

The costs and risks of privatising Auckland's pools and leisure centres

The Auckland Council Governing Body will vote on **Thursday 1 August 2024** to decide whether to privatise the operations of the 22 pools and leisure facilities currently managed by Council.

Under the proposal, private operators would lease the right to manage the operations of the 22 facilities in return for a payment to the Council. Council would still own the land and assets.

Across Auckland, there are a total of 43 pool and leisure centres. Nineteen of these are currently managed by private organisations such as Belgravia, CLM and the YMCA. These organisations have current leases with Auckland Council to manage sites such as the Mt Albert Aquatic Centre, Onehunga War Memorial Pool and the Ōtāhuhu Pool and Leisure Centre.

Risks of privatising pools and leisure operations

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY – Losing direct management of the pools and leisure centres means we lose democratic oversight and control. Council is making this decision without public input or consultation.

PROFIT OVER PEOPLE – Private operators exist to make a profit. To do this, they may reduce staff pay and conditions, cut staff, and reduce service and support.

HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS – In light of the very recent incidents at the privately managed [Mt Albert](#) and [Newmarket Olympic](#) sites, our members in pools and leisure are justifiably worried that health, safety and wellbeing would be compromised under any private management.

The push for privatisation

The Council has proposed privatising the operations of these facilities to help reduce the Council's financial costs in running these centres.

However, no-one can guarantee that privatising management would deliver meaningful savings. It would only guarantee private organisations would try to manage these facilities for their own gain. The Council is ignoring opportunities to invest and re-model internally so that it can operate these sites more efficiently.

Sites managed by Council are currently operating at a loss, and they increasingly need heavy investment to maintain and upgrade them. But privatising management won't make these problems go away. Ultimately the Council will have to re-invest and repair operations of the sites once the leases expire and eventually return to Council.

Examples of outsourcing of pools and leisure centres

- [Record-keeping issues at Mt Albert Aquatics Centre two months before a near-drowning.](#)
- [Major increases to membership fees in Belgravia-run sites in Brisbane.](#)