



Poolsafe®

# Annual Report 2024

Recreation  
Aotearoa  
Te Whai Oranga



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# Introduction

## Welcome to the 2024 Poolsafe® Annual Report

This annual publication will provide a broad snapshot of the overall public pools industry in Aotearoa. It provides an opportunity to share key industry updates, research, major projects, and to acknowledge achievements across the industry.

The information and data collected for this report have been provided by Poolsafe® facilities, Te Mahi Ako, Water Safety NZ (WSNZ), and other industry organisations/individuals. We would like to acknowledge and thank them for their contribution.

The future of aquatics is changing, from the way customers use our pools to the role our facilities play in the overall water safety and drowning prevention effort across Aotearoa.

People are at the centre of the industry, both staff and customers. Equipping and preparing our people so they have all the skills and knowledge they need to do their roles effectively is essential. Along with supporting them through difficult times and listening to and encouraging them to play a vital part in contributing to the running of our facilities.

Connecting with our communities is also becoming more important, and this may look different in different regions. Facilities often become the heart of a community, and taking the time to connect the facility and its staff with the differing groups within our communities will help us to better understand how we can support them at the facility.

Technology is developing at an increasing rate, and there are many advances in the areas of operating and training that can contribute to ensuring that we operate our facilities safely, efficiently, and more effectively.

Being able to self-reflect on one's own model of practice is a key skill. Just because we have always done something that way does it mean we should? We have reflected on this here at Recreation Aotearoa and are currently looking at our Poolsafe® programme with our Assessors and Advisory Group, discussing how we can enhance it to better meet the needs of our sector. So, look out for some new developments next year. We hope that you find the report informative and welcome your feedback.



**Rhiann Collins**

Kaiwhakahaere i ngā puna a Rēhia  
Aquatics Programme Manager

Recreation Aotearoa



**Jess Pratt**

Kairuruku Kaupapa  
Programmes Coordinator

Recreation Aotearoa

# Poolsafe® 2024 Overview

## Poolsafe® History

Poolsafe® was jointly developed in 2001 by the New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA) and Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ). It started due to concerns about incidents in public pools, prompting the aquatics sector to come together and create an industry-led quality management system.

Poolsafe® is an independent assessment of public pools to ensure their operations and policies and procedures align with industry best practice. Accreditation guarantees participants have met a set of minimum

standards, including health and safety, water quality, pool supervision, pool alone, and emergency action plans. Although voluntary, Poolsafe® has been recognised by WorkSafe as the default minimum standard for all pool operations in the event of an incident investigation. There are currently 157 pools in the scheme out of a possible 230 across New Zealand.

### So why do Poolsafe® and what are the benefits?

Poolsafe® provides an independent method of evaluating your safety and operational procedures and assisting you in maintaining industry best practice. It can help reduce aquatic-related injuries and fatalities, improve your staff training, ensure your policies and procedures are current, and keep you up to date with any regulatory or best practice changes. You can also receive expert advice from our experienced aquatics professional assessors. There is the opportunity to connect with a network of Poolsafe® facilities through Recreation Aotearoa, where you can access advice and assistance on a number of facility issues.

Read on to discover what some of our Poolsafe® facility managers have to say about their experiences in the Poolsafe® scheme.

“It has helped create a benchmark we are aiming for and allowed us to really work towards consistency and maintaining high standards.”

**Te Pou Toetoe Linwood**  
Christchurch City Council

“Its good to be kept up to date with new industry standards if they arise and having a second set of eyes to check over anything new.”

**Wellington Regional Aquatic Centre**  
Wellington City Council

“Ensures the customers that they are in a safe environment and the people working here are working at a standard.”

**Splash Planet**  
Invercargill City Council

“It’s great to be part of a wide team with so much experience in the industry.”

**Greerton Aquatics Centre**  
Bay Venues Tauranga

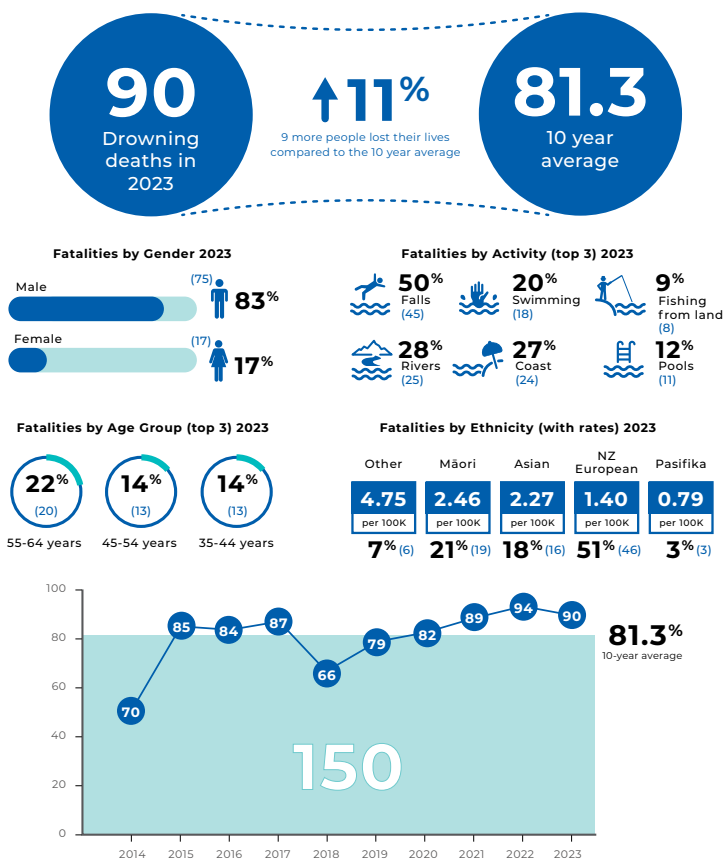
“Poolsafe® gives us good structure for all things safety which allows us to provide our customers a better service knowing they trust in the processes we do. Also shows the staff that we take the safety of our environment very highly.”

**Tekapo Springs**

# Drowning Report 2023

The Water Safety New Zealand Drowning Report was released at the beginning of 2024. It painted a sober picture of the drowning situation in New Zealand. The image below shows who is drowning, broken down by gender, age, ethnicity, activity, and location.

## Who is losing their life?



While a very small number of drownings occur at Poolsafe® facilities, it is important to remember that they do still happen. The tables below show WSNZ data on pool-related deaths over the past nine years, including a breakdown of the categories of pools.

Year	Pool Drowning Fatalities 2015-2024 YTD
2015	1
2016	2
2017	10
2018	11
2019	4
2020	7
2021	5
2022	5
2023	11
2024	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57</b>

Public pools account for the third highest number of incidents; therefore, we need to be aware of the role our facilities play in reducing these statistics.

Gender	Female	Male	Total
Drowning Fatalities <b>Home Pools</b> 2015-2024	6	14	<b>20</b>
Drowning Fatalities <b>Hotel/Motel Pools</b> 2015-2024	1	0	<b>1</b>
Drowning Fatalities <b>Institution Pools</b> 2015-2024	2	3	<b>5</b>
Drowning Fatalities <b>Portable Pools</b> 2015-2024	2	2	<b>4</b>
Drowning Fatalities <b>Public Pools</b> 2015-2024	4	5	<b>9</b>
Drowning Fatalities <b>School Pools</b> 2015-2024	0	1	<b>1</b>
Drowning Fatalities <b>Spa Pools</b> 2015-2024	7	5	<b>12</b>
Drowning Fatalities <b>Thermal Pools</b> 2015-2024	0	5	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>57</b>

# Poolsafe® Facilities



# Labour Force Overview

The New Zealand Register of Recreation Professionals is an independent public register.

It recognises the qualifications and experience of sport and recreation professionals in New Zealand.

As at July 2024 the following numbers were registered.



**3992**  
Lifeguards

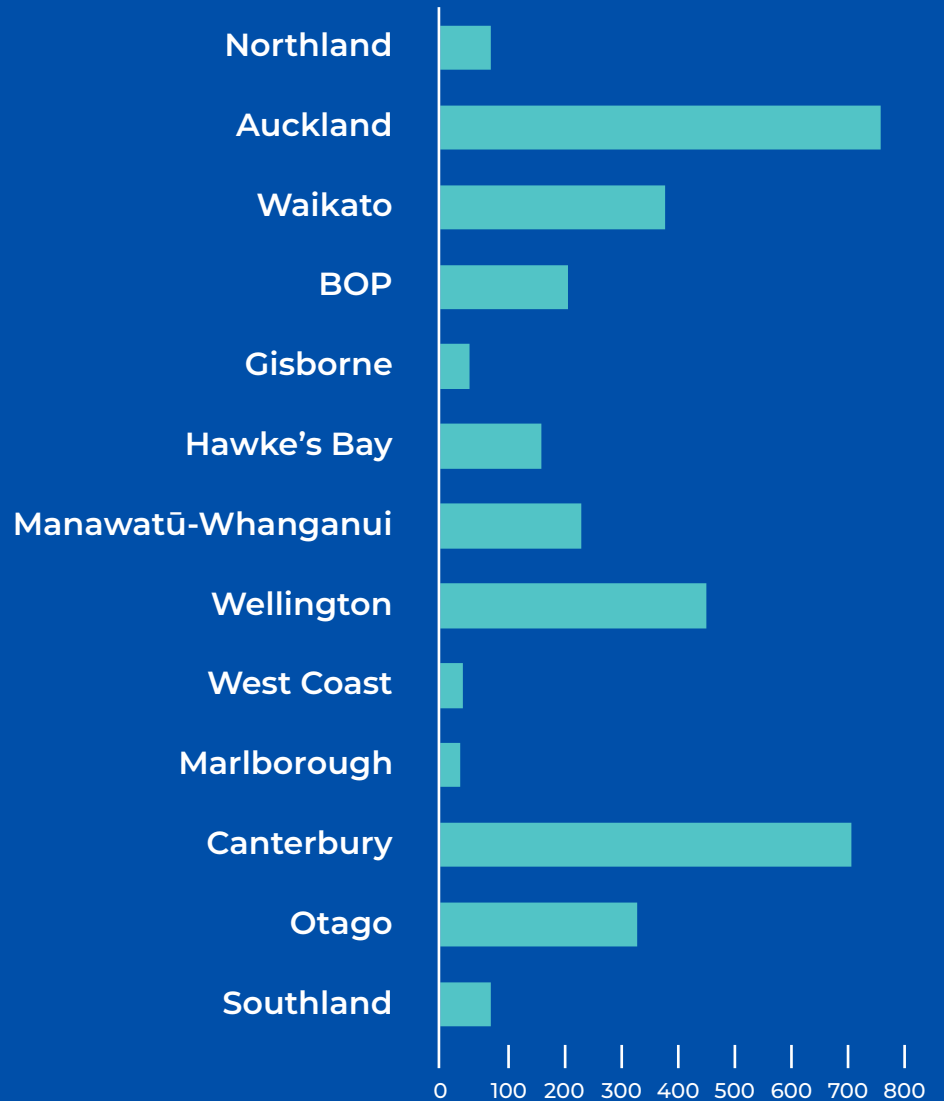


**550**  
Swim  
Teachers



**160**  
Assessors

## Lifeguards by Region



# Labour Force People



## Lifeguard Alex Lowings

Te Pou Toetoe Linwood Pool  
Christchurch City Council

### How long have you been working as a lifeguard?

About 6 months

### What's one thing about being a lifeguard that you didn't know before?

How involved the job is and how much knowledge you need to have in a variety of different areas.

### What do you love the most about working as a lifeguard?

I love the inflatables, and hearing the excitement and laughter from the kids

### What do you find challenging about the job?

Dealing with difficult members of the public and making sure that parents are properly supervising their children

### How has being a lifeguard influenced your decisions and attitudes?

I have more faith in my own abilities and in my own fitness. I am also more aware of what is going on around me and am more understanding of how difficult jobs can be regardless of the outward public perception.

### What was a highlight of being a lifeguard in the last year?

Performing my first rescue of a young child in the deep-end of the swimming pool at Matatiki.



## Lifeguard Assessor Nick Macky

Wellington Regional  
Aquatic Centre  
Wellington City Council

### What is your history in the aquatic industry?

I started my journey in aquatics back in 2016 as a part-time lifeguard and swim instructor at Flaxmere Pool with Hastings District Council. I moved to Wellington in 2020, where I did a short stint with H2O Xtreme in Upper Hutt

before starting at Karori Pool with Wellington City Council. This role is where my development has really taken off, becoming a Duty Manager only six months after starting at Wellington Regional Aquatic Centre (WRAC) earlier this year. Since then, I have led multiple medical incidents, managed more staff, and run more PLSA courses. Additionally, I had the opportunity to take the lead in the Poolsafe® Audit this year, which was a great experience for me to collaborate with like-minded people in the industry across New Zealand.

### When did you become an assessor?

I became a qualified Lifeguard Assessor in September 2023 but had been co-leading PLSA courses for the 18 months leading up to that as a verifier.



### What do you enjoy most about being an assessor?

Lifeguarding and training are something I am passionate about, and having the opportunity to share the skills I have learned through my eight years in aquatics is really rewarding

### Would you recommend becoming an assessor?

I would! If aquatics is something you are passionate about and care for, then I think it's a great next step to further your career. Te Mahi Ako has a great support network for both the learners and yourself as the assessor.

### What's been a highlight for you as an assessor in the last year?

We had a lot of new staff at the beginning of this year, which meant running multiple courses in a short time frame, keeping updated training records, and ensuring inductions were all completed correctly. It taught me a lot about how to manage multiple staff starting at once within our facility. I've also learned how to assess the Professional Aquatics Level 3, which has been a great learning experience.



## Poolsafe® Assessor Kayla Davies

Selwyn Aquatic Centre  
Selwyn District Council

### What is your history in the aquatics sector?

I started out lifeguarding as an internship with Disney World, and when I got back from overseas, I needed a job, so I started off at Selwyn as a summer pool lifeguard, which led to a part-time role and a full-time reception role. I then became the evening team leader

lifeguard, and with a restructure, I became a senior lifeguard. In the summer, I got the role of summer pool coordinator, so I would run our three summer pools over the summer and be a senior lifeguard in the winter. I am now the aquatics operations lead and lead the lifeguard team all year round at SAC, which consists of a team of 40 lifeguards, with another 25 joining for the summer at our three summer pools.

### When did you become a Poolsafe® Assessor and why?

Two years ago, I became an assessor to keep our facilities and staff safe. Most lifeguards are young, with the average age being 16–20. If they are trained and supported correctly, and something goes wrong in their facility, it still has a huge impact on them and the rest of their lives. I want to make sure we are always doing the best to prepare all staff in case the worst outcome happens, so they can survive it and walk away knowing they did the best they could. This also means that our community and tamariki are kept safe as well, so they can continue to have fun

and exercise safely and enjoyably in our aquatic facilities.

### What do you enjoy most about being an assessor?

Getting to meet so many other professionals in this industry and sharing, as well as potentially stealing, ideas from other facilities to make our procedures, training, and facilities better, as well as supporting smaller community facilities that might not have the staffing or the ability to evolve new plans.

### Would you recommend becoming an assessor?

Yes, it is a great way to meet others in the industry and share and gain knowledge.

### What's been one highlight for you as an assessor in the last year?

Talking to the lifeguards on-site and hearing how much knowledge and enjoyment they have in their role.



## Facility Manager Mikayla Oliver

Alpine Aqualand/Arrowtown  
& Wanaka Recreation Centre  
Queenstown Lakes District Council

### What is your history in the recreation sector?

Swimming Instructor, Swim School Administrator, Aquatics Program Coordinator, Team Leader Aquatic Operations, Aquatics Manager.

### What have you learned as a facility manager?

It's good to understand the 'why' behind what you do as a facility and a team. This helps your community

and team align with the purpose and value of what you are trying to achieve or provide. Understanding the history of your facility helps identify what's to come and what has been done previously. There are partnerships you can benefit from, and those individuals or organisations are often trying to achieve the same or similar outcomes.

### What's the best part about your job?

Seeing the community benefit from what is available to them. When we implement something that encourages more people to get active, individuals that you haven't seen before come in.

### What do you find most challenging?

Balancing how you spread your time across all areas of your role and making sure the results of each of those areas are valuable changes or outcomes.

### In the last year, what is one project or idea that you've established and are proud of?

We've implemented a few changes, but I'd say some of our small wins have been around relooking at some of our current processes and making changes where needed, as well as establishing or strengthening some community partnerships.

### What's one tip for being a good manager?

Being open-minded and adaptable



## Swim Teacher Jude Bell-White

Freyberg Community Pool  
CLM

### How long have you been a swim teacher?

I have been a swim instructor for seven years.

### Why did you become a swim teacher?

I became a swim instructor as I needed to find a part-time job during my final year of high school. I remember preferring the idea of teaching and facilitating recreation over finding work in the hospitality or retail industry.

**What do you enjoy the most about being a swim teacher?**

As a swim instructor, you are never exempt from being challenged or learning something new. The capacity to pursue growth and consistent improvement through these opportunities is what I enjoy the most about the job.

**What do you find most challenging?**

I think an exemplary swim instructor should have an intuition on when to innovate elements of their lessons. Judging when it is appropriate to change drills or how verbal, visual, and physical corrections are made is what I find most challenging. It requires concentrated focus on how students respond to these elements and the initiative to cater to their needs as individuals rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' approach.

**What's been one highlight for you as a swim teacher in the last year?**

I have recently been given more responsibility as a senior instructor around the teaching and training of less experienced staff. This responsibility incorporates leadership into my role and gives me more influence in maintaining a high standard within our swim school. Offering my insight to colleagues and witnessing the impact of those contributions are my highlights from the last twelve months of swim instructing.

**Would you recommend becoming a swim teacher, and why?**

I would absolutely recommend becoming a swim instructor. Swim instructors must learn and demonstrate skills that can be taken into a plethora of other careers and industries. If that isn't enough motivation, many colleagues I have met through swim instructing are now some of my closest friends outside of the workplace..



# Awards

## 2023 OPSEC National Pool Lifeguard Competition

The 2023 competition was held at Waterworld Te Rapa, Hamilton. Four teams competed this year.

The teams were put through their paces with a series of tasks, which included a rescue relay, deep water spinal, non-fatal drowning, first aid, a quiz, and a TikTok challenge.

This year, we added a new event: the treading water challenge, the brainchild of one of our LGOTY nominees, Martin Martinez D'Orso from CCC. This challenge proved tougher than it looks.

The training and professionalism of the teams shone throughout the competition. All four teams played to their strengths and abilities, both as individuals and as teams. All the assessors on the day agreed that the professionalism, determination, teamwork, and passion for the role on display throughout the day made us proud to be part of the

aquatics industry. It was clear that these LGs take their roles seriously and play an integral part in both their facilities and communities. The competition ended in a draw between Lord of the Waves and Water Time to Be Alive, with only the team videos remaining to be judged. Auckland Council emerged victorious, knocking the five-time winners CLM off the top spot.

This year, we were privileged to have a Ruth Lee manikin donated as a prize by Lifetec Australia. The teams also got the chance to use one of these highly innovative and realistic rescue manikins during the competition.

The competition is an excellent platform for the lifeguards to showcase their skills, teamwork, and leadership in a fun and competitive way. We hope, with feedback from the industry, to continue to grow this competition and see representation from lifeguards throughout the country.



## 2023 OPSEC National Pool Lifeguard Competition Winners

Lord of the Waves  
Auckland Council



Hamilton City Council  
The Courageous Crocs



Waipa District Council  
Matt Horne's Last Hope

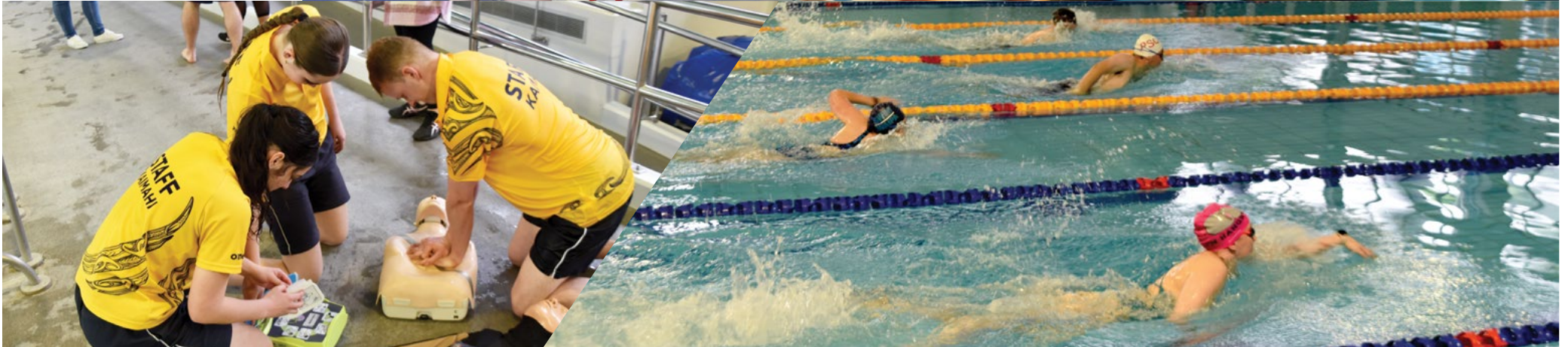


CLM  
Water time to Be Alive



# 2023 OPSEC National Pool Lifeguard Competition

Te Rapa Waterworld  
Hamilton





## Awards

### 2023 Lifeguard of the Year

The 2023 Lifeguard of the Year was presented to Jen Baen-Price from Christchurch City Council's Taiora QEII Recreation and Sports Centre.

This award is given to a lifeguard who has made a significant contribution to their facility and the aquatics industry.

Jen has a very customer-centric attitude, positively influencing those around her and working hard and fast to constantly achieve high results in all she does. Christchurch City Council's vision is to create "a great place where people want to be," and Jen is the embodiment of this vision. She makes her facility a great place to swim or play sport, and a great place to work. Jen's people-focused attitude makes her an asset to the wider aquatics industry and a deserving recipient of Lifeguard of the Year.



"Winning Lifeguard of the Year 2023 was amazing! It felt really great to be recognised for what I bring to aquatics! I have used the Te Mahi Ako grant to start the Level 4 Facility Operations Apprentice, which is pretty awesome. Since becoming Lifeguard of the Year 2023, I have become a Team Leader, opened a new facility, and now run one of our biggest lifeguard teams at Taiora QEII for CCC. Thanks so much for this awesome experience!"

**Jen Baen-Price**  
Christchurch City Council

2023

## Lifeguard of the Year

**Jen Baen-Price**  
Christchurch City Council

## Lifeguard of the Year Merit Awards

Two Lifeguard of the Year Merit Awards were also presented.

Martin Martinez D'Orso from Christchurch City Council's Graham Condon Recreation and Sports Centre received merit for his high commitment to his role. Judges commented that his nomination clearly demonstrated what an outstanding asset he is within his workplace and to the industry as a whole.



**Martin Martinez D'Orso**  
Christchurch City Council

Chantelle Hutton from Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools also received merit. Judges commented on what a fantastic asset she is to her

facility, a clearly valued member of the team who has really made a mark in the Hanmer community.



**Chantelle Hutton**  
Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools

## 2023 Aquatic Innovation Award

The second award presented was the Aquatic Innovation Award, which went to Youth & Cultural Development, Christchurch City Council, and Sport Canterbury collectively for their FRESH Pool Parties programme. The FRESH Pool Party Series has redefined youth recreation in Ōtautahi Christchurch, attracting over 2,200 rangatahi since its start in January 2022. The initiative aims to engage youth and whānau from the Linwood Community in Ōtautahi Christchurch in active recreation. The judges were impressed with

the success of the programme and how well it aligned with the needs of the local community.

Two Merit Awards were also presented in this category. Choices NZ & Community Leisure Management (CLM) received merit for their Dive into Success Internship Programme. The judges appreciated their inclusive approach that not only addressed staff shortages in the industry but also provided meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Aroora and Community Leisure Management (CLM) also received merit for He tāhuna tau atu. The judges were impressed by how the programme helped to develop rangatahi within the community.



**Aquatic Innovation Award**

**“It was fantastic to be recognise for our collaboration with Youth and Cultural Development (YCD) to create and run our FRESH Pool Parties. A huge amount of work goes into making them a success, so to receive industry recognition was very meaningful for both YCD and the Christchurch City Council. The sessions are still booming with 200-300+ attendees at each party and feedback continues to be amazing. A number if attendees wouldn't use the pool otherwise, but they're attracted by the free entry, DJ, sausage sizzle, pizza, drinks, games, manu competitions, inflatables, spot prizes, haircuts and hair braiding. The initiative has been so successful that YCD have rolled the pool parties out across the city. Thank you to Recreation Aotearoa for facilitating the awards”**

**Rowan Foley**  
Aquatics Manager  
Christchurch City Council



**Merit Award Aquatic Innovation**

# Qualifications

Te Mahi Ako is a tertiary education organisation specialising in work-based learning for people working in active recreation, leisure and entertainment.

Current figures (July 2024) below show the number of learners registered or that have registered for Aquatics industry qualifications:

Pool Lifeguard Practising Certificate	1339
NZ Certificate Aquatics Pool Lifeguard Level 3	165
NZ Apprenticeship Senior Pool Lifeguard Level 4	10
NZ Certificate Aquatics Swim and Water Safety Teacher Level 3	145
NZ Apprenticeship - Aquatics (Specialised Swim & Water Safety Teacher) Level 4	38

## Qualifications Available to Aquatics Staff

[Pool Lifeguard Practising Certificate](#)  
[New Zealand Certificate in Aquatics Pool Lifeguard Level 3](#)

[Apprenticeship New Zealand Certificate in Aquatics Senior Pool Lifeguard Level 4](#)

[New Zealand Certificate In Aquatics Swim and Water Safety Teacher Level 3](#)

[Apprenticeship New Zealand Certificate in Aquatics Specialised Swim and Water Safety Teacher Level 4](#)

[New Zealand Certificate in Aquatics Aquafitness Level 3](#)

[New Zealand Certificate in Aquatic Treatment Systems Level 4](#)



# Meet Our Learners

Follow the journey of some of our learners in the aquatics sector.

Janette Murphy transitioned from farming to aquatics, following her passion with support from a regional advisor. Dougal Holmes, an experienced swimmer and surf lifesaver, is committed to giving back to his community. Ruby, at just 20, inspires others as a swim instructor, overcoming challenges with determination. Lou Murray plays a key role in mentoring new members at Jellie Park, helping them find their place in the community. Each team member shows how passion and dedication can lead to fulfilling careers in aquatics.



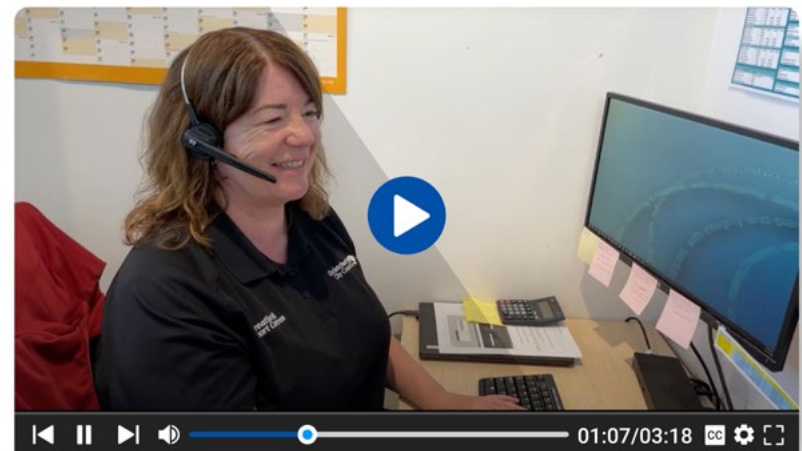
[Meet Janette Murphy - Lifeguard](#)



[Meet Dougal Holmes - Lifeguard](#)



[Meet Ruby-Selwyn Pools - Swim Teacher](#)



[Meet Lou Murray - Customer Experience / Membership](#)

# Patronage

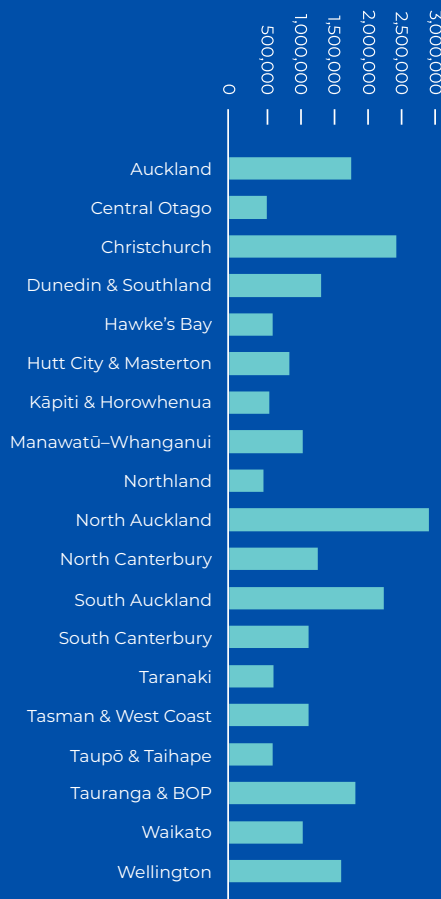
Each year, we gather information from our Poolsafe® members.

This includes total attendance at their facilities and the number of incidents and accidents, including rescues. We categorise these into non-notifiable and notifiable incidents.

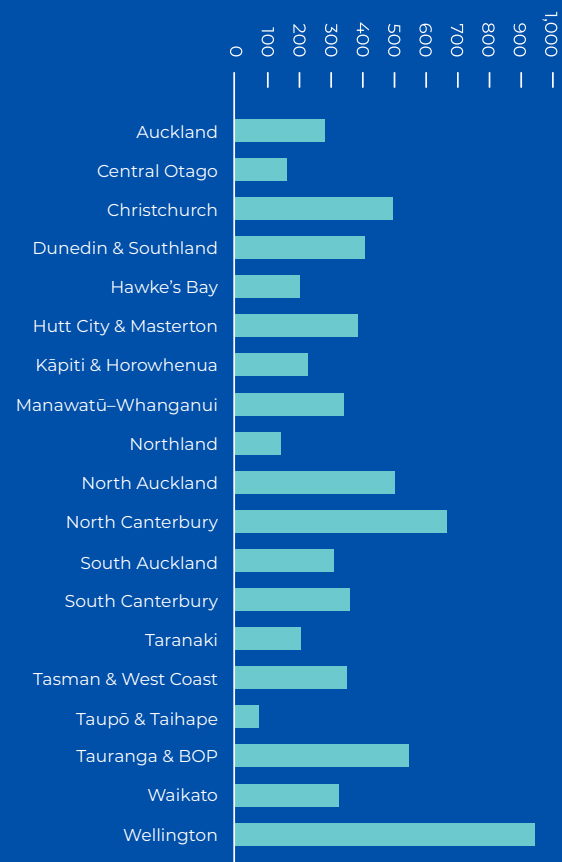
These figures are collated and provide us with an overall picture of how many people are using our Poolsafe® facilities and the types of incidents and accidents that occur. This data is used to identify trends and to inform changes in policy and procedures that could reduce the rate of incidents. This data is also shared with WSNZ to contribute to the overall national picture of water-related incidents.

The figures from July 22 to July 23 show that aquatic facility attendance numbers have dramatically increased from 16 million the year before to 22 million. The incident rate has dropped to one incident occurring for every 3,200 visits.

## Customers



## Incidents



**1 in 3200**  
Incident rate

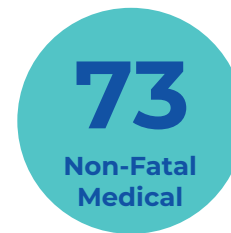
**22 million**  
Visits



# Incidents

The information on incidents is based on those that have been reported to Recreation Aotearoa from Poolsafe® facilities.

In the July 22 – Jun 23 year, there were 12 non-fatal drowning incidents at pools. There were four fatalities, all of which were medical events.



Manager within 24 hours. An incident report will need to be provided for that incident. Facilities are also asked to complete an annual incident report for all accidents and incidents that have occurred at the facility during the year.

## Where is this information kept?

Individual incident information is entered into the incident database held by Recreation Aotearoa. The Annual Incident Review information is collated on another database, which is also held by Recreation Aotearoa.

## What is this information used for?

The statistical information collected from the annual incident review is collated and shared with Water Safety New Zealand for inclusion in their national drowning statistics. Information on individual incidents is collated and analysed to identify any trends or new issues. These are then used to inform changes to Poolsafe® criteria or industry best practice.

## Reporting of Incidents

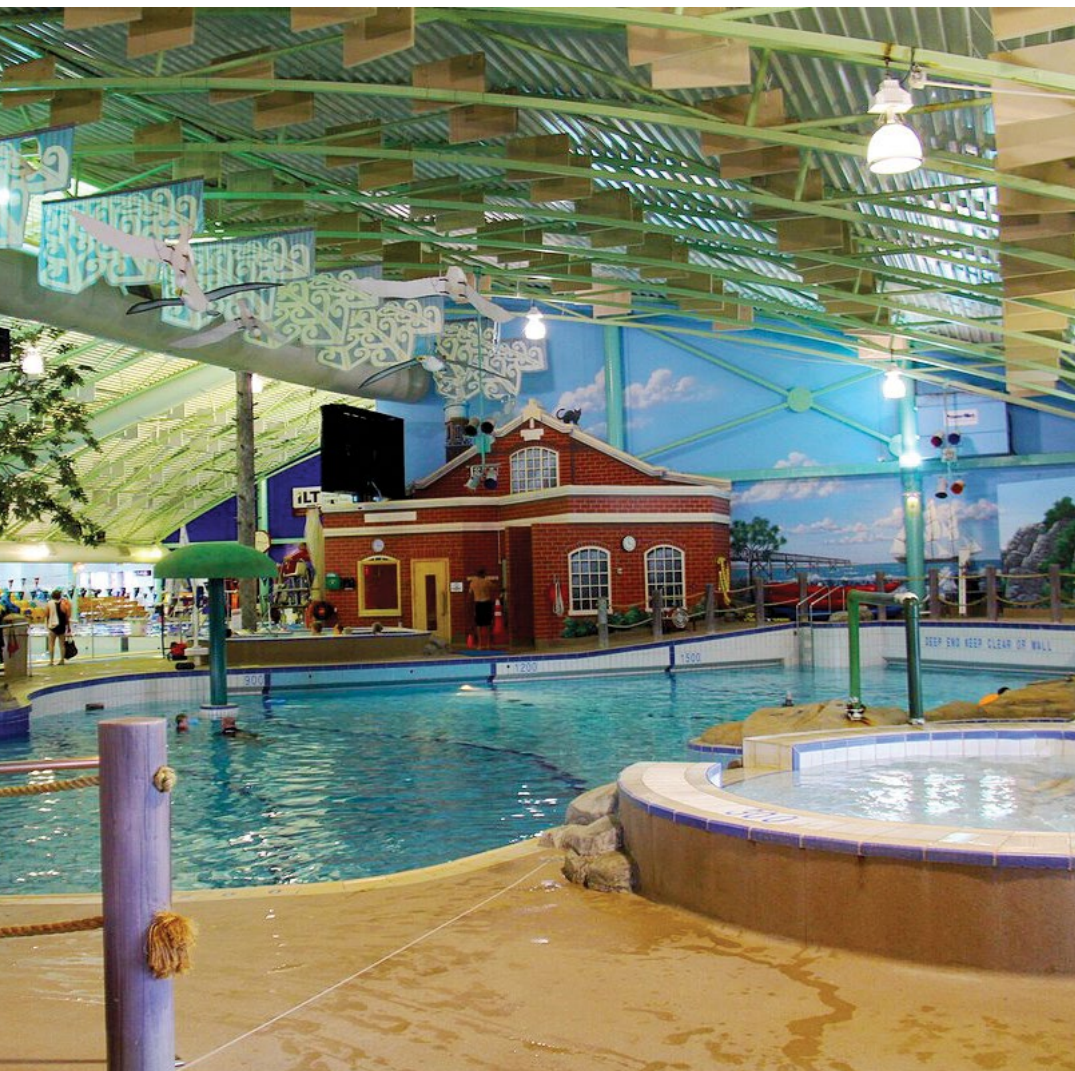
### What is the incident reporting requirement for Poolsafe® pools?

Information on any notifiable incident that occurs at the facility needs to be reported to the Recreation Aotearoa Aquatic Programme

# Incident Case Study:

## Non-Fatal Drowning

### Splash Palace Invercargill



## Background

On a Sunday in October 2023, there was a large group booking where an organisation had invited families from within the community to attend a fun day at Splash Palace. The booking was broken into two time slots: 10 am–12 pm and 12–2 pm. Each session consisted of up to 200 people participating in a variety of activities within the facility. The selection of activities ensured that customers were spread out across different areas of the facility, each of which was supervised by a lifeguard as per the facility ratios of 1 lifeguard to 50 customers.

The organisation had only provided one person to run the event. This person was acting as an entertainer and was engaging with the families but was not involved in running or controlling the event.

## What happened

In the afternoon session, a 4-year-old girl was found floating face down in the leisure pool by a swimmer. She was brought to the side of the pool, where she was found not to be breathing. CPR was carried out by a lifeguard with the assistance of an off-duty fireman while another lifeguard called emergency services and fetched the defibrillator. After a minute of CPR, the 4-year-old girl started breathing; she was put in the recovery position and was monitored and supported until an ambulance arrived, where she was transported to hospital.

## How it happened

The morning session had gone well, with many families staying in the pool when the next session of families started coming in. This increased the number of customers in the facility but still stayed within the required lifeguard supervision ratios.

A family with 3 children, including their 4-year-old daughter, went into the leisure pool. At that time, there would have been around 120 people in that pool and 3 lifeguards supervising. As the family entered the leisure pool, they stopped to sort something, and the 4-year-old girl kept walking towards the deep end. The leisure pool is a shallow beach entry with a sloping bottom going from 0.3 m to 1.5 m. As the girl got close to the 0.9 m line, she started to lose her footing and tried to get back to the shallow end but drifted toward the deeper end of the pool, eventually motionless, face down. The lifeguard closer to where this was taking place was dealing with an issue at the deep end of the pool at the end of their patrolling route, and as they walked back to their station, they saw the customer carrying the girl out of the pool.

**This incident happened within 3 minutes from entering the pool to getting her to the side of the pool. This illustrates how quickly a situation can go from good to bad in an aquatic environment.**

## Action taken

As soon as the lifeguard was aware of the situation, emergency response plans were actioned. CPR commenced, and emergency services were called, and the AED was brought to poolside. The family was supported by staff whilst their daughter was being treated, and incident forms were completed. The Aquatics Manager and Aquatics Team Leader were called, who then notified the relevant personnel within the council. Staff affected by the incident were spoken to by senior staff, offered support, and access to EAP services; they were then asked to go home and come back the following day for a debrief. During the debrief, each lifeguard involved

was spoken to in order to gain an understanding of the situation and their account of the event. This was supported by CCTV within the facility. The lifeguard who carried out CPR was supported and given some time off to help manage the emotion that came with the event. The following day, a WorkSafe notification report was made, and facility staff followed up with the family to see how the girl was doing. Fortunately, there were no negative effects from the event for the girl. The family was very appreciative of all the staff involved through the entire process. The family came in and met with the Manager and Team Leader as a follow-up to the event. An internal investigation was carried out by the Health and Safety Manager, which showed that the staff followed correct protocols and that no one was found to be at fault.

## Changes to policy or procedures

**As a result of the above incident, the following changes have been made to group booking policy:**

- ~ A requirement for group bookings to have 1 adult per 10 children that are outside of our normal adult-to-child supervision requirements.
- ~ Organisations making large group bookings are to provide more support for running and managing the event. They need to provide someone who can deal with customer behaviour and be responsible for managing the customers during the event.
- ~ Session times need to be managed in order to control number within the facility. This is particularly important at the beginning and end of sessions. A time gap is to be put in place to allow for customers to exit the facility before the next group enters.

The organisation wanted to book the event again this year but was not able to meet the above requirements. This meant the event will not proceed. This is unfortunate as it was a great community event; however, the need to ensure the safety and well-being of all customers and staff is the first priority.

# Incident Case Study:

## Shallow Water Blackout

### Olympic Pools & Fitness Auckland



#### Background

During an evening casual swim session on 25 May 2024 at Olympic Pools and Fitness, two casual swimmers got into difficulty. The two male swimmers, aged 29 and 31 years, had previously been spoken to by a lifeguard about their abuse of facility rules such as bombing and jumping into swimming lanes. There were 2 lifeguards and two reception staff on duty. There were a number of lane swimmers and casual swimmers in the pool.

#### What happened

The lifeguard noticed people looking under the water at the deep end of the pool. At the time, he was dealing with a minor incident by the spa pool. He rushed to the deep end and saw the two men lying on top of each other at the bottom of the deep end of the main pool. A lane swimmer had also noticed them, and the lifeguard asked if he could swim down and check they were OK. The swimmer did this and, noting that they were unresponsive, he grabbed one of the men and brought him to the surface. He brought him to the side of the pool, where the lifeguard retrieved him from the pool. The swimmer then went back to the bottom to retrieve the second man, whilst the lifeguard radioed for assistance from other staff members and commenced first aid on the first swimmer.

#### How it happened

The two men had been informed by the lifeguard to stop “mucking around” for the majority of their visit. After being told by the lifeguard not to jump into the pool, they went to the sauna. Following this, they decided to get into the main pool and dive to the bottom. Quickly after, they were noticed and found on top of each other, unconscious. The assumption is they were engaging in breath-holding activities or another activity outside of their competency level.

#### Action taken

The first swimmer was unconscious and not breathing, so CPR was carried out by the first responding lifeguard. After a short time, the man began to breathe, and blood was noticed coming from his mouth. The second lifeguard assisted the other man, who was conscious and breathing, and kept both men in a stable recovery position. Casual customers and a doctor who was in the facility at the time also assisted with the lifeguard-led first aid. Oxygen was given from the first aid kits at The Olympic to both men, as it was clear breathing was very difficult. This was done until emergency services arrived and took control of the situation. Both men were taken to hospital.

WorkSafe was notified along with Poolsafe®, and a follow-up was carried out with the police. Both lifeguards involved were debriefed and supported, with both receiving therapy to talk through the seriousness of the event and the effects on their mental health. There were also multiple debrief sessions with the facility manager; this was of great assistance to their mental state and workplace confidence.

#### Changes to policy or procedures

- ~ No deep-water diving allowed on site – outside of certified scuba groups
- ~ No external free diving – Only one large group held on site with a professional trainer + buddy system.
- ~ No tolerance for extended breath-holding – includes lane swimmers and shallow pools.

# Poolsafe® Assessors

**Poolsafe® assessors are volunteers from various sectors in the industry.**

**They are selected for their experience, skills, and competencies. They share their knowledge with the facilities they visit and bring valuable insights back to their own organisations.**



**Nick Warwick**  
Aquatics Team Leader  
Pioneer Recreation & Sports Centre, Christchurch



**Kristin Raynes**  
Assistant Manager Operations  
H2O Xtream, Upper Hutt



**Dot Leggett Lane**  
Aquatics Manager  
Christchurch City Council



**Dave McKenzie**  
Centre Manager  
Riverside Pools & Nayland Pools, Nelson



**Kayla Davies**  
Aquatics Operation Lead  
Selwyn District Council



**Keith Martin**  
Centre Manager  
Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology, Tauranga



**Sarah Clarke**  
Aquatics Manager,  
Sport & Recreation  
University of Auckland



**Gastón Vélez**  
Operations Manager Levin  
Aquatic Centre, Horowhenua



**Leah Burgess**  
Facility Manager  
Rotorua Aquatic Centre



**Matt Greenwood**  
Aquatic Facilities Manager  
Waimakariri District Council

# Poolsafe® Assessors



**Nick McConaghty**  
Operation Manager  
Selwyn Aquatic Centre



**Steve Prescott**  
Belgravia Leisure



**Darryl Hamilton**  
Aquatic & Recreation Facilities  
Contract Manager  
Auckland



**Stephen Cook**  
Aquatics Services Manager  
Invercargill



**Kendall Gray**  
Senior Aquatic Specialist  
– Pools and Leisure  
Auckland Council



**Irene Smith**  
National Operations Manager  
Belgravia Leisure



**Andrew Smith**  
Facility Manager  
Whakatāne



**Matthew Rowlands-Gardner**  
Pools Operation Manager  
Polynesian Spa



**Stephanie Austin**  
Aquatics Supervisor  
Queenstown Lakes District  
Council



# Poolsafe® Advisory Group

**The Poolsafe® Advisory Group provides advice, industry feedback and leadership to Recreation Aotearoa specific to the Poolsafe® Scheme.**

The purpose is to assist with the review and development of the Poolsafe® Business Plan to continuously improve and grow the scheme.

We meet twice a year to review the Poolsafe® visits and update the criteria as required. It is also a chance to discuss current issues within the industry. The advisory group is also responsible for the recruiting of Poolsafe® Assessors.

All our members are drawn from the aquatics industry, they are either experienced aquatic facility managers/leaders or aquatic specialist in fields such as water treatment or training.

We recently said farewell to Matt Greenwood (May 2023) who had been on the advisory group for a number of years. He has been replaced by Sarah Clarke.

We will be exploring the option of an emerging leader position on the advisory group.



**Sarah Cresswell**  
Wai Skills



**Rowan Foley**  
Christchurch City Council



**Pierre Holland**  
CLM



**Sarah Clarke**  
University of Auckland



**Alex Calwell**  
Thrive Spaces & Places

# Sink Your Jaws into These Resources

## Gender Diverse Accessible Facilities

At Waves 2023, we held a session where delegates were encouraged to engage in discussion around Gender Diverse Accessible Facilities. With an increasing number of questions from facilities and customers around this topic, Recreation Aotearoa got together with a group of representatives from the Aquatic and Recreation sector and Rainbow Organisations to work on producing a set of guidelines to assist facilities in creating safe and welcoming spaces for gender-diverse communities. We asked delegates to consider the following three questions to help inform the content of these guidelines:

- ~ What are you currently doing in this space?
- ~ What challenges are you experiencing?
- ~ What information should we include in the guidelines?

[Download Gender Diverse Accessible Facilities session results here.](#)

## Aquatic Sector Qualifications

At Waves 2023, Te Mahi Ako held a workshop around Aquatic Sector Qualifications and support for learners. They were keen to get feedback from delegates on what was working, what wasn't, and what improvements could be made.

[Download Te Mahi Ako findings here](#) or see the results of the session on page 28.

## WAVES 2023

### GENDER DIVERSE ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES

#### WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING?

##### Education & Training

**Empowering staff and increasing their knowledge of:**

- language and inclusion
- navigating conversations around gender diversity.
- how to be accommodating and welcoming to all

**Response plan for incidents**  
**Researching what other facilities do**  
**Liaison with gender diverse advocacy and service organisations.**



##### Facilities

**Staff have private bathroom with separate cubicles.**  
**Changing space options availability.**  
**Change names on toilets and change rooms to be generic.**  
**Putting in cubicle partitions in open changing spaces.**  
**Building inclusive change spaces in new builds.**



##### Marketing & Comms

**Showing we are open to supporting the gender diverse community and staff are supportive and flexible.**  
**Open acceptance/inclusiveness, everyone welcomes to facility.**  
**Celebrating rainbow communities.**  
**Option to select pronouns on membership applications.**  
**Non-gendered language used by staff and on signage.**  
**Working with the gender diverse community to make safer spaces.**  
**Signage/rainbow stickers at facilities.**



## WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU EXPERIENCING?

### EDUCATION

Lack of information around:

- where to get advice and support in creating an inclusive space.
- how to addressing complaints.
- how to have conversations about gender diversity.

No national or industry guidelines.  
 Interpretation of current legislation.  
 Access to resources and training.



### CUSTOMERS

Tolerance and lack of knowledge by existing customers.  
 Parents and caregivers worried about changing rooms.  
 Not knowing what spaces can be used by who.  
 Inability to control people's actions within our facilities.  
 Customer opinions.  
 Societal attitudes particularly within smaller communities.



### FACILITY

Overreacting to perceived risks – e.g., closing changing rooms for schools.  
 Lack of changing room space in older and smaller facilities  
 Signage  
 Budgets/ cost of providing more separated spaces  
 constraints of existing footprint  
 New builds fit for purpose/future proofed.  
 Not a lot of advice available or organisations to talk to particularly around facility design.



### COMMUNICATION

Difficulty in engaging with community to understand wants/needs.  
 Getting other organisations on board  
 No engagement with rainbow support groups  
 Press/media & social media  
 Having time and resources



## WHAT INFO SHOULD WE INCLUDE IN THE GUIDELINES?

### EDUCATION & TRAINING

Guidance on engaging LGBTQ community and organisations  
 How to plan training with staff  
 Online e learning module/induction on gender diversity  
 Guidelines around protecting privacy of all users.  
 Case studies  
 Voices from community - lived experience text



### CONNECTIONS

Online forum to connect aquatic centres.  
 See what others are doing, what's working and what isn't.  
 What are other countries doing?  
 Celebrate and promote venues that do this well.  
 Communication channels to communities.  
 Local and national framework.  
 Network options.  
 Open forum on diversity related issues.



### RESOURCES/TEMPLATES

Common terminology.  
 List of Supporting agencies and organisations.  
 Guidance on how to deal with difficult conversations..  
 Templated response to complaints and queries.  
 Signage guide.  
 Standard logos pictures signs and symbols.



### LEGISLATION/POLICY

Accountability and consistency.  
 Specific guidelines that are not open to different interpretation.  
 National voice.  
 Facility design aspect.  
 Any data or consultation info to back up guidelines.  
 Explanation of relevant legislation.

## Waves 2023 Feedback themes



Te Mahi Ako ran a session at the recent Waves conference to collect your feedback. We have collated this feedback and are pleased to be able to share it with you all.

We are committed to reviewing all this feedback, with the view to improve our support of industry and look forward to sharing our future plans with you as they are developed.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our session and offered feedback.

### What is working well?

- ▶ Postal moderation.
- ▶ Support from Te Mahi Ako staff.
- ▶ Career pathways for industry.
- ▶ Consistent assessment materials.
- ▶ Relevant assessment tasks.
- ▶ Setting of high standards.
- ▶ Learning and assessment resources being available both online and in paper.
- ▶ Dedicated staff with aquatics backgrounds.



### What are the barriers to learning?

- ▶ Online portal is challenging to work.
- ▶ Speed of delivery of resources.
- ▶ Recording video evidence.
- ▶ Staff turnover/recruitment and retention.
- ▶ Cost.
- ▶ Learners not used to self-learning.
- ▶ Not understanding the time commitment to the Senior Pool Lifeguard apprenticeship.
- ▶ Relevance of the Senior Pool Lifeguard apprenticeship.
- ▶ Te Mahi Ako communication.
- ▶ No in-house assessors.
- ▶ Lack of first aid providers.
- ▶ People not seeing aquatics as a career.
- ▶ Te Mahi Ako website lacking detailed information.
- ▶ Understanding the progress of learners.
- ▶ Online enrolments.
- ▶ Assessment material being too generic.



## Waves 2023 Feedback themes



### What do you want?

- ▶ Specific assessor training.
- ▶ More assessors.
- ▶ Assessment resources which are more specific to individual facilities
- ▶ Break up water treatment qualification pathway.
- ▶ Increase the flexibility in the pool lifeguard assessment.
- ▶ Team leadership and management qualifications.
- ▶ Increase recognition and celebration of completions.
- ▶ Aquatics specific first aid.
- ▶ Train the trainer.
- ▶ Consistency amongst assessors.
- ▶ Increase the learning over the qualifications.
- ▶ App to reinforce learning.
- ▶ Increase the storytelling within the pathway.
- ▶ More marketing about what working in aquatics is all about and what the options are.
- ▶ Get together for assessors.
- ▶ Videos overviewing each qualification and what is involved.
- ▶ Community of learners.
- ▶ Bring back a customer service qualification.





## Quality Pool®

**Developed by Recreation Aotearoa in partnership with Water Safety New Zealand, QualityPool is targeted at private swimming pools such as holiday parks, gyms, retirement villages, seasonal pools, hotels and motels, and schools.**

It works as a self-review of an aquatic environment, benchmarking against specific standards. The programme is conducted via a user-friendly online system.

The standards encompass risk assessment and management, pool water quality (NZS5826:2010), supervision, emergency procedures, signage, and health and safety. The programme allows operators to review their pool(s) through one simple assessment system.

Currently, there are 19 accredited QualityPools in New Zealand, including school pools, council paddling pools, and retirement village pools.



# Resources & Research

## Insights

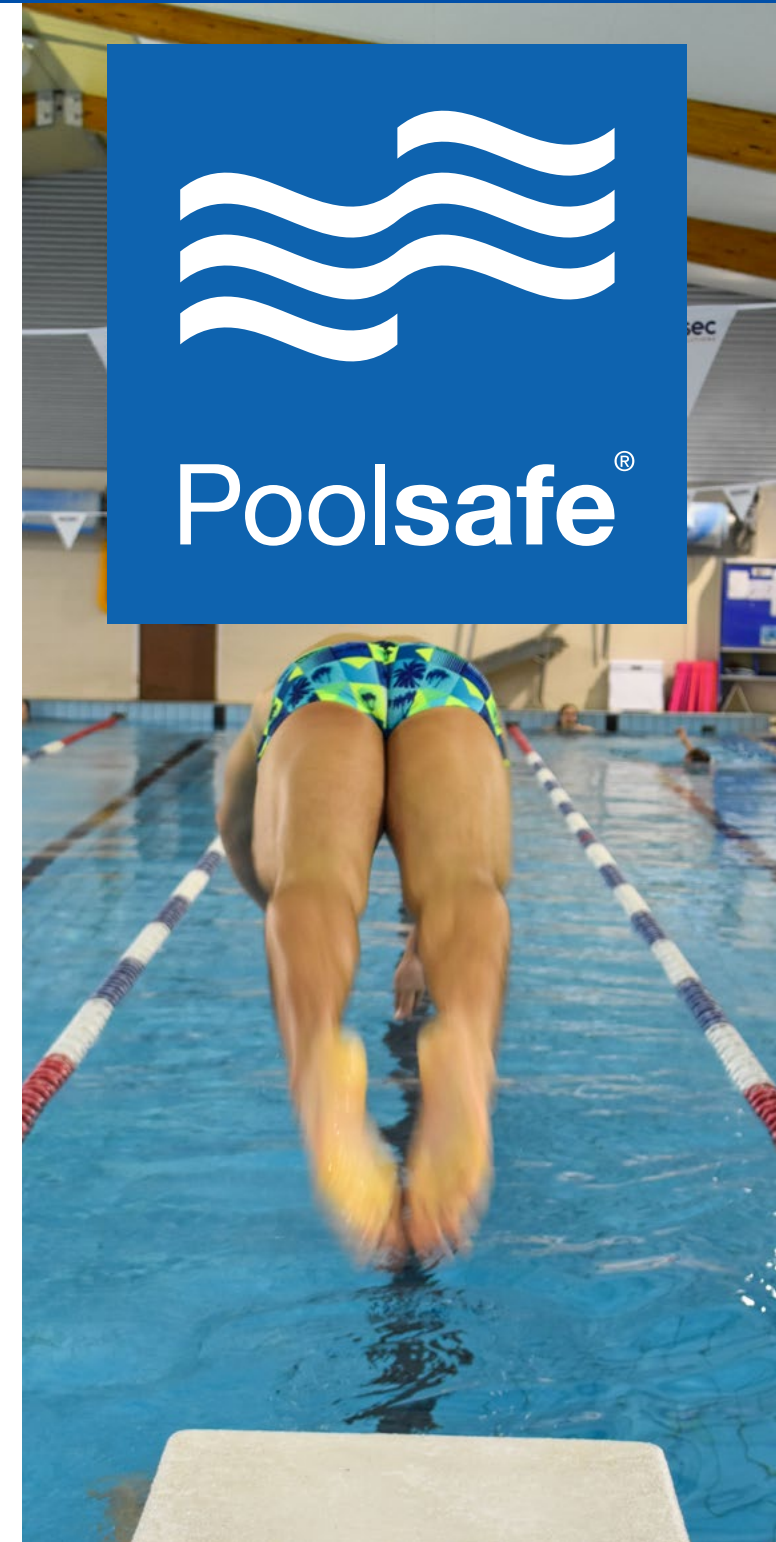
Working with a network of thought leaders in the industry, the Recreation Aotearoa Insights Team has a programme of publications and case studies which pertain to our work in the recreation space. The following are the insights relevant to aquatics:

- ~ [Aquatic Facility Design in the 21st Century](#)
- ~ [Retrofitting Facilities](#)
- ~ [How's Your Facility Performing?](#)
- ~ [Youth and Wellbeing](#)
- ~ [Family Violence, Workplace Safety and Care](#)
- ~ [Older Adults and Recreation](#)
- ~ [Mental Wellbeing Mindsets](#)
- ~ [Recreation and Disasters](#)
- ~ [Recruitment and Retention](#)
- ~ [Recreation and Climate Change](#)
- ~ [AI and Recreation](#)
- ~ [Water Safety](#)
- ~ [Principles of Inclusion](#)

## Sport New Zealand Aquatics Resources

Sport New Zealand has recently produced its National Aquatic Facilities Strategy, which outlines the current provision for aquatics in Aotearoa and the vision for the future, alongside a guide for developing sustainable facilities.

- ~ [National Aquatic Facilities Strategy](#)
- ~ [Environmental Sustainability Guidelines](#)



**Poolsafe®**

