Willoughby Leisure Centre Manager

Willoughby City Council



- **Newly developed, state-of-the art leisure centre**
- **Lead the successful post-opening transition into full operational delivery and long term sustainability**
- **Manage a multidisciplinary leadership team**

About Willoughby City Council

Willoughby City is located in Sydney's northern suburbs - about nine kilometres from the Sydney CBD. With a population of approximately 70,000, Willoughby City is predominantly a residential area but also has substantial industrial and commercial areas, as well as significant bushland areas along the Lane Cove River and the foreshore of Middle Harbour.

About Willoughby Leisure Centre

Willoughby Leisure Centre (WLC) is undergoing a once-in-a-generation $65m upgrade to the pool hall, providing modern aquatic facilities, services and programmes to the community. The upgrade includes:

- 25-metre lap pool with access ramp
- Warmer program pool
- Learn to swim pool
- Toddler pool and play pools
- New spa and sauna
- External cladding and re-roofing of the whole centre
- A range of sustainability and accessibility improvements
- Expanded creche and a new sports hall roof.

Other features of Willoughby Leisure Centre include a health club with fully equipped gym and group fitness; and sports hall with two full sized basketball courts suitable for a wide range of court sports.

The new pool hall is due to open late-2026 and now requires an experienced leader to manage the facility whilst successfully delivering against strategic objectives and driving both business performance and community outcomes.



Willoughby Leisure Centre Manager

Reporting to the Director Community, the Willoughby Leisure Centre Manager provides strategic, values-led leadership of Council's leisure and aquatic portfolio.

Leading the successful long-term evolution of the redeveloped Willoughby Leisure Centre, the role will ensure the newly opened Centre operates smoothly and sustainably. The Manager will position WLC as the leading leisure destination on Sydney's lower north shore, delivering exceptional customer experiences, driving participation and loyalty, generating sustainable revenue, and embedding innovation and inclusion across all operations. The role translates strategic priorities into clear, deliverable plans and leads complex initiatives through to completion, supported by strong governance, disciplined project management, effective systems and robust performance monitoring.

Managing an established multidisciplinary leadership team, the role calls for a positive outlook combined with strong, visionary leadership. The successful candidate will be adaptable and resilient, able to roll with the punches and lead confidently through change.

To be considered for this role you will have extensive experience in aquatics, health and fitness centres and the management of community programs, including strategy, policy and program development. You will have a strong track record in managing aquatic operations and asset management, with a demonstrated working knowledge of regulatory frameworks, compliance, risk and safety management. With strong commercial acumen, you will drive sales, marketing and business development, whilst successfully delivering against strategic objectives that benefit the community.

You will need to engage and develop positive relationships with a broad and complex range of stakeholders, including patrons, members, staff, Council and senior Council Executives. You will also have demonstrated success in business planning and operations, including budget and project management, whilst inspiring a customer service and safety focussed culture.

This is an incredible opportunity to establish a newly developed state-of-the art facility as an industry leader and drive the success of this once-in-a-generation project.



Key Accountabilities

Strategic Leadership & Vision

- Develop and deliver a Leisure & Recreation Strategy for WLC aligned with the Community Strategic Plan and IP&R framework, translating Council priorities into practical programs and projects with clear outcomes, milestones, accountabilities and measures of success.
- Position WLC competitively in a crowded leisure market, anticipating trends and responding to community needs.
- Lead innovation in customer experience, programming and technology adoption to future-proof operations.
- Maintain a forward-looking view of market trends, community needs, operational risks and emerging opportunities, and recommend timely strategic responses.

Customer Experience & Community Outcomes

- Champion accessible, inclusive and high-quality leisure services that enhance health, wellbeing and community connection.
- Drive growth in participation and loyalty through engaging programs and consistently excellent service.
- Use customer insights, data and market analysis to refine offerings and build brand strength.

Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement

- Build strong partnerships with schools, sporting clubs, health providers and community organisations.
- Collaborate with industry networks, professional associations and government agencies.
- Represent Council with professionalism in dealings with elected officials, community stakeholders and commercial partners.

Business Growth and Financial Stewardship

- Lead WLC as a multimillion-dollar business unit with strong commercial discipline, financial accountability and a focus on sustainable community outcomes.
- Develop and execute business plans that maximise revenue across aquatics, fitness, memberships, swim school, facility hire and ancillary services while identifying new growth opportunities and operational efficiencies.
- Lead annual budgeting, forecasting and financial reporting, closely monitoring revenue, expenditure and key variances, and taking timely corrective action where required.
- Secure external funding, sponsorships and strategic partnerships, and prepare compelling business cases and reports to support Executive and Council decision-making.

Operational Excellence & Risk Management

- Lead the successful transition from construction to full operations
- Oversee aquatics, fitness, recreation, customer service and facility operations to deliver safe, compliant and high-quality services.
- Ensure compliance with WHS, child safety, risk management and relevant legislative and industry requirements, embedding effective governance, systems and controls across operations.
- Manage the Centre's assets and facilities, identifying maintenance, renewal and rectification requirements and working across Council to deliver timely outcomes.
- Develop and maintain the operational systems, policies, procedures and controls required to support safe, efficient, compliant and customer-focused operations.
- Embed sustainability initiatives in line with Council's Green City goals.

People Leadership

- Inspire, mentor and develop a multidisciplinary workforce, including a large casualised pool.
- Foster a high-performing, customer-centric culture that values safety, inclusion, accountability, innovation and collaboration.
- Lead workforce planning, recruitment, rostering and professional development to ensure capability at start-up and beyond.
- Develop leaders and build management capability in planning, financial stewardship, systems thinking, project delivery and continuous improvement.
- Model respectful behaviours, including respect for cultural diversity, encouraging innovation and collaboration
- Provide clear direction, support and accountability to enable leaders and teams to deliver business outcomes.
- Lead organisational and operational change, supporting staff and customers through transition while embedding new ways of working.

Key Challenges

- Balancing community and commercial outcomes: ensuring the new aquatic and leisure facilities deliver exceptional customer experiences while also achieving revenue growth and financial sustainability.
- Competing in a crowded market: positioning WLC as a best-in-class local destination, continuously innovating to attract and retain members and outpace competitors.
- Managing a dynamic workforce: leading a large, casualised and multi-skilled workforce, ensuring service consistency, staff engagement and compliance with WHS and child safety standards.
- Embedding sustainability: integrating environmentally sustainable practices across all aspects of facility operations, consistent with Council's Green City goals.
- Delivering under public scrutiny: operating in a high-profile, community-owned environment where decisions are visible and subject to political and community expectations.
- Coordinating complex operations: balancing swim school, aquatics, fitness, recreation programs and events to maximise utilisation, community benefit and customer loyalty.

Hours of Work

This is a permanent full time position. Given the unique nature of the recreation industry, flexibility to work outside of office hours, including early mornings, evenings, weekends and public holidays, may be required from time to time to meet operational needs of the centre.

Location

Willoughby Leisure Centre is located at 2 Small St, Willoughby, NSW.

Remuneration Guide

An attractive and competitive remuneration package of $180,000 to $190,000 per annum plus superannuation, plus car allowance will be available to the successful candidate, negotiable depending upon skill level and experiences. At the time of applying, candidates are invited to indicate their current salary and salary expectations.

Website & Social Media

For more information and news items on all facets of activities, services and programs, visit:

Willoughby Leisure:

Website: **willoughbyleisure.com.au**

Facebook: **facebook.com/WilloughbyLeisureCentre**

Instagram: **instagram.com/willoughby.leisure**

Willoughby City Council:

Website: **willoughby.nsw.gov.au**

Facebook: **facebook.com/WilloughbyCityCouncil**

Instagram: **instagram.com/willoughbycity**

LinkedIn: **linkedin.com/company/willoughby-city-council**



Selection Criteria

In addition to demonstrating **relevant experience across the core functional areas of responsibility identified in this Position Overview**, candidates applying for this role will require a range of personal and professional skills, including:

Required Skills and Experience

- Proven leadership of aquatics, fitness or recreation facilities of comparable scale, with accountability for business growth, customer experience and community outcomes.
- Expertise in aquatics operations, asset management, compliance, risk and safety systems.
- Strong track record in business planning, financial management, contract management and project delivery.
- Comprehensive knowledge of relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks (e.g. Local Government Act, Swimming Pools Act, WHS, child safety).
- Outstanding interpersonal, communication and stakeholder engagement skills, including experience working with elected officials, community groups and industry partners.
- High-level analytical and problem-solving skills, with the ability to use data and insights to drive innovation.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and inspire multidisciplinary teams, including casual and shift-based workforces.
- Experience in change management, workforce planning and embedding cultures of continuous improvement.
- Demonstrated commitment to community development principles in the design and delivery of programs and services.

Qualifications

- Tertiary qualifications in recreation, sport management, business administration or a related discipline; or significant equivalent senior industry experience.

Desirable

- Demonstrated success in launching or transforming facilities, services or programs, with the ability to manage start-up complexity and deliver sustainable outcomes.
- Understanding of the complexity of local government, including social, political and regulatory frameworks.
- Experience in swim school program design and growth strategies.
- Knowledge of health and fitness programs, customer service design, and membership acquisition/retention.
- Familiarity with aquatic education development, accreditation and administration.
- Experience securing external funding or sponsorships to support program or facility growth.
- Experience with membership management and point-of-sale systems to support customer service and operational efficiency.

This position will be subject to relevant and ongoing police, working with children, qualification and other probity checks as determined by Council.

Residency and Immigration

Candidates must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen / permanent resident or have unlimited working rights in Australia to be considered for this position.

Leadership Capabilities

- **Lead:** Articulate a bold vision for leisure and recreation in Willoughby. Model ethical leadership, inspire innovation, and take accountability for outcomes.
- **Learn:** Use customer insights, data and industry trends to refine programs and business strategies. Foster adaptive learning and continuous improvement.
- **Care:** Champion health, wellbeing, safety and inclusion in every aspect of WLC's operations. Embed sustainability and exercise wise compassion with staff and customers.
- **Share:** Build collaboration across Council, schools, community groups and industry partners. Share knowledge and expertise openly to strengthen collective impact.
- **Deliver:** Achieve measurable growth in participation, revenue and satisfaction. Consistently deliver safe, high-quality programs and experiences that enhance Willoughby's reputation.

Please apply now to avoid missing out!

Please note Sportspeople Recruitment will commence screening and interviewing for this role immediately.

Applications close: 5pm Monday, 16 November (AEDT).

If you are intending to apply, please do so now. We reserve the right to close the role as soon as sufficient merit applications are received.

Candidates must complete and submit the COMPULSORY **Sportspeople Recruitment Application Form** at the time of applying. The form is available as a download at the Sportspeople Recruitment website listing for this role and contains questions against which we require your specific response prior to considering your application.

Sportspeople Recruitment prefers a 1-2 page letter of introduction and an accompanying CV of no more than 6 pages, merged into the Application Form as one MS Word file.

Apply Now to

Your application should be sent electronically via the "apply now" link at the advertisement via **sportspeoplerecruitment.com/jobs**

Enquiries

In the first instance general enquiries should be directed to **Scott Oakhill** on **0408 258 337** or **FREECALL AU 1800 634 388** or or **+61 2 9555 5000** or via **admin@sportspeoplerecruitment.com**.

About Sportspeople Recruitment

The Willoughby Leisure Centre Manager, Willoughby City Council search and recruitment process is being managed exclusively by **Sportspeople Recruitment**.

Sportspeople Recruitment is a leading executive search and recruitment firm servicing sport business. Celebrating 30 years in 2026 our curated Talent Network has been developed as a result of successfully filling thousands of roles across the A-Z of sport business employers.

We offer the most experienced Consultant team in the market available to assist with executive search, general recruitment, hiring strategy, remuneration planning and executive/Board advice.

We are delighted to have been appointed by Willoughby City Council as the exclusive search partner for the Willoughby Leisure Centre Manager position.

Australian owned - globally connected - since 1996

Merit Recruitment

Don't meet every single requirement? Studies have shown women and minority groups are less likely to apply for jobs unless they meet every single qualification. **Sportspeople Recruitment has a reputation as a leader in merit recruitment**. Everything we do has a focus on presenting the best candidates to our client Employer whilst maintaining a commitment to do what we can to address the imbalance of under-represented groups in leadership positions.

If you believe you have what it takes to perform this job but don't tick off every single qualification and experience we've listed, we encourage you to focus on the strengths, experience, qualifications and soft-skills you do have as the reasons you should apply. Believe in yourself and if still in doubt call our Consultant for a quick chat or simply apply. Without an application we can't consider you and we'll never consider your application a waste of our time.

SPORTSPEOPLE RECRUITMENT

WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL
City of Diversity