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Caption:

The installation of a full room cover hoist with handle and sling similar to that pictured is one change to the programme pool changing areas that is featured in a Caroline Bay Aquatic Centre accessibility report recently presented to Timaru District Councillors.



Aquatic Centre design changes to recognise community needs

A report outlining the community's ease of access to functions and features of the Caroline Bay Aquatic Centre has been presented to Timaru District Councillors by the pool's architects.

The report follows council consultation with the community which identified a range of features needed to meet the specific needs of a "changing, and aging population".

The council's brief to architects Boon, Goldsmith, Bhaskar, Brebner Team Architects for ease of access to the centre and its facilities reflected the demographic of the local community identified as having a higher than national average population over the age of 65, with 26 per cent (or 11,300 individuals) projected to be over 65 by 2021. The median district age is 50.3 years.

Among resulting changes, access to leisure and learn-to-swim water in the new centre will include level threshold "beach" type entry from the splash deck area. The splash deck surface will be a non-slip rubber shock pad and the leisure pool beach entry will comprise a non-slip tile surface, the architects' report says.

Drainage channels are to be installed at two heights within the programme pool to provide two depth ranges accommodating a broad range of activities. These depth ranges are: 1m – 1.4m and 0.7m – 1.1m. In both instances full access by stair and ramp are maintained.

And with the disabled in mind the council has reviewed the design of the programme pool changing rooms. They will now include room and fixture layout to better accommodate these individuals and their carers. Changes include bigger rooms; the installation of a full room cover hoist with handle and sling; a change bed, and a privacy curtain and bench for carer change.

Council district services manager Ashley Harper said the design review acknowledged the special community health and wellbeing attributes of the new aquatic centre and its allied activities.

“We undertook a consultative process with this community group to better understand what design features could be included in the facility to better accommodate those individuals that tend to fall outside the scope of accessibility as defined by the New Zealand Building Code by virtue of their incapacity to carry out normal activities and processes within the building,” Mr Harper said.

However, the accessibility report also included easy-access provision for staff and public activity as well the surrounding site area to Te Weka St and Benvenue Avenue boundaries, including on-site roading, parking and wide pedestrian and cycle pathways.

The report said the minimum starting point for good aquatic centre design was the “accessible route” as defined for public buildings in the Building Code – “an access route that shall be a continuous route that can be negotiated unaided by a wheelchair user.

“More generally, it is commonly accepted that with best practice ‘accessible’ design, comes best design for use by all ages and abilities – from young to old and for the district community and visitors to the area,” the report stated.

Of major attraction, the report noted, will be the water temperature of the programme pool.

“With a temperature range of 32C to 36C it will therefore be a primary focus for activities for the young, aging, and disabled. The higher temperature will maintain user comfort without the need for physical activity. Programmed activities will include learn to swim, aqua-aerobics and hydrotherapy.

“Along with stair access to the shallow end of the pool, this pool comprises a ramp that will accommodate a submersible wheelchair,” the designers said.

Efforts have been made to “cluster” compatible activities in the new centre, scheduled to open in July next year.

Sauna and steam rooms are located near the programme pool, a time out pool, spa pool, and programme change areas.

“While very much a part of the overall pool complex, with physical and visual connection to other activities, this cluster provides a degree of separation from the bustle of everyday aquatic activity,” the report to councillors said.

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