

**2024**

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**TENTH ASSEMBLY**

**Inclusive Access to Swimming Facilities - Assembly Resolution of 12 October 2022 - Update**

**Presented by  
Yvette Berry MLA  
Minister for Sports and Recreation  
August 2024**



The following is an update on the Government Response to the Legislative Assembly resolution regarding inclusive access to swimming facilities.

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring that everyone can access ACT Government-owned pools in a safe way and will continue to improve accessibility and inclusivity at our pools, while engaging with the community on the best way to achieve these outcomes.

The current service providers of Territory owned aquatic facilities, Belgravia Health and Leisure Pty Ltd (Belgravia) have delivered several initiatives to enhance the inclusivity of our aquatic facilities and provide support to the community. These initiatives have included exclusive swimming events for transgender, gender diverse and intersex community members. This allows these community members to access and utilise the aquatic facilities in a safe way.

Belgravia have also appointed an Inclusion Officer at the Lakeside Leisure Centre. This role actively promotes inclusive engagement with community. Several indigenous, cultural, aged care and support services groups have been contacted to discuss engagement opportunities.

The ACT Government with Belgravia have delivered refugee programs for male and female adult participants which include gender specific instructors to provide swimming lessons to support the requirements of these groups. Within the programs offered, there are also components additional to swimming that provide basic English lessons to those people from non-English speaking cultures, supporting refugees to feel safe and comfortable in the wider community and learn new skills.

Additionally, Belgravia is working proactively with The Australian Nepal Friendship Society Inc to provide swimming lessons to Nepalese adults without prior swimming skills. This commitment includes classes for Australian Nepal Friendship Society members only, including female-only classes to support the participants' needs. There are currently 50 participants in the Nepalese swim program.

In April 2024 the Move-IT Canberra campaign was run by Belgravia and challenged the community to get moving and involved in activities across the five Belgravia managed facilities. Funds raised from this campaign will be re-invested back into the community and, with supplement funding from the Belgravia Foundation, will support the ongoing delivery of the refugee swimming programs.

The ACT Government has taken steps to ensure inclusivity and accessibility of our aquatic facilities by installing an accessible ramp at the 50-metre pool for the Dickson Pool and works at Manuka Pool to provide compliant access for people with accessibility issues.

In early 2024, the Dickson Pool hosted members of the Australian Paralympic Swimming Team. The team was in preparations for the Australian Open Swimming Championships, and the improved accessibility to the 50-metre pool was able to support the needs of the team.

The ACT Government is also investing significantly in upgrading our pool facilities to ensure they cater for the diverse needs of the Canberra community. This includes the construction of a new ACT Government hydrotherapy pool at the University of Canberra Rehabilitation Hospital and delivery of a new hydrotherapy pool in Canberra's south at the Lakeside Leisure Centre.

Construction for the new Hydrotherapy pool at the Lakeside Leisure Centre commenced on 15 July 2024 and is expected to be complete in mid-2025. Hydrotherapy offers a vital service for a wide range of people. This new facility in Canberra's south will support people with mobility issues, chronic pain caused by illnesses such as cancer, migraine, osteoarthritis, and arthritis and provide recovery for others after injury or surgery.

The ACT Government has also planned for upgrades to improve the bathroom and change room facilities at Manuka pool. This will provide inclusive access for people with disabilities or accessibility issues. Work is anticipated to commence in August 2024. Additionally, consideration for family-friendly and gender-neutral bathrooms on site at Manuka pool is underway in consultation with ACT Heritage.

Belgravia have partnered with local community and user groups to support people with disabilities to attend tailored gyms sessions to support their physical and mental health. Belgravia and Communities @ Work are currently running an initial program that delivers gym sessions to participants who otherwise would not have this opportunity.

Due to the positive feedback and community interest, there is a focus to increase capacity of this program at our Aquatic facilities by 90-120 participants.

As part of their commitment to ensure the community has a safe and inclusive aquatic facility, the Belgravia Foundation benchmark their programs against internal Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to ensure that programs provided at our pools are meeting all equity and diversity requirements for our community groups.

The ACT Government, with support of its aquatic facility operator, offer a companion application called 'CERGE' to support the guest experience for

individuals living with a disability. The application can be personalised to support the individual and provide visual stories, sensory guides and communication tools to provide the community with a positive experience. The application also supports community members living with diverse needs and varying requirements.

We will continue to work with Belgravia and community stakeholders to determine how best community needs can be met at our ACT Government-owned pools. This will include the ongoing delivery of safe and inclusive swimming for the whole community.