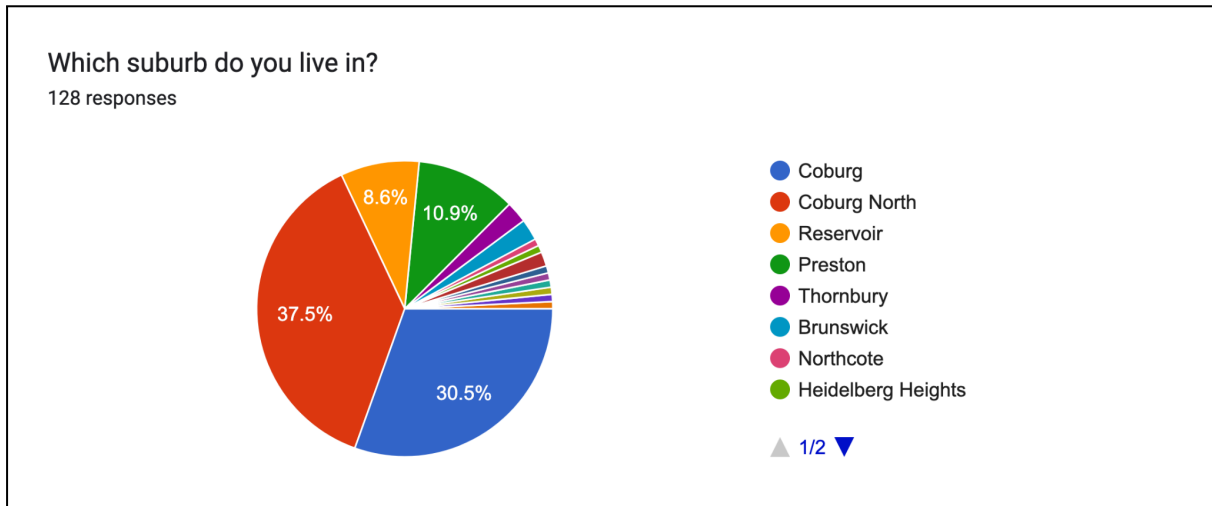


Figure 3

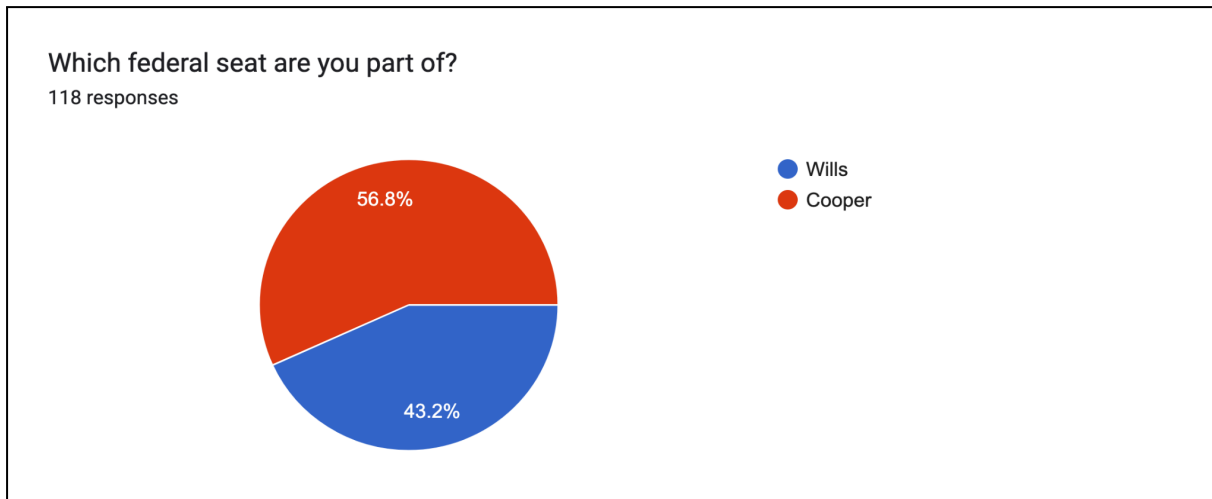


Figure 4

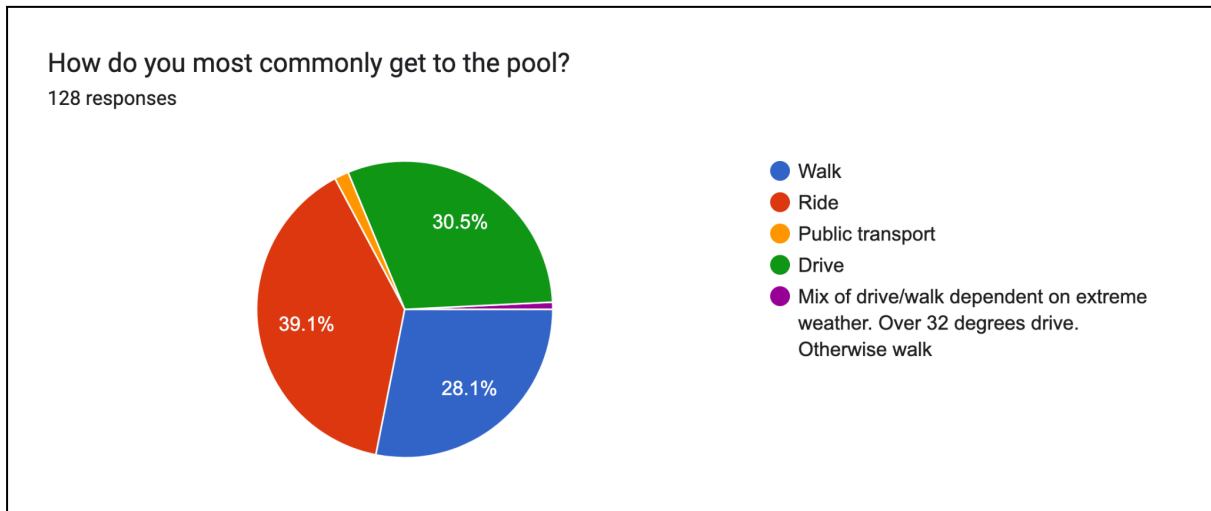


Figure 5

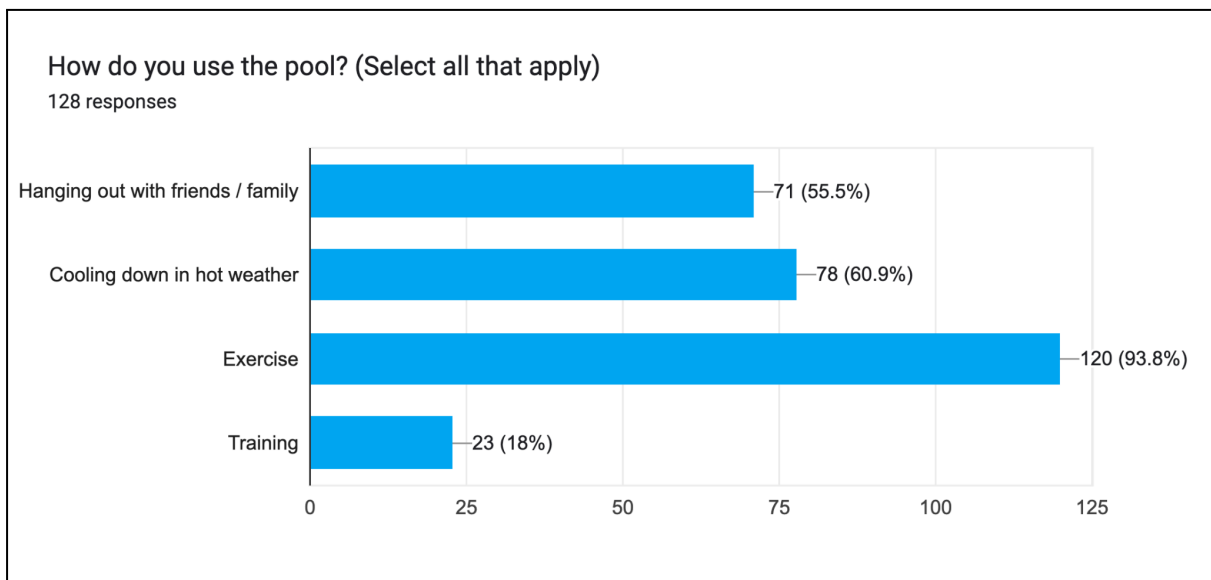


Figure 5

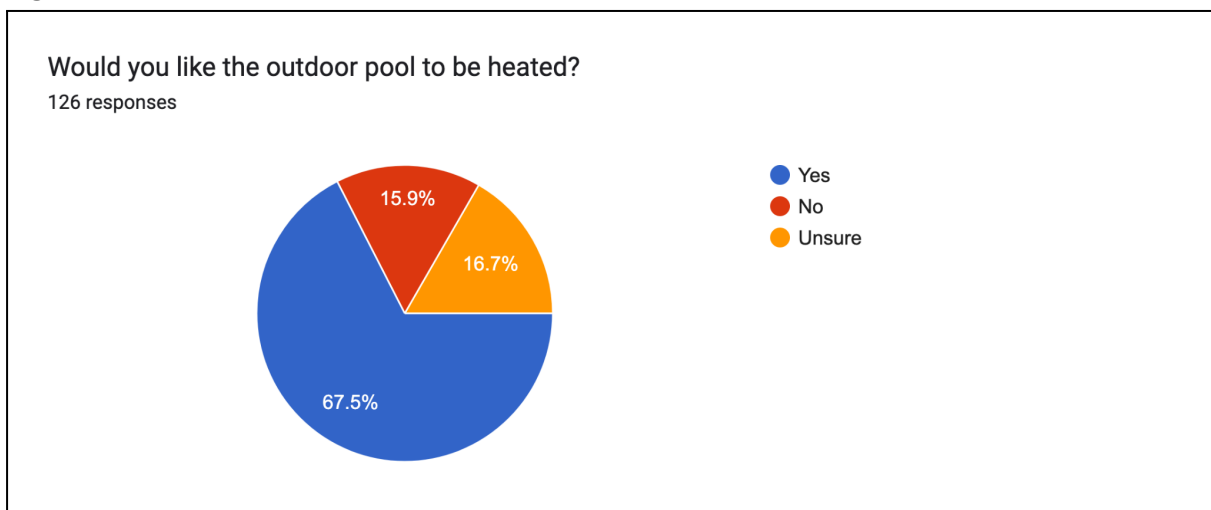


Figure 6

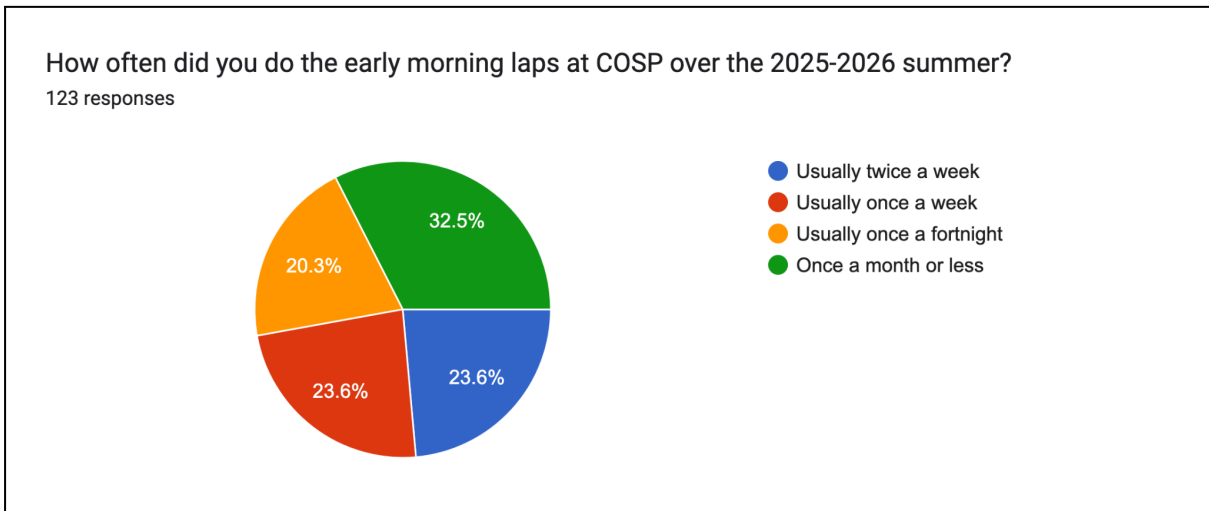


Figure 7

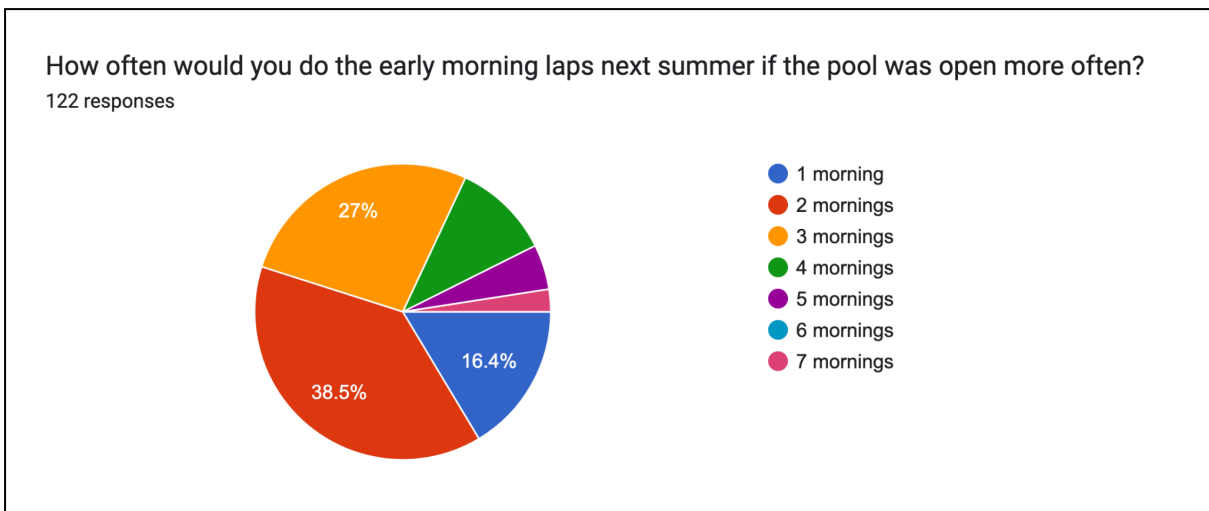
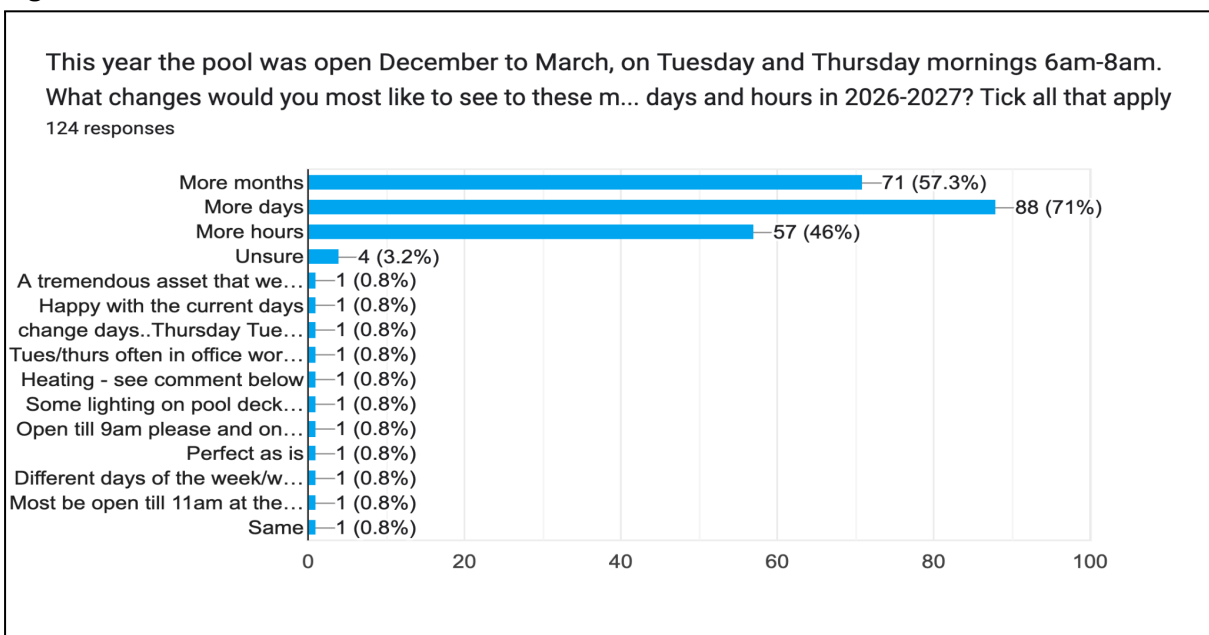


Figure 8



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Table 1: Analysis of qualitative open-ended question regarding the respondents' motivations to do early morning lap swimming at COSP this season.

<i>Q: Why did you do early morning lap swimming at COSP this season? Eg. How has it helped you? (n=105)</i>	
MENTAL HEALTH/ WELLBEING	
• Mental health/ wellbeing	37
• Great start to the day	27
• COMMUNITY (seeing regular swimmers new and existing friends, happy friendly swimmers and staff)	19
• Beautiful, natural environment	17
• Fun, pleasure	2
ACCESS	
• Convenient location / close to home	25
• Convenient time	18
• Can walk or ride	6
• Reliably open	6
• Supporting use of local facility	5
• No UV issue	4
• Other pools too crowded	3
• Back into swimming!	2
HEALTH - PHYSICAL	
• Exercise routine / strength / fitness	34
• Physical health	23
• Cool water	15
• Outdoor/ fresh air	14
• 50 metre pool	10
• Training	3

Table 2: Analysis of a qualitative open-ended question regarding COSP in general.

<i>Q: Do you have any other comments or requests for COSP in general? (n=81)</i>	
HEATING	
• Heated	21
• Heated during winter	5
• Unheated	1
• Use pool blanket to retain heat	1
HOURS/ DAYS/ SEASON	
• Open year round	21
• Consistent/ predictable hours	20
• More early mornings	12
• Longer season	11
• Hours extended	10
• Lower (or no) trigger temp for opening	6
• Open more	3
• More early morning hours	3
• Open earlier on hot days to avoid UV	3
• Open earlier in the afternoon so can swim before school pick up	1
MANAGEMENT	
• Better communication (hours/ open)	8
• Better method to communicate with users when issues with opening in early mornings	2
• Promote the pool more	3
• More staff on hot days so not queuing outside in hot sun	1
• Remove bird poo around pool edges	1
FACILITIES	

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● A community asset	8
● Investment strategy for the future	6
● sauna/ steam room/ spa	4
● Keep as is	3
● Fix clock incl second hand for laps	3
● Fix BBQ (out of action for 2 seasons)	2
● Better lighting around the pool	2
● Cafe	2
● Lights in changerooms	2
● Power point in women's changerooms for hairdryer	2
● Coffee machine	1
ACTIVATION IDEAS	
● Regular aqua aerobics	4
● Aerobic/ exercise yoga classes outside	3
● More food options	2
● Ask local businesses to do food and coffee	3
● Food truck Friday	2
● Monthly breakfast gathering	2
● More community activities	1
● Better promotion of events	1
● Weekly biathlons	1
● Triathlons	1
● Early morning weekly stroke correction session	1
● Weekly training schedule	1
● Re-establish Coburg Swimming Club	1
● Coburg Olympic Pool swim cap	1
● Bands	1

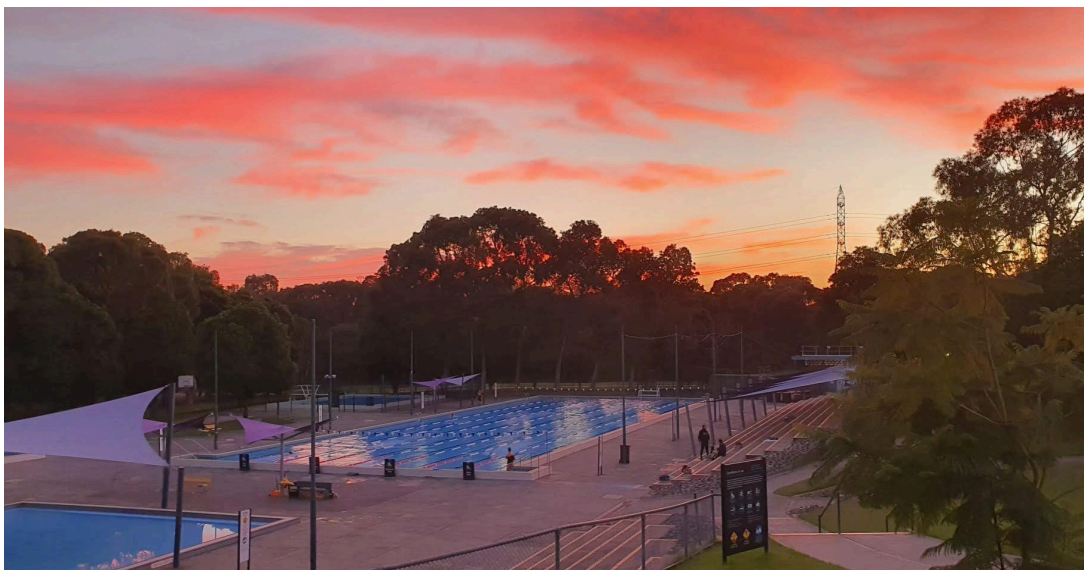
Exhibit A: Early morning lap swimming attendance figures (2 Dec 2025-1 April 2026)

The following data was collated by FCOP in collaboration with the Duty Managers who manually recorded attendance numbers for us on most mornings.

Date	Swimmers	Air temp (6am-8am)	Pool
Tuesday 2 Dec	20	9.7°	16°
Thursday 4 Dec	35	20°	18°
Tuesday 9 Dec	34	16°-18°	
Thursday 11 Dec	22	10°-12°	18°
Tuesday 16 Dec	13	13°	
Thursday 18 Dec	42	16°-21°	
Tuesday 23 Dec	44		
Tuesday 31 Dec	80-100 (staff estimate)		
Tuesday 6 Jan	(31 by 7.30am, final figure unknown)		
Thursday 8 Jan	50	24°-28*	24°
Tuesday 13 Jan	40 (staff estimate)	17°	
Thursday 15 Jan	38	18°	
Tuesday 20 Jan	57	18°	
Thursday 22 Jan	Issue opening pool		
Tuesday 27 Jan	88 (staff estimate)	16°-18°	
Thursday 29 Jan	49	17°	22°
Tuesday 3 Feb	38	10°-11°	19°
Thursday 5 Feb	51	16°	21°
Tuesday 10 Feb	37	17°	20°
Thursday 12 Feb	22	12°	20°

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Tuesday 17 Feb	53	23°	22°
Thursday 19 Feb	37	15°	21°
Tuesday 24 Feb	38	16°	21°
Thursday 26 Feb	31	13°	20°
Tuesday 3 March	Issue opening pool		
Thursday 5 March	25	15°	20°
Tuesday 10 March	34	18°	19°
Thursday 12 March	27	13°-14°	19°
Tuesday 17 March	30	17°	19°
Thursday 10 March	19	17°	19°
Tuesday 24 March	38	19°	20°
Thursday 26 March	Issue opening pool		
Tuesday 31 March	43	15°	19°
Thursday 1 April	21	12°	18°
Median (not counting estimates)	37		
Average (not counting estimates)	35		



Pic credit: Greg U.