

Winchelsea Pool 2025 / 2026 Season Engagement Results

September 2025

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Purpose

The operating hours of the pool for the 2025-26 season will largely be determined by the available budget.

Council subsidises the operating cost of the pool to keep it affordable for the community, however, we need to balance our operating costs with community use and our need to fund other community facilities and services.

The survey sought the community's input on some potential small adjustments.

In many cases, feedback received via the open text boxes in the survey, while acknowledged, was outside the scope of this survey.

Feedback themes have been summarised and an officer response for each theme has been included in the report.

The purpose of the engagement was to get feedback from community to help us with programming for the 2025-26 season:

The engagement was open Tuesday 5 August through Tuesday 26 August 2025. Throughout this time, we collected the following statistics;



21 days
of engagement



162
surveys completed



378
Your Say page
views



11
Your Say followers



23
Social media
reactions

How we engaged

We received feedback from community via:

- an online survey on Council's Your Say page
- reactions to social media posts on Council's Facebook page.
- a community member conducted an independent survey on community wishes for the new pool, and shared findings with us.

To get the word out about the project and encourage feedback we prepared the following communications:

- Media release (Issued 6 August 2025).
- Social media posts: a primary post (6 August) and a reminder post (26 August), shared to Winchelsea Health Club's Facebook page (8 August). It was also picked up by What's on in Winchelsea Community Facebook page (6 August).

Your Say survey results

"Please open as much as possible it's an amazing asset to this beautiful community!"

"There should be extended hours on hot days, open on public holidays. Lap swimming 3 mornings a week all year round. School swimming lessons for local schools. Closed if temp below 20 degrees"

We had 162 contributions to the survey. It was no surprise most respondents were from Winchelsea. But residents from Moriac, Inverleigh, Deans Marsh and Torquay responded, as well as 5 other smaller towns.

Overall, the feedback reflects a high level of enthusiasm for the upgraded pool facility, with many expressing a desire for it to be used more frequently and with greater flexibility. Some respondents feel that the current operational approach does not align with the town's

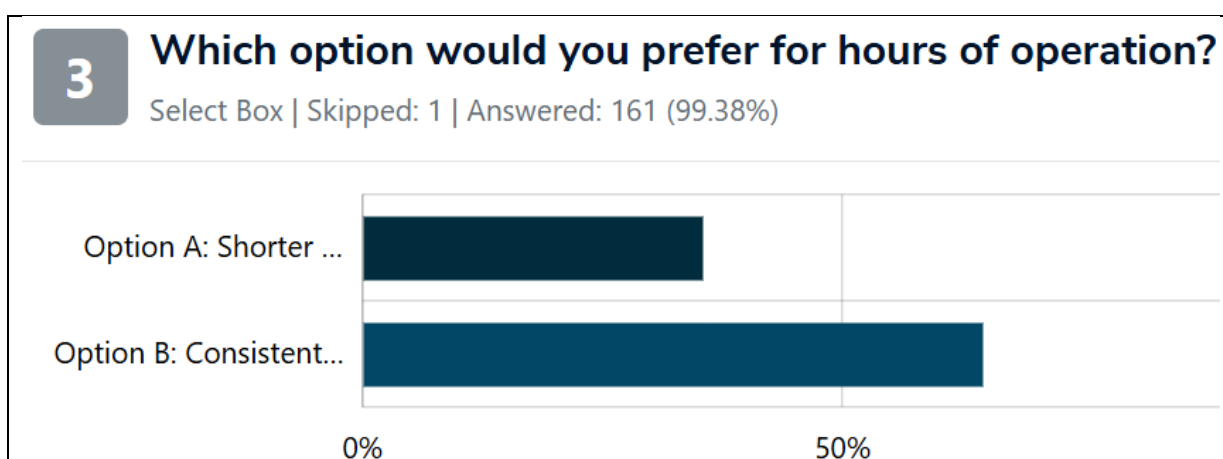
population growth, or the scale of investment made in the asset. There is a clear interest in ensuring consistent access, developing inclusive programming, and encouraging local involvement in the facility's ongoing use and management.

Questions with 'drop down' responses

When asked if they had used the new pool, 64% of respondents had. Ninety six percent of responders intended to use the pool in the future.

Many respondents (65%) wanted to retain consistent hours of operation, rather than shorter hours during school terms and longer hours over school holidays.

"Would like the pool to have consistent open hours for access"



Just over half of the respondent agreed to closing the pool when temperature predictions were below 22 degrees.

"Happy to close under 22deg if you open on day/weekends that will be over 34 after labour day weekend."

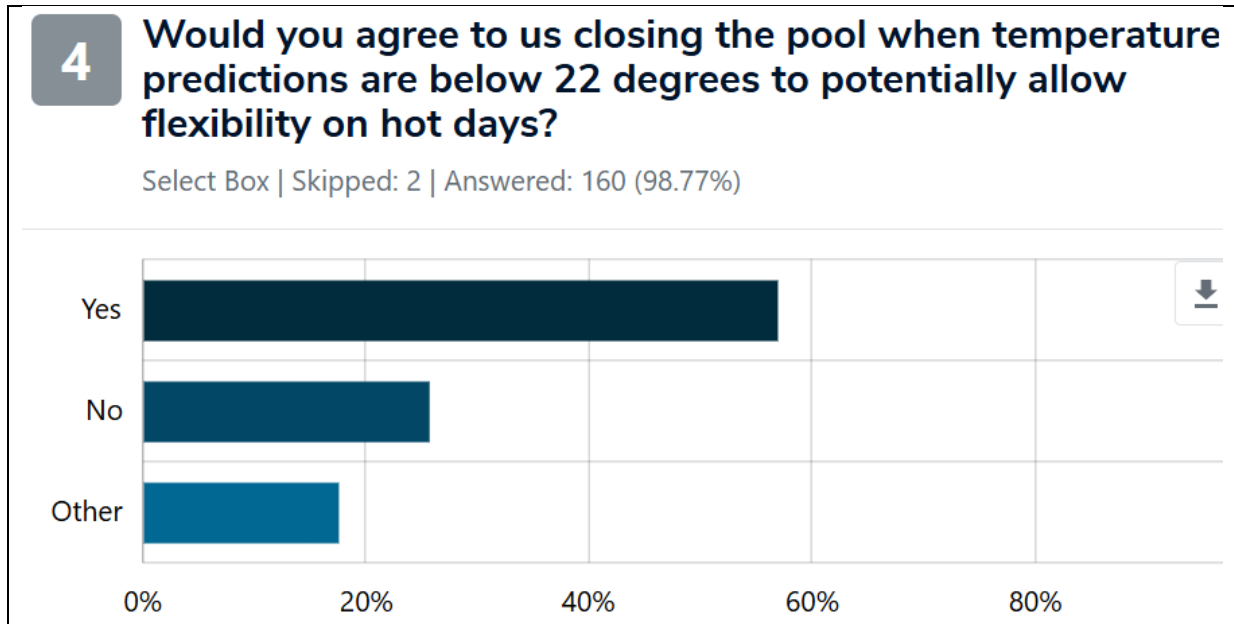
Those that chose 'other' think closing the pool at 22 °C is too strict and they would rather see the cut-off set closer to 18–20 °C, especially since early-morning lap swimmers want guaranteed access no matter how cool it is.

"22 may be too high leading to the pool being closed on lots of days. Lap swimmers will swim whatever the weather."

They also ask for longer opening hours on hot days, weekends and public holidays to make up for any cooler closures. There is a concern that changing weather forecasts make it hard to plan their swims.

Winchelsea residents feel they miss out compared to Torquay, particularly parents and shift workers who rely on early-morning swim slots. Keeping the splash park open when the pool is closed was suggested, along with opening earlier on warm days, and trialing a lower temperature rule with good advance notice and attendance tracking to see how it really affects use.

“Winchelsea doesn’t have much, this was a big investment for the town. The locals are excited, and we just want to all use it. Help us use it with all our different schedules! Thank you”



Questions with open ended responses

Is there anything else you would like to tell us that's important for our planning of the 2025 / 2026 summer season?

“Really appreciate all the work on upgrading to pool.”

The community strongly values the Winchelsea pool as a vital asset but is frustrated by its limited and inconsistent availability. There is a clear call for longer and more flexible hours, including early morning lap swimming, later evening sessions (particularly on hot days and weekends), and split or staggered times to balance the needs of adults, children, families, retirees, and working residents. Many want the season extended to at least March or April, ideally through the Easter holidays, to align with warmer weather and daylight savings, with consistent opening hours rather than weather-dependent closures.

Residents also stressed the importance of swimming lessons, school programs, water aerobics, hydrotherapy, sessions for elderly or disabled residents, and even quiet/sensory hours, noting that regular swimmers will use the facility even in cooler conditions if it is heated.

“Availability for swimming lessons after school and school based swimming lessons would be a huge asset to the community.”

Respondents suggested practical improvements such as a dedicated lap lane, adding more shade (especially over children’s areas), easier access with steps or ramps, improved traffic management, and better communication of hours and closures. Some proposed community or volunteer involvement in staffing, committees, or fundraising, and employing local youth as

cadet lifeguards. Overall, there is a strong feeling that after such significant investment, the pool should be fully utilised, promoted, and accessible to support health, fitness, and social connection across all ages in Winchelsea's growing community.

"Early morning lap swimming and swim lessons would be a great addition."

Key themes from open ended responses

Theme	Detail	Council Response
Opening hours and scheduling	There is strong community demand for more flexible and reliable pool hours, including early morning access for workers, lap swimmers, and young families, as well as extended evening sessions on weekends and holidays. Suggestions include staggered time slots to accommodate different user groups, consistent and predictable schedules, and trial periods to test reinstated or new opening hours.	In response to the majority community feedback, we will keep consistent hours for the entire season. While we're not able to implement other changes this season, we want to assure you that your feedback has been carefully considered. Operational constraints, staffing availability, and budget limitations mean we need to balance community aspirations with what's feasible right now. That said, we remain committed to ongoing improvement. Your input helps shape future planning, and we'll continue to explore ways to better align the pool's availability with community needs in the seasons ahead.
Season duration and weather considerations	The community strongly supports extending the pool season from November through March or April to align with daylight savings, with requests to stay open on both hot days and cooler ones if heated to around 28°C. There is also a call for clearer guidelines and communication around weather-related closures.	The season length is comparable with facilities in other regional Victorian areas like Southern Grampians, Mount Alexander, Moorabool and Corangamite Shires. We're not able to extend the season this year. Operational planning for the pool involves a range of factors including staffing, maintenance schedules, and budget constraints, which currently limit our ability to expand the season beyond its current timeframe. We also appreciate the call for clearer communication around weather-related closures. We're reviewing how we can improve this going forward to ensure users have timely and transparent updates.

Theme	Detail	Council Response
Lap swimming and fitness	The community is calling for a stronger focus on health and fitness, with dedicated lap lanes that are respected and enforced, regular lap swimming sessions at least three mornings a week year-round, and recognition that the pool serves all ages for exercise, rehabilitation, and wellbeing.	We can provide a dedicated lane for lap swimming during regular opening hours. While we're not able to implement regular morning lap sessions, we'll continue to keep this feedback in mind as we hand the operation of the pool to an external provider.
Children and families	There is strong demand for accessible local swimming lessons and school programs, along with family-friendly hours that suit young children's routines, such as mornings before naps and afternoons after school, with support for use by schools from Winchelsea, Inverleigh, and Bannockburn. There was also a call for a community led committee and volunteer run sessions.	We will continue to run Vicswim during January and encourage schools to use the pool for swimming carnivals.
Broader community access	The pool is valued as an important community asset that supports mental health, fitness, and social wellbeing, with appreciation for recent upgrades but frustration over its limited access and untapped potential for greater use. The community highlights the need for inclusive scheduling that accommodates older adults, working parents, and young children, while also ensuring season pass holders get good value. It's also noted that residents from Golden Plains Shire regularly use the pool and could help contribute to its funding.	We will continue to subsidise operating costs to keep the pool affordable for the community.
Facility improvements	Key requests include urgent shade over toddler and splash areas, easier entry with steps instead of ladders for older or injured users, improved access from the river car park, and retail options such as snacks and drinks to enhance the pool experience.	While shade over the toddler and splash areas is a good suggestion, we need to ensure clear visibility for our lifeguards.

Social media results

We posted on Council's Facebook and Instagram pages at the start of engagement (6 August), and towards the end of engagement (21 August). Community was encouraged to visit our Your Say page for information and to provide feedback via a survey.

We had 23 reactions across our Facebook and Instagram posts including shares to other Facebook pages.

Next steps

We will now consider the responses to help with decisions about adjustments in programming for 2025-26, in line with the options presented in the survey.

We expect to communicate these decisions with the community in November.

Feedback we're unable to accommodate this season will be noted and may be considered for future seasons, when the pool comes under the management of an external contractor. (Acknowledging that we will always need to balance operating costs for the pool against community usage, level of subsidy, and our responsibilities to fund other services and facilities across the shire.)