

POOL ALONE CASE STUDY

MANUREWA AQUATIC CENTRE NGAA MAHI A REHIA



Manurewa Aquatic Centre opened on 15 July 2005 and is owned by the Auckland Council, operated by Manukau Leisure Services.

AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

The population in the Manurewa area is 77,508 made up predominantly European (40%). The balance of the community is Pacific (28%), Maori (27%) and Asian (15%).

The population is relatively young (28 being the median age), with 37% less than 20 years of age and 7% being 65 and over.

There are 30 schools in the Manurewa area. Of these 13 are decile 1, 13 are between decile 2 to 5 and 4 are decile 6 to 10.

FACILITY OVERVIEW

Manurewa Aquatic Centre comprises of:

- 25 metre, 6 lane, 2 metre deep lap pool
- 25 metre, 4 lane, 1 metre to 1.35 metre deep leisure pool
- Learn to swim pool
- Splash pool
- Spa pool
- Sauna
- Fitness Centre
- Café

Facility attendance for the 2010-2011 year was 484,142.

CURRENT POOL ALONE POLICY

The Pool Alone policy as set out below was implemented in 2006.

All children under 10 years must always be ACTIVELY SUPERVISED by a caregiver 16+ years.



ACTIVELY SUPERVISED MEANS:

- Watching your child at all times, able to provide immediate assistance
- You must be at a close distance where you can see, hear and be heard by your child and your child must be able to see you
- If in the water with your child you must be no more than an arms length away
- In pools other than the toddler's pool, paddling pools and shallow fun pools, caregivers must be in the water with children under 5 years of age
- Caregiver must be a responsible person over 16 years of age
- Manukau Leisure Services reserves the right to refuse entry to any of its aquatic facilities or ask swimmers to leave if these conditions are not complied with

INTRODUCTION OF NEW POLICY

The Manukau City Council Bylaws were up for review in 2006 and Manukau Leisure Services put a submission to Council to increase the child supervision age from 8 years old to 10 years old.

The main points of the submission were:

- The existing bylaw provisions did not reflect operational controls used by Council
- Council is potentially liable for unaccompanied children in its pools
- Council proposed to retain the age controls
- Protect itself from the burden of the "duty of care"
- Liability imposed on Council by unaccompanied children in these facilities
- Community Development Committee raised the age for unaccompanied children from 8 years to 10 years
- A set of consistent age controls across facilities was most desirable
- Easier for the public to remember and easier for Council to enforce where joint facilities exist

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POLICY

Manukau Leisure Services designed and used its own posters and fliers to advertise and communicate the new under 10 supervision bylaw. "Pool Ambassadors" were employed to help educate and communicate to customers the change in policy.

When first implemented, there was a period of time where customers had to adapt and adhere to the new under 10 year's age. This is where the customer support staff and pool ambassadors were important in educating customers.

The entry/exit barriers installed at reception allowed reception staff to screen children and ask questions on age before entering the facility.

Language barriers were an issue and at times have continued to be an issue. Manukau Leisure has recently updated their Pool Alone posters and collateral to include the Pool Alone rule in 4 different languages including English.



Both staff and parents thought the increase to 10 years old was a good idea. The new signage was really visible and the pamphlets and fliers gave further information. Parents commended staff on how they went about and continue to explain the pool alone rules.

It has been good to see parents coming to the pools to supervise their children as opposed to sending them with a minor. Parents are sticking to the rules and not thinking the lifeguards are babysitters.

How is the policy working?

Pool alone records show that incidents have reduced each year from 2006 when there were 17 recorded pool alone incidents, to 10 in 2011. Rescues for this age group have also reduced from 8 in 2006, to 4 in 2011.

The reduction in both the incidents and rescues can be contributed to the following factors:

- The increase from 8 years to 10 years
- Better education of parents, care givers and children of the pool alone rules and responsibilities through a number of media modes, awareness campaigns, improved signage, pamphlets and fliers
- The introduction of Pool Ambassadors
- The introduction of the John Walker Field of Dreams Community Swim Programme to all year 3, 4, 5 and 6 school children in Manukau

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