

## SECTION 3

## OUTLINE OF PROCESS

Eleven aquatic facilities were randomly selected on the basis of their representativeness and accessibility. Three (Naenae, Moana and QE2) were major retrofits and additions to an existing large indoor pool facility. Eight were new facilities (Upper Hutt, Porirua, Karori, Richmond, Centennial, Pioneer, Oamaru and Alexandra). All had been developed since 1995.

An initial pilot study was carried out at Naenae and Karori pools to test the proposed methodology; this resulted in some minor modifications to the intended process and information required. The questionnaire to each of the selected pools requested information on problems and issues previously identified through preliminary research and feedback from industry members (A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix A). The questionnaire information was followed up with site visits through May 2005. The site visit involved interviews with either the facility manager and/or the senior council officer responsible for the facility. In some cases, additional information not readily available through the questionnaire or at the interview was requested. Some difficulty was experienced in obtaining information due to changes in management or, in a few instances, inadequate record keeping or filing systems. In some cases the information was simply unavailable.

I also took advantage of industry contacts to clarify issues, explore problems and their solutions, and to peer review technical assessments made through this report. I met with Standards New Zealand, in regard to the adequacy or otherwise of N.Z standards as they relate to public swimming pools.

In many cases, I have deliberately not identified the specific pools where errors, omissions or issues arose. This is deliberate and done for two reasons. First, the exercise was to learn. Not, to criticise or lay blame. The industry should be encouraged to share their experiences and this is less likely to happen where those experiences can be open to criticism or ridicule. Second, some of the issues are somewhat subjective. For example, I am critical of the poor layout of some plant-rooms, but this may not be perceived as a problem by the specific pools.

The review attempts to address the areas of most concern regarding construction and layout issues rather than talking about operation and promotion, except where they are directly impacted by construction or layout issues. While beyond the general scope of this review, I have also made some observations in section 12 on the relative merits of gymnasiums/ fitness suites, river rides, wave pools, cafeterias or springboard diving facilities. In my opinion, there is a degree of naivety in the assumption that they will be more attractive than they actually are.

This Aquatic Facility Review has been rewarding but, at times, frustrating. Rewarding due to the outstanding co-operation received from senior council officers from five councils. Clearly lessons had been learnt and some pools had far less problems than others because of this.

Unfortunately the level of co-operation from the other four councils was of a lesser standard. Information either could not be found or did not exist. Additional requests for information were not forthcoming and in some cases, not responded to. If this information had been available, the review would have been far more valuable and useful. One site visit was less than meaningful as despite confirming the meeting date, time and place weeks in advance, the council officer was not able to deliver on their commitment.

Another concern was the unreliability of information regarding operational costs of some facilities. There was considerable variance in illustrating costs and revenue between facilities. It would appear that some of these costs are shown in areas unrelated to the facility. In many cases, when comparisons were made between participating facilities, the results produced a picture of doubt. It was therefore not possible to make as many reliable comparisons between facilities as intended and as there should have been.

A 1991 Hillary Commission project comparing swimming pool data such as usage, income and costs, to ascertain, among other things, a net cost per pool user, was unreliable because much of the information supplied was in many cases clearly incorrect. Fourteen years later, very little has changed, regardless of the fact that we now have Annual and Long Term Community Plans, asset management plans and legislation that requires transparency.

A draft document was produced in June 2005 and this was peer reviewed before being submitted to SPARC in October 2005.