



#TimeWarpTuesday – 17 December 2024

Welcome to #TimeWarpTuesday and a look back to the official opening of Perth City Council run – Somerset Pool.

“The opening of Somerset Pool in early 1966 was the culmination of many years of residents and councillors lobbying the City of Perth for such a facility. A loan had been set aside for several years for the development of a beginners’ pool, but the Victoria Park-Carlisle swimming club and the State Swimming Council had both lobbied the City Council to increase the planned design to an Olympic size. The Council refused this request on the grounds that it would cost significantly more than had been allocated. Even though the Council recognised that the pool would be limited in its usage – it would, for example, be unsuitable for school swimming carnivals – the City Council refused to budge on the original plan. This decision angered some residents of the district, including the editor of the *Park Post* who wrote that it was yet another case of other Wards receiving a superior class of facilities:

“The PCC, in a complete reversal of the attitude it showed when in 1962 it secured for Western Australia and amateur sport in general the Commonwealth Games, is completely ignoring the need of Victoria Park swimmers to train and compete under standard conditions”

“After many debates, the City Council decided to proceed with an amended plan which made allowance for an extra six inches of depth, for use for training, but would not agree to the demand for a full-size pool. Councillors opposing the request were adamant that because the project had been initially approved as a learners’ pool, it should be built as such. Despite the disputes surrounding the building of the pool, residents of the district eagerly embraced this new facility. In the first week, over 1,000 swimmers used the pool, despite cooler weather, and it was, as the *Park Post* proclaimed, ‘a popular rendezvous for the children of the district’. Although the pool was closed in winter months, it was well patronised in the summer time. During December 1967 and January 1968 alone a total of 86,674 people passed through the admission gates.” (Thompson, pp. 162-163)

If you have stories or photos to share that document life in Victoria Park and its suburbs, please get in touch with use here at the Library.

#LoveVicPark

Reference:

Thompson, Sussanah 2013, 'Beyond Matta Gerup: a History of Victoria Park', Town of Victoria Park, Victoria Park, Western Australia, pp. 162-163.



PH00233-01 Front entrance to the Somerset Pool on the day of the Official Opening, 1966. Local History Collection, Town of Victoria Park Library.



PH00233-02 Dignitaries speaking at the Official Opening of Somerset Pool 1966.
Local History Collection, Town of Victoria Park Library.