



NARRABRI AQUATIC CENTRE

CASE STUDY

Overview

Narrabri Shire Council were awarded an Age Friendly Local Government Grant in 2014 to provide a portable pool chair lift to be used at Narrabri Aquatic Centre, enabling 360 day access to the indoor heated pool and seasonal access to outdoor pool. They also produced a brochure promoting the chair lift and activities available at the pool for older persons, incorporating transport options to the facility.

Inclusive and accessible features

The Narrabri pool already had a ramp into the water allowing those able to wheel themselves or walk with the assistance of a rail, to ease gently into the water.

For those with less mobility, a new portable BluOne lift allows for a dignified transfer from the swimming pool change rooms to the edge of the pool itself, as well as gentle, easy and safe transfer into the water. This lift is also available in summer to give access to the outdoor 50m pool.

Council representatives met with local aged care health workers, occupational therapists, aged care residents, gym owners/trainers to ask if they would use the service and the best way to inform local residents of the available services at the aquatic centre.

There has been an increase in participation by residents aged over 55 in exercise activities at the aquatic centre. These include use of the pool chair lift, participation in water aerobics classes and land based exercise activities such as Yoga and Tai Chi. Participation in these programs is averaging 120 participants per month.

Key Learnings

An unintended outcome of this project was the involvement of older persons without mobility issues or only mild issues who use the pool more often due to the brochure and publicity around it. Some residents have been too embarrassed to ask for assistance with the pool lift and have been using the walk in ramp and 'wet wheelchair' which was included in the newly designed pool.

The use of the pool lift has been dominated by younger wheelchair users and less by the over 55s than anticipated when developing the project. Local disability carer groups have booked in to start running their own water based programs at the pool.

Many of the local residents were not aware that they could walk gently into the pool and the warmth of the heated pool. The brochure has been more beneficial than the lift itself for the over 55s age group in terms of promoting regular exercise.

Although the project was based on consultation with aged care experts, more planning and consultation in relation to an Ageing Strategy would be beneficial to the shire.



Contact

Name:

Simone Kerr

Position:

Aquatic Centre Manager

Phone:

02 6799 6873

Email:

simonek@narrabri.nsw.gov.au

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