Golden Square Pool




# GOLDEN SQUARE POOL INC.

# 2023/2024

# ANNUAL REPORT



Working hard
everyday to be a

# vibrant, dynamic and empowering

community hub that

# connects and grows

Golden Square and
Bendigo

# OUR ORGANISATION



### Committee of Management

**Sam Kane** President
**Barb Lomas** Vice President
**Margaret Hand** Secretary
**Linda Howell** Treasurer
**Helen Barton**
**Debra Butt**

### Operations Leadership Group

**Sam Kane** General Manager
**Barb Lomas** Volunteer Manager
**Linda Howell** Business Manager
**Margaret Hand** Grounds Manager
**Tracie Kane** Kiosk Lead
**Kobe Henderson** Team Leader
**Aidan Corr** Team Leader
**Kate Parry** Team Leader

### Teams

**Plant Operations**
Andrew Penna, Adam Reaper, Kobe Henderson

**Maintenance, Grounds and Facility**
Andrew Penna, Margaret Hand, Steve Hand, Catherine Doyle, Dave Kane, Doug Pringle, Chris Corr, Josh Fox

**Digital and Communications**
Sam Kane, Barb Lomas, Carol McCormack, Noel Clarke

**Finance and Risk Committee**
Sam Kane, Linda Howell, Deb Butt

**Golden Square Pool 2023/2024 Annual Report**
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Produced by Sam Kane and Barbara Lomas

# FROM OUR PRESIDENT

**There's nothing quite like Golden Square Pool.**

**The friendships, the people, the events and programs, the sunny summer nights, the doggos, the classes and, of course, the swimming.**

**Our pool was founded on grassroots community action, and the core belief every single person in our suburb deserves a community space to call their own. That's just as true now, 11 years since we saved it, as it was when the pool opened 106 years ago.**

**It gives me great pleasure to present our 2023/2024 Annual Report, a celebration of our team's achievements and community impact over the past year.**

## AQUATICS

This season has been our longest ever, at 19-weeks (mid-November until 30 March). During the season we hosted 10 schools for swimming lessons, carnivals and fun days. We once again hosted one of Victoria's largest outdoor VicSwim programs.

As in previous years, water aerobics proved to be incredibly popular, with most weekday classes having more than 20 participants. We held classes three times a week, including a regular Saturday class for the first time. These classes are well embedded into our programming and we look forward to seeing them continue.

It was great to also extend the use of the pool for paddleboarding with Bendigo Water Sports. Attendees had a great opportunity to come and try this activity in a safe environment.

Our Pool Operations and Chemical Team did a wonderful job to ensure we could safely operate every single day, under the challenges of an aging asset. Likewise, our Leadership Team effectively managed the demands of running a seven-day a week business, ensuring we were compliant, staffed and safe.

## EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Our Events and Programs are always popular, and this past year was no different. To create a summer festival vibe for patrons and members, we strategically branded this year's suite of activities as Summer at the Square.



Highlights included our Movie Night, Music by the Pool, Inflatable Days and New Year's Eve Party, as well as Opening Day/Weekend, which was bigger than ever.

Holi – Festival of Colours, regional Victoria's biggest event of its kind, was also back this summer in partnership with the Indian Association of Bendigo. Almost 1,600 people attended, and it was a great demonstration of everything we love about Golden Square Pool. Our volunteers did another amazing job, managing all event logistics and implementation.

We're always committed to extending the use of our site beyond the traditional confines of the 'summer swimming season'. Our pup-ular Pools for Paws was back for a huge third year, with this year's event extended to three big days. More than 225 cute doggos and their owners joined us. It's a brilliant example of our facility being diverse and adaptable, and is now regarded as a leader across the state in holding doggie days. We also celebrated our volunteers and staff with an event in April. This means we activated the site for seven months - from the site's preparation from September, until our Pools for Paws in March. A great achievement!

## PEOPLE

Our 86 volunteers are the life blood of Golden Square's beating heart. Whilst we welcomed some new team members, it was great to see the majority of our team return for another season. In particular, I want to pay tribute to the kiosk volunteers who do a great job ensuring our patrons are looked after as quickly as possible, especially in the heat! Our Grounds Team also grew this season, keeping the place in top shape – the best grass around!

Our 17 paid staff also did a fantastic job, ably lead by Kobe Henderson, Aidan Corr and Kate Perry. This summer we implemented Team Leaders for the first time and Kobe, Aidan and Kate oversaw the lifeguards and daily operations. This model worked incredibly well and greatly supported our volunteers. It also allowed us to invest in the future by sharing skills across multiple people in the organisation.

This summer, we launched a strategic campaign to grow our memberships. We were delighted to welcome 622 members, the highest number in our history. Whilst people purchase their pass to swim, we know many members also purchase their pass to invest in the ongoing viability of our facility. We thank everyone for their support.

The people are truly what make Golden Square Pool what it is – whether they're on the team or using our great facilities. This is the reason we've been so successful.

**STRATEGY, INVESTMENT & ASSET**

We're nearing the end of our first-ever Strategic Plan (2020-2024). Even though the 135 actions were marked as ambitious at the time, we've in fact achieved many of them, across governance, finance and community. That's no mean feat for a voluntary organisation.

Key highlights this year included having the pool shell completely repainted, important asset maintenance and implementing the outcomes of an organisational review which better aligned our operational structure to our needs, capacity and financial viability.

This year we've also undertaken considerable works towards implementing our site Master Plan and Modernisation Project, with scoping of a chemical shed, filtration area and solar panels project to address safety, operability, financial and environmental concerns.



**INDUSTRY AND ADVOCACY**

We've used our recognition as Victoria's Seasonal Pool of the Year to continue our advocacy for greater support for community-managed swimming pools in Victoria.

In January we hosted Aquatics & Recreation Victoria (ARV) CEO Kathy Parton for a site visit. The purpose of the visit was to help her understand the challenges we face and consider opportunities for the future.

This has led to many beneficial conversations, including the formation of a Community-Run Facilities Networking Group lead by ARV, something we have been advocating for over many years. We're also actively involved in the Greater Bendigo aquatics landscape. I was also proud to help judge a category for this year's ARV Awards and present at the Regional Conference.

We still feel there are better ways for collaboration across the industry, which will lead to a more secure future for pools like ours. We're proud to be a leader in these conversations.

**FUTURE**

The future of Golden Square Pool is bright. Our volunteer and staffing numbers remain steady at 110 people – without whom, we simply wouldn't be operating. Our new 2025-2028 Strategic Plan will be released at the end of 2024, and will orient the organisation to ensure sustainability as we approach 15-years of community management, a great achievement! Whilst we're not forecasting drastic changes to our operations over the next four years, we're also cognisant of the fact we have to adapt to a changing and increasingly challenging aquatics, not-for-profit and community landscape. The balance to deliver an innovative service while managing increasing risk, compliance, and asset issues, will only grow more difficult.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our success over the past year. Our people and our community give of their skills and of their time, the most valuable of resources, to make Golden Square Pool great.

I feel like the luckiest person around to lead this brilliant organisation, one that lives its values in everything it does – its actions, its people, its innovation and in its offering to our community.

As I said at the start, there's nothing quite like it.

**Sam Kane President**

# BY THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Seasons operated by community** | 11 |
| **Season entry total** | 17,579 |
| **Combined entry total since 2013** | 176, 246 |
| **Members** | 622 |
| **School programs and lessons visits** | 3,332 |
| **Volunteers Total** | 86 |
| | Adults (56), Juniors (30) |
| **Kiosk Volunteer hours during the summer season** | 1518 |
| **Kiosk Junior Volunteer Team hours worked during season** | 502 |
| **Followers on social media** | 6,092 |
| **Water aerobics participants** | 435 |
| **Holi attendees** | 1600 |
| **Pools for Paws visits** | 225 |
| **Friends of Golden Square Pool** | 252 |





















# OUR PEOPLE

# OUR VOLUNTEERS

**The future of Golden Square Pool looks bright thanks to our Volunteer Team. Our volunteer numbers are steady and we are proud of our high retention rate.**

This season, there were many shifts to fill and lots of big events needing the team to work together for a successful outcome. The Team's dedication and hard work was particularly evident for our New Year's Eve party, Holi Festival and Pools for Paws.

Our volunteers manage most aspects of the daily running of the facility, including maintenance, operating the kiosk, running events, managing social media and communications, maintaining the gardens and facilities and the governance and compliance of the pool.

Volunteers ensure our visitors feel welcome and valued from the moment they arrive at the gate and always do whatever they can to help them enjoy the great atmosphere and facilities at Golden Square Pool.





# OUR JUNIORS

**Our Junior Team were once again an impressive and valuable aspect of our volunteer workforce throughout the season. We are so proud of the work they do and the way they are ambassadors for our organisation.**

They bring such enthusiasm to the pool and encourage their parents and grandparents to embrace our volunteering culture.

As the Junior Team members work in the kiosk, serving customers, stocking shelves and following the roster, they not only serve the pool, but they also develop valuable skills, learn about community involvement and build on their future resumes.

We have now seen many of our Junior Team members graduate into the Senior Team and begin to take on shifts without needing parental supervision.

# OUR STAFF

**We're grateful to the support of our 17 staff for ensuring that we're operating efficiently and effectively each and everyday.**

This year we introduced a new operating model, with our lifeguards led brilliantly by Kate Parry, Kobe Henderson and Aidan Corr.

Our staff complete many risk and compliance tasks that are important to keep our organisation going.



# OUR MEMBERS

**This summer, we launched a strategic campaign to grow our memberships, which included online purchases for the first time. It was a great success, and we were delighted to reach a milestone membership level of 622 members - the highest number for a single season so far.**

While we know that people purchase their pass to swim, many members also purchase their pass to invest in the ongoing viability of our facility. We thank everyone for their support.

As well as everyday access to the pool, member benefits include discounted classes, no extra charge for our events and a discount on the Program MultiPass, making it great value.

All funds from Golden Square Pool memberships and City of Greater Bendigo Season passes sold at Golden Square Pool stay with our community organisation.

**Golden Square Pool (GSP) Membership sales**

**GSP only adult membership pass – 12**
**GSP only adult concession membership pass – 8**
**GSP only child membership pass – 9**
**GSP only family membership pass – 61**
**GSP only family concession membership pass – 55**
**Total GSP only membership sales – 145**

**City of Greater Bendigo (COGB) Season Pass sales**

**COGB adult Season Pass – 9**
**COGB adult concession Season Pass – 1**
**COGB child Season Pass – 1**
**COGB family Season Pass – 110**
**COGB family concession Season Pass – 356**
**Total City of Greater Bendigo Season Pass sales – 477**

**Total combined membership and season pass sales – 622**



# OUR COMMUNITY

**Golden Square Pool's dedication to creating a friendly and inclusive community is demonstrated in our ongoing success. Each year we enjoy continued growth and achieve new goals.**

The people are truly what makes Golden Square Pool what it is – whether they're on the team or using our great facilities. This is the reason we've been so successful.

Our hard-working volunteers are committed to the success and future of the organisation, enjoying the benefits of volunteering as well as contributing to the team. Our loyal patrons make the most of the unique facility and are grateful for the oasis that has been created in Golden Square.

In our eleventh season we continue to develop the original vision, which was to create something for the community and the neighbourhood. The people of Golden Square and Greater Bendigo vote with their feet to support an outdoor facility where children feel safe and welcome, people care about each other and there's always something happening.

This pool is about people first and foremost, and that motivates the team to provide a wide range of offerings such as movie nights, fitness classes, swimming lessons and community gatherings.

Our pool - Golden Square's true beating heart, is evidence of all the good work the community has done over the last 11 years.



# FACES OF THE SQUARE

## BARB, RONAN & JACK

"I believe our Junior Program is one of the reasons we have been so successful – because the organisation builds a multi-generational community and really makes sure everyone feels welcome."

In 2013 Barb Lomas went along to the first community meeting to save our beloved pool, concerned by how it had declined in recent years and was at risk of disappearing.

And now, ten years later, Barb holds many roles within the team including being our Vice President, Volunteer Manager and on the Marketing and Events Team, with her son Ronan by her side for much of the journey.

"Ronan has volunteered at the pool most of his life but officially since 2018 when we launched the Junior Team. He began by helping to clean the pool and pick up noodles before progressing into the kiosk," Barb said.

"He became well-known for taking the rolling esky out to sell drinks and ice-creams during big events - and one of his favourite days at the pool was selling lollies in the kiosk to children his own age for school fun days."

Barb and Ronan have become an unmissable duo. In 2019 Ronan's mate Jack joined him behind the counter, and now they do their shift together every Friday.

Jack has also really enjoyed working in the kiosk for school fun days and he looks forward to chilling out in the kiosk each week and spending time with his best mate.

Both boys have really developed their money-handling skills and their quick mental calculations as well as learning other life skills.

Now 15, the boys have already acquired a great understanding of community and the value of volunteering - and contribute immensely to the life of our piece of paradise.





## LEONIE

"The biggest benefit of volunteering for me is the new experiences it brings that I may never have had."

Golden Square local Leonie joined our volunteer team back in 2022, and has become a valuable part of our strong 95-member group.

As a child, she used to swim at the pool and then later enjoyed taking her own children, and then her grandchildren to enjoy the facility.

"I then thought it was time for me to contribute keeping this wonderful place open," Leonie said.

Since joining us Leonie has picked up a regular kiosk shift every week, fills in when it's busy or when someone's away, and supports our major events.

She's also part of many other local groups - giving back in so many ways.

Leonie said it's the team which makes volunteering at Golden Square Pool so rewarding.

"The age range of volunteers is vast and all are embraced. This makes for a dynamic group," she said.

"One of my favourite things has been participation in the 2023 Holi festival. The atmosphere, the fun had by those attending and the volunteers who helped to make it such a success."

And for Leonie, there are many personal benefits from volunteering.

"I believe volunteering is a two way street - being able to walk away having enjoyed the experience, and knowing you have contributed in some small way," she said.

"The smiles on the faces as patrons leave, particularly children as well as appreciative parents, is a bonus!"

Leonie, we can't thank you enough for all you do to help us make the beating heart what it is.


COMMUNITY
ACTIVATION

# EVENTS PROGRAM

**New Year's Eve**
Our neighbourhood pool party was the place for early New Year's Eve celebrations. Family-friendly fun included music, dim sims, ice-creams, plenty of grass and shade and our helpful team ready to ensure a safe and relaxing evening for all.

Once again, the families flowed through the gates and enjoyed a great night out before heading into town or up the hill to watch the early fireworks.

**Australia Day**
Low-key Australia Day celebrations made for a relaxing way to enjoy the public holiday. Free entry, fine weather and our famous Great Inflatable Race provided plenty of entertainment, spills and fun for everyone.

**Movie Night**
The annual mid-summer movie night was once again a great hit with families of all ages. Picnic rugs and chairs were in prime position early on as people settled on the grass to watch the family movie Super Mario Bros.

The weather was perfect for a swim and a picnic dinner, with the kiosk offering ice-creams, popcorn, lollies and drinks.

**Music by the Pool**
Saturday 10 February saw our popular pool party return with Ally Gook providing live music and good vibes. There were also food trucks.

Summer at the Square 2023/2024



# LESSONS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING



**Golden Square Pool is dedicated to enhancing the social, emotional, and physical well-being of our neighbourhood and aims to be more than just a place to swim.**

**Water Aerobics**
Water aerobics classes were more popular than ever this season. The workout, which is suitable for all fitness levels, was enjoyed by a core group as well as a growing number of casual visitors.

We were able to add more instructors to our team so that we could offer an extra evening as well as introducing Saturday afternoon classes. Fun themes, lively music, a discounted MultiPass and enthusiastic instructors all ensured a growing base for the classes. Netball teams also took advantage of the sessions to do some pre-season training.

**VicSwim**
Once again, our VicSwim Program was hugely popular, with families making the most of the fun and educational holiday classes. Over three weeks in January, children developed their water safety and swimming skills under the skilled supervision of instructors Anne and Gabby.

**Stand-Up Paddleboarding**
Patrons had the opportunity to enjoy Stand Up Paddle Boards at the pool over two Sundays this season: one in December and the other in February. This fun activity gives people a way to experience the sport in a safe and controlled environment. It's another great example of extending the ways in which the pool may be enjoyed and building relationships with local businesses.

# HOLI FESTIVAL OF COLOUR



**Our pool hosted the 2024 Holi Festival of Colours for the third year on 23 March and it was the biggest one yet! The day was a fusion of music, dance, food, colour, smiles, happiness and community. This was a wonderful celebration on so many levels, demonstrating the strength and vibrancy of Bendigo's growing multicultural community.**

Holi festivals are a Hindu tradition, famous around the world for the use of coloured powders and water to celebrate love and new life and we were again proud to deliver this event in partnership with Indian Association of Bendigo Inc., also supported by many local businesses.

Our event is the biggest of its type in regional Victoria and was a great day of fun for everyone, bringing people of all ages and cultural backgrounds to Golden Square to enjoy a family-friendly party.

Involving many months in planning and held over a very busy and long day, it would not be possible without our brilliant team of volunteers and staff.





# POOLS FOR PAWS

**Bigger and better than ever, the dogs were keenly waiting for the humans to finish so they could have their turn at the pool.**

Our third Pools for Paws event was held over three days, with pooches of all shapes and sizes, running, swimming and playing at the pool, followed with a puppuchino and a doggy treat.

This year we trialled a twilight event which was also popular. Despite holding the final day on Easter Saturday – one of the busiest days in Bendigo - the event was once again a sell-out.



















# FACILITY GROUNDS AND STRATEGY

# COMMUNITY GARDEN

**Our volunteers kept up work on the community garden during the winter, including planting seedlings and building up the top lawn.**

We again continued our partnership with the Department of Justice and Community Safety - Community Plants Program, where they supplied strawberries, tomatoes, herbs and magnificent sunflowers for our garden.

# GROUNDS, FACILITY AND MAINTENANCE

**The Grounds and Maintenance Teams undertook a power of work over the past year to ensure our grounds were in tip-top shape.**

We were especially grateful to the new volunteers who joined Margaret and Steve in supporting the grounds work, which allowed for a better share of the load and ensured we were keeping the facility well-maintained in the height of summer.

The most frequent feedback we get on our operations area is about our beautiful grass - and that's testament to this volunteer team.






# OUR ENVIRONMENT

**We work hard everyday to ensure we're having a positive impact on our operations.**

This year we introduced a new program in line with the launch of Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme program, to ensure we're collecting cans and bottles for recycling.

We were delighted to collect and return nearly 5,000 cans in the first year of this program, with 10 cents from each being returned to Golden Square Pool to support our programs.

We've advanced our environmental sustainability this year by progressing plans for solar, and being a TerraCycle donation point - the Colgate Oral Care Free Recycling Program.

# HEALTHY KIOSK

This year we were thrilled to partner with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (SAKGP) to make choosing healthy options in the kiosk easier for our patrons.

This partnership saw new healthy icy-pops with fresh fruit called 'Yogi Pops' available in the canteen along with popcorn and healthier, natural drink options. We also worked with the SAKGP team on the positioning of items in the kiosk to best promote healthier alternatives.

The implementation of these practices are required under our lease agreement with City of Greater Bendigo. Under the City's Healthy Facilities Policy, we're required to provide options for patrons. Thanks to the SAKGP for this brilliant partnership.



# POOL REPAINTING



**In October 2023 we completed a significant maintenance and facility upgrade task - the repainting of all three pools! The last time this task was undertaken was back in 2014, just one year after we saved the pool. So it was a much needed and much welcomed upgrade.**

Stunning deep blue - the paint work looks a million bucks, and our valuable members and patrons almost didn't recognise it!

As a volunteer not-for-profit, the support of our community every year allows us to save for projects like this. We're proud to be in a position to continually invest in the facility and ensure the experience for patrons is one of a contemporary aquatic facility.

We thank Tony and the team from B&T Pool Painting & Court Surfacing for their great work and support, and our volunteer team for their preparation work.





# FUNDING

**The team has been working hard behind the scenes to secure funding for variety of upgrades and programs.**

The following funded projects are currently underway or were completed this year:

**Lisa Chesters Stronger Communities Grant Program** – funds to enable upskilling of volunteers (underway)

**Multicultural Festivals and Events Program** – funds to share and celebrate different cultures and traditions was used to run the Holi Festival of Colours 2024.



# SUPPORTERS AND SPONSORS

**We wouldn't be where we are today without the valuable work and support of the following supporters and sponsors:**

- Bart n Print
- Goldfields Tag & Test
- Terry Lamprell and Nola Thomas
- WebSmith Productions
- Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Golden Square Dry Cleaners
- Josh Garvin





## STRATEGIC PLAN
# ANNUAL UPDATE

We're in the final year of implementing our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan - our first strategic plan - and have undertaken its final year implementation review. It was fantastic to see so many of our actions have been completed.

A key highlight of this plan was seeing that the governance, operations and business/financial elements have been implemented and embedded into the organisation, which create the grounding for the next phase of our growth.

Significantly, this Strategic Plan also saw the Master Plan for the site developed, as was a key requirement of the organisation after the 2020 council decision on the future of the Golden Square Recreation Reserve Master Plan.

With elements of the Golden Square Pool Master Plan moving towards scoping and funding, our strategic position is well advanced. This means the organisation is in a position to implement aspects of this Master Plan in the next Strategic Plan.

Key highlights of the plan for 2023/2024 saw the organisational structure reviewed and a new operating model introduced, to better meet the organisation and our financial future.

## THE
# FUTURE

The future of Golden Square Pool is bright. Our volunteer and staffing numbers remain steady, ensuring our ongoing operations.

At the end of 2024, our first Strategic Plan 2020-2024 will come to an end. A monumental document, it included 135 actions focused on modernising our organisation. Our Committee of Management are proud to have implemented most of the actions.

Our new 2025-2028 Strategic Plan will be released at the end of 2024 and will position the organisation to ensure sustainability as we approach 15-years of community management - which is a great achievement.

Although not expecting drastic changes to our operations over the next three years, nevertheless we need to ensure that as an organisation we are adapting to an ever-changing and increasingly challenging aquatics industry, as well as the not-for-profit and community landscape.

The balance to deliver an innovative service while managing increasing risk, compliance, and asset issues, will only grow more difficult in the future.

We never take for granted the huge responsbility we have in operating this important asset - and do so on the goodwill and generosity of our wonderful community.



**2023/2024 Committee of Management**
**Deb Butt, Barb Lomas, Sam Kane, Helen Barton, Linda Howell, Marg Hand.**




Golden Square Pool

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