



# **First Lap Voucher Program Evaluation**

**Final report**

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## Summary

### Background

Swimming skills are an evidence-based component of drowning prevention, but many Australian children miss out on learn to swim education. Voucher programs may reduce swimming lesson cost and increase participation. **The First Lap voucher program was launched in December 2021 and provided two New South Wales (NSW) state government funded \$100 vouchers, one per financial year, in 2021 - 2022 and 2022 – 2023 for parent/carers of children aged 3-6 years.** For the 2021 - 2022 financial year, the program also included children in Kindergarten in 2021 and 2022, who missed out on vital water safety education during their preschool years due to COVID-19 restrictions.

UNSW Sydney were contracted as the independent evaluators of the First Lap voucher program. **The First Lap program evaluation aims to determine the effectiveness of the program in meeting the objectives of increasing preschool aged children participating in learn to swim programs and increasing parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of learning to swim.** Data from the launch date in the 2021 - 2022 financial year and the entire 2022 – 2023 financial year were used. This report presents the final evaluation findings, following an interim report (November 2022; Appendix 1)

### **Outcome evaluation findings**

In the 2021 – 2022 financial year a total of 221,333 vouchers were created and 155,086 vouchers were redeemed (70%) and **in the 2022 – 2023 financial year a total of 143,776 vouchers were created and 111,280 vouchers were redeemed (77%).** Across both financial years, a total of 350,068 vouchers were created for 296,141 individual children, 277,488 of which were redeemed (71%). **Of the children for whom at least one voucher was created, 199,496 (70%) were redeemed.** This was approximately **42% of the 476,101 children aged 3-6 years living in NSW** at that time.

However, there were disparities in voucher creation and redemption in priority population groups in both financial years. In 2022 - 2023, the *proportion* of vouchers that were created for **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) children** was 17% lower than the NSW population proportion of CaLD children. The *number* of vouchers created for CaLD children was 29% lower than the NSW population proportion of CaLD children. The proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for CaLD children was also 9% lower than for all children for whom vouchers were created.

In the 2022 – 2023 financial year, the *proportion* of the total number of vouchers created for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children** was comparable to the NSW Aboriginal



and Torres Strait Islander child population proportion. The *number* of vouchers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was only 2% lower than for all children. However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was 11% lower than for all children.

The *proportion* of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed for **children with a disability** was comparable to the NSW population proportion of children with a disability in the 2022 – 2023 financial year. The *number* of vouchers created for children with a disability was slightly higher than for all children. However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for children with a disability was 12% lower than for all children.

In the 2022 – 2023 financial year, the total *number* of vouchers created and redeemed for the eligible population of **children living in regional areas** was slightly lower than for children living in metropolitan areas. However, the *proportion* of created vouchers that were redeemed for children living in regional areas was slightly higher than for all children.

There were also disparities in voucher creation and redemption by **socioeconomic status (SES)**. In the 2022 – 2023 financial year, vouchers were more likely to be redeemed for children living in higher socioeconomic areas than lower socioeconomic areas. **The direct cost of vouchers to the two highest SES quartiles was over \$6 million in the 2022 – 2023 financial year.** Further, the priority population groups of children living with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CaLD children and children living in regional and remote areas were more highly represented among the lowest SES quartile.

Across both financial years, First Lap vouchers were created and redeemed at lower rates for **children who had not previously or recently (in the previous 12 months) engaged in swimming lessons**. In 2021 – 2022, 81,732 vouchers were redeemed for preschool and kindergarten children who had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months, 25% of the total vouchers redeemed. As a potential measure of retention of these children in the 2022 – 2023 financial year, a total of 26,036 vouchers were created for these children, 19,605 (75%) of which were redeemed, only slightly lower than the redemption rate for all children. *However, it is unclear whether the First Lap program met its objective of increasing preschool aged children participating in learn to swim programs as data on the baseline (initial) levels of participation in NSW and other Australian jurisdictions is unknown.*



As part of the program evaluation, parent and carer surveys were conducted. A total of 2256 parent/carers completed both Survey 1 (2022) and Survey 2 (2023). **The survey findings indicated a significant increase in knowledge and awareness of supervision as a water safety strategy**, but there were no changes for restricting access to water, pool fencing, learning to swim or resuscitation, most of which already showed high awareness among this cohort of parent/carers.

During the 2021- 2022 and 2022-2023 financial years, 574 swim school providers were onboarded. Of these, 498 providers (87%) redeemed program vouchers in the 2022-2023 financial year. The **provider survey** was distributed to all 519 onboarded providers at the time in December 2022 and completed by 100 providers (19%). Most providers indicated that First Lap had increased enrolment in learn to swim lessons for children 3-6 years at their swim school. Increases in the number of classes taking place, increased hours for existing teachers and increased swim school income were also reported.

**Interviews with swim school providers** found that views of the program were very positive and that the vouchers were generally easy to redeem. Providers indicated vouchers are predominately being used by families already enrolled in swimming lessons as cost of living relief. Retention over winter months was also described as a benefit of the voucher program. Although difficult to definitively attribute impacts on enrolment and thus business to the scheme, industry views were that the First Lap program likely contributed to increased enrolment and thus increased employment for instructors and additional pool space being used. However, it was a challenge to ensure staffing levels were adequate to support demand and allow progression of students through swim school levels.

### ***Economic evaluation findings***

The economic evaluation found that the First Lap program is highly valued by recipients with benefits for those who would have otherwise not been able to access swimming lessons due to cost. Providers have reported an increase in economic activity due to the program. Combined, these benefits were found to outweigh the costs associated with delivering the program.

A **benefit-cost ratio** of approximately **\$1.4 for each dollar invested** for the First Lap program indicated that the estimated benefits exceed the costs of the policy. There are several uncertainties around this result, however sensitivity analyses demonstrate that the finding is relatively robust to plausible variations in key parameters including increased program demand and a focus on low socioeconomic groups, and estimated benefits are larger than estimated costs in all scenarios modelled.



## **Recommendations**

Given that it is unclear whether the First Lap program met its objective of increasing preschool aged children participating in learn to swim programs as data on the baseline levels of participation are unknown, a **NSW population surveillance measure** could be used to collect these data. This measure could be included in the NSW Health Child Population Health Survey and ask parent/carers of children aged 3-6 years to report **whether their child had participated in swimming lessons in the preceding 12 months.**

Recommendations to increase redemption among priority populations groups are to **offer a higher voucher amount (\$200 - \$250) to low SES families**, reflecting the true cost of one term of swimming lessons and largely removing the need for parent/carer co-contribution. To generate cost savings that could be directed to provide this higher voucher amount to low SES families, **means testing for the voucher** could be introduced. This could restrict future eligibility to the two lowest SES quartiles, approximately half of pre-school aged children in NSW. Such means testing focused toward low SES families will be more likely to reach additional priority population groups of children living with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CaLD children, as well as children living in regional and remote areas.

Another recommendation to increase redemption among priority populations is to **establish specific program governance groups to guide all stages of the program for each priority population group** (children living with a disability, Aboriginal children, CaLD children), to include community leaders, families and community organisations at the state and local level.

Raising awareness of the program and encourage voucher creation among regional and remote families and working with regional providers to ensure swimming lesson provision that meets customer demand is also recommended.



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## 1. Background

The First Lap voucher program provided two (one per financial year) New South Wales (NSW) state government funded \$100 vouchers for parent/carers of children aged 3-6 years who are not enrolled in school to contribute to swimming lesson costs, during 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023.

The core objectives of the program were to:

1. Increase the number of preschool aged children, who did not participate in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months, participating in learn to swim programs.
2. Build knowledge and awareness amongst parents and carers of the importance of children learning to swim.

Learning to swim is one of several strategies that, when used in combination, can reduce a child's risk of drowning (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2023a). However, it is not yet known how many lessons are needed to achieve minimum competencies (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2023b), nor at what age its optimal to start learning to swim. Indeed, when is the right time is likely to differ based on a child's age and physical, mental and emotional development. What is known is that participation in swimming lessons declines significantly after age seven (PwC Australia 2022) and an estimated 40% of children leave primary school without being able to swim the length of an Olympic swimming pool (PwC Australia 2022).

In addition, the more time in the water the better when it comes to learning to swim. This may be in informal instruction, such as learn to swim lessons, but may also be informal aquatic activity whereby children can practice skills learned in more formal settings (Franklin et al. 2015).

At the time the First Lap program was launched on 1 December 2021, it was recognised that COVID-19 had significantly impacted the commencement of swimming lessons for pre- school aged children over the previous 18 months. For this reason, for the first year of the program, in operation for seven months (1 December 2021 to 30 June 2022) eligibility was expanded to include children in kindergarten in 2021 or 2022. *For the purposes of this report and comparison to Census population data, the eligible population for the 2021 – 2022 financial year is defined as children aged 3-6 years.*

On 1 July 2022, First Lap eligibility reverted to children aged 3 to 6 years not enrolled in school, as originally intended. *For the purposes of this report and comparison to Census*



population data, the eligible population for the 2022 – 2023 financial year is defined as children aged 3-5 years. Most children are enrolled in school by the age of six as, in NSW, children must have commenced school by their 6th birthday. A limitation of the evaluation is that the different eligible populations means that some data points cannot be directly compared or combined across both financial years.

The evaluation of the program provides an understanding of how the program has impacted participation rates of preschool aged children in learn to swim programs, particularly within Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living with a disability, regional and remote residing children, and children in low socio-economic status (SES) areas (Macniven et al. 2023). These groups were identified as priority populations for the First Lap program, having previously been identified as being underrepresented in formal or structured swimming lesson participation.

The evaluation also examined whether the program has influenced the attitudes and motivations of parents and carers about the importance of learning to swim programs and water safety strategies. Further, the evaluation examines whether the program has impacted or enhanced the ability of the aquatics sector to deliver fit-for-purpose learn to swim programs. An economic evaluation has been conducted to assess the cost-effectiveness of the program.

#### **EVALUATION AIMS:**

1. Provide understanding of program impact on learn to swim participation rates, particularly CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, disability, regional and remote and low SES priority populations
2. Examine program influence on parent/carer knowledge, awareness, motivation for learn to swim programs and awareness of water safety strategies
3. Examine program impact on aquatic sector delivery of learn to swim programs
4. Conduct an economic evaluation to assess the relative costs and benefits of the program

First Lap evaluation activities, data sources and data collection timeframes and progress are summarised in Appendix 2. All activities were completed except for interviews/focus groups with parents and carers due to recruitment and timing issues; qualitative data from parent/carers was instead obtained in both parent/carer surveys via free text responses. A program logic model was developed by the Program Owner, the Office of Sport, to explain the inputs, activities and intended outputs, and outcomes, which guides the evaluation (Figure 1).



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This report is based on data received from the NSW Government Office of Sport between July 2022 and July 2023 (Appendix 3). Parent/carer survey data (Appendix 4) and Provider survey data (Appendix 5) were accessed by the evaluators directly through the Survey Manager platform.

Standalone data from financial year 1 (Dec 2021 – June 2022) were analysed and reported on in the **First Lap Voucher Program Evaluation Interim findings report** in November 2022 (Appendix 1). The final report analyses and reports on standalone data from financial year 2 (2022 – 2023) and combined data across both financial years where applicable.

The independent evaluators have provided commentary and future recommendations to align with the current operating context. At the time of writing the report during the 2023 – 2024 financial year, the First Lap voucher program has been extended until 30 June 2024 to provide one NSW state government funded \$50 vouchers for parent/carers of children aged 3-6 years who are not enrolled in school to contribute to swimming lesson costs.

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**Figure 1: First Lap Program logic model**

Current situation/Needs	Evidence	Program Components/Activities	Outputs	Mechanism of Change	Outcomes	
					Short- Term (1 year)	Medium-Term (2 years)
Concerns over the level of swimming capability of children living in NSW and the impact of this on water safety. The First Lap Voucher Program seeks to increase participation of preschool-aged children in learn to swim classes and to build parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of preschool-aged children learning to swim	Children are missing out on vital learn to swim education, particularly those from low socio-economic, rural and remote locations, Aboriginal CaLD and children with a disability. As a result, there are gaps of achievement of basic swimming and water safety skills and knowledge  September 2020 enrolments in swimming lessons decreased by 25%  Year on Year  Every Australian child should be able to	1x\$100 learn to swim voucher per financial year for every preschool-aged child residing in NSW to be used to pay for eligible intensive or weekly/term-based learn to swim programs or part thereof  Technology platform to support voucher transactions  Sector consultation including peak bodies and a cross section of learn to swim providers (private, public, sole trader)  Program business rules, guidelines, and terms & conditions for participants and providers.  Sector communications focusing on educating potential providers about the program's eligibility criteria and how to promote voucher use	Total number of voucher redemptions  Number of eligible providers onboarded  Survey responses from providers  Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children who have never attended learn to swim programs.  Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children who have not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months	By providing every preschool aged child in NSW a \$100 learn to swim voucher every year, we can increase participation of preschool-aged children in learn to swim programs and build parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety	Preschool-aged children participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the Program vouchers  Learn to swim providers register to become a Program provider  Preschool-aged children participate in learn to swim programs for the first time (new participation)  Preschool-aged children who had previously participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months, recommence learn to swim programs	Increased number of preschool-aged children participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the Program vouchers, YoY  Improved sector service provision facilitated by program eligibility requirements, communications, and consultations  Maintained participation of preschool-aged children who in year 1 of the program had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months  Increased level of parent/guardian knowledge



<p>achieve the fundamental stage milestones of the National Swimming and Water Safety Benchmark by the age of 6 years</p> <p>Cost of lessons is a barrier to participation</p>	<p>Communications aimed at improving parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of the importance of preschool-aged children learning to swim.</p> <p>Targeted communications aimed at increasing awareness of the program in priority populations including CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability</p>	<p>Survey responses to questions relating to parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs.</p> <p>Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability</p>	<p>Establish baseline of parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs.</p> <p>Preschool-aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability, participate in learn to swim classes</p>
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**External factors:**

- Covid-19 restrictions on the learn to swim industry
- The ability of providers in regional/remote areas to meet program demand

**Assumptions:**

- Participation of preschool--aged children in learn to swim programs will lead to attainment of swimming and water safety skills
- Voucher redemptions are an appropriate measure of program participation



## 2 First Lap evaluation activities

### 2.1 Retrospective collection of baseline participation data and historical data

It was unfeasible to obtain industry baseline participation data and historical data due to incompleteness of data and limitations around data capture and the impact of Covid-19 on pre-program data. However, the evaluators collaborated with three key industry partners (Royal Life Saving NSW, Belgravia and YMCA) to gain an understanding of learn to swim participation among NSW preschool age children during the First Lap program period (2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 financial years).

Results from the data analysis are presented in section 6 Other Findings.

### 2.2 Online Survey of registered providers

The provider survey (Appendix 5) was distributed to registered First Lap program providers during November – December 2022. A total of 100 of the 518 providers who were onboarded at the time completed the survey (19.3%).

Results from the data analysis are presented in section 3: Outputs, and section 4: Short-Term (1 year) Outcomes.

### 2.3 Online Survey 2/2 of parents and carers knowledge and attitudes of learn to swim programs and water safety, voucher use

The second of a series of two parent/carer survey was distributed to parent/carers who consented to take part in the program evaluation during May 2023. Parent/carers who had registered more than one child for the program using the same email were sent one survey only, and asked to answer on behalf of their eldest child. A total of 14,837 responses were received, representing 15.6% of those who had consented to receive a survey and 11.5% of the vouchers created in the 2022 – 2023 financial year.

***The proportion of survey respondents who redeemed a voucher was 92%, compared to 69% of total redemptions, indicating that respondents are a biased sample of parents/carers who were more likely to redeem vouchers. Results should therefore be interpreted with caution.***

Results from the data analysis are presented in the following sections of this report: section 3: Outputs; section 4: Short-Term Outcomes (1 year); section 5: Medium-Term Outcomes (2 years), and section 6: Other Findings.

#### *2.4 Interviews/focus groups with parents and carers*

N/A (Not undertaken due to recruitment and timing issues; see Table 1).

#### *2.5 One-on-one interviews with select learn to swim providers*

Interviews were conducted with industry partners, including Royal Life Saving NSW, Belgravia, and YMCA. Results from the data analysis are presented in section 5: Other Findings.

#### *2.6 End of financial year 2022-23 voucher creation and redemption data, registered provider data*

Voucher creation (N = 143,776) and redemption (N = 111,280) data for the 2022 – 2023 financial year indicate that 77.4% of vouchers were redeemed in this period.

Results from the data analysis are presented in the following sections of this report: section 3: Outputs; section 4: Short-Term Outcomes (1 year); section 5: Medium-Term Outcomes (2 years), and section 6: Other Findings.

#### *2.7 Cost-benefit analysis*

Results from the cost-benefit analysis are presented in section 7: Economic Evaluation.

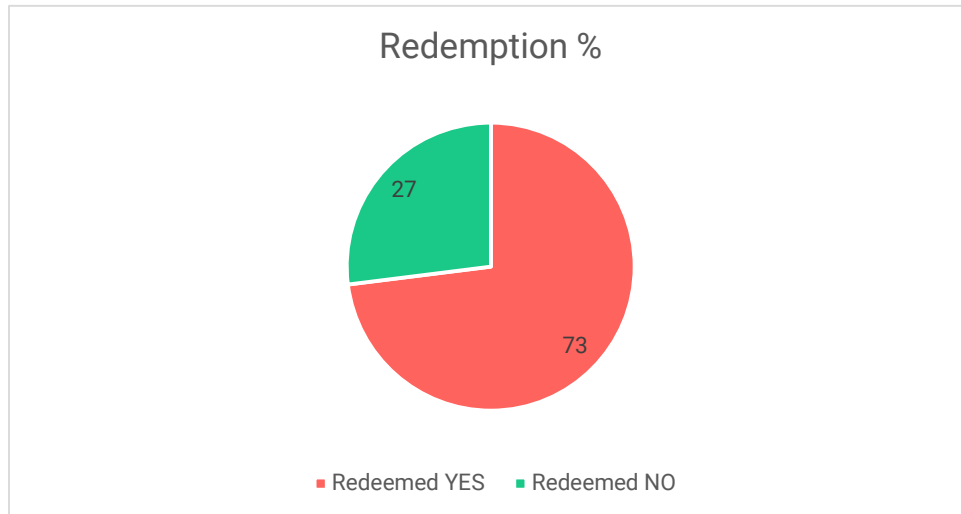


### 3 Outputs

#### 3.1 Total number of voucher redemptions

Across both the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 financial years, a total of 365,109 vouchers were created and 266,366 vouchers were redeemed (73.0%).

Figure 2: Voucher redemption 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 combined



#### 3.2 Number of eligible providers onboarded

During the 2021- 2022 and 2022-2023 financial years, 581 providers were onboarded. Of these, 507 providers (87.3%) redeemed program vouchers in the 2022-2023 financial year.

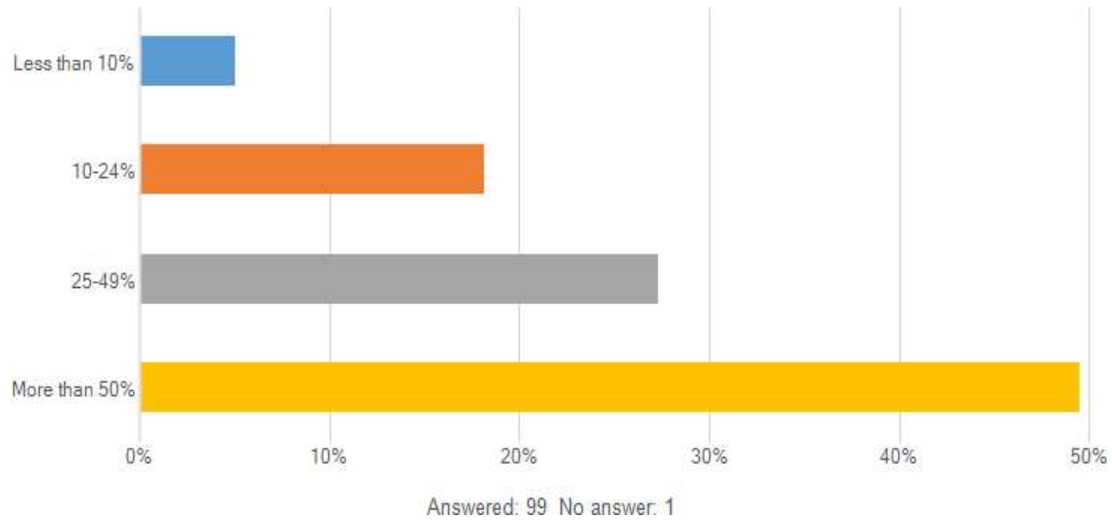
#### 3.3 Survey responses from providers

The provider survey was distributed to all onboarded providers in December 2022. A total of 100 of the 518 providers who were onboarded at the time (19.3%) completed the survey. Responses were received from Business owner/operators (N=72; 73.5%), Swim school managers (N=27; 27.6%), Swim teachers (N=23; 23.5%), Facility managers (N=13; 13.3%), Administration/finance (N=15; 15.3%), General manager (N=2; 2.0%), President of swim club (N=1; 1.0%), Program leader (N=1; 1.0%).

Providers were asked approximately what proportion (%) of children aged 3-6 years enrolled in learn to swim lessons at their swim school had redeemed a voucher since the First Lap program

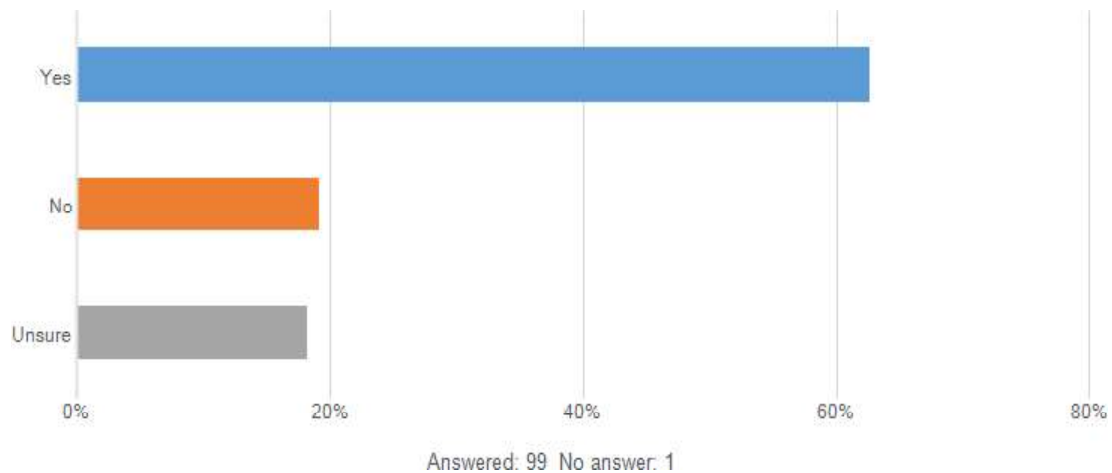
began in December 2021. Almost half (N=49; 49.5%) stated "More than 50%", 27 (27.3%) stated "25-49%", 18 (18.2%) stated "10-24%" and five (5.1%) stated "Less than 10%" (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Proportion (%) of children aged 3-6 years enrolled at swim school redeemed voucher



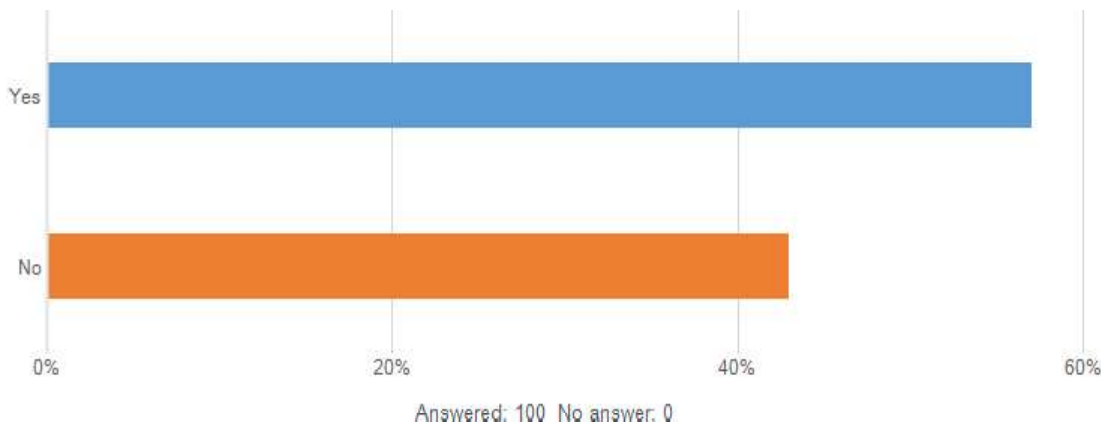
Providers were asked whether First Lap has increased enrolment in learn to swim lessons for children 3-6 years at their swim school. Most (N=62; 62.6%) indicated "Yes", 19 (19.2%) indicated "No" and 18 (18.2%) were "Unsure" (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Has First Lap voucher increased enrolment for children 3-6 years at your swim school



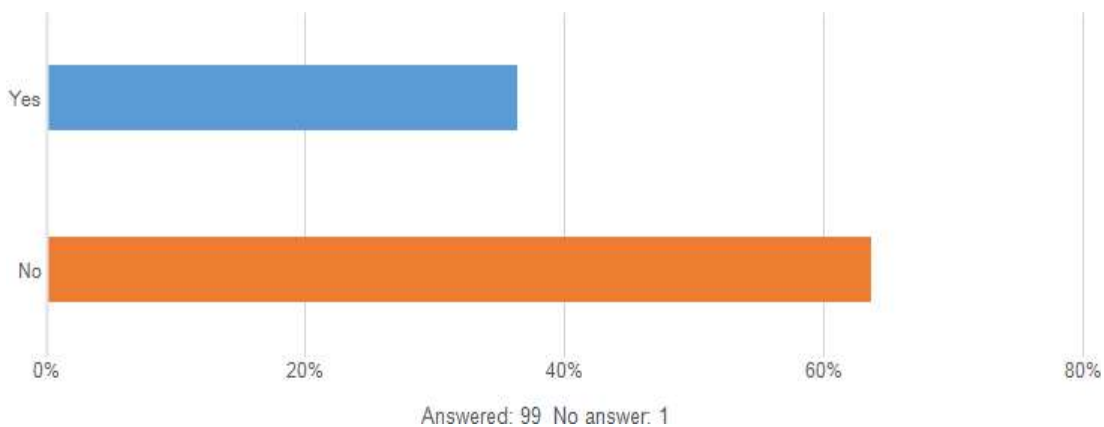
Respondents were asked a series of questions about whether First Lap had resulted in changes to learn to swim lesson operation at their venue. Most (N=57; 57.0%) indicated “Yes”, 43 (43.0%) indicated “No” to a) More classes taking place (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Changes to learn to swim lesson operation a) More classes taking place



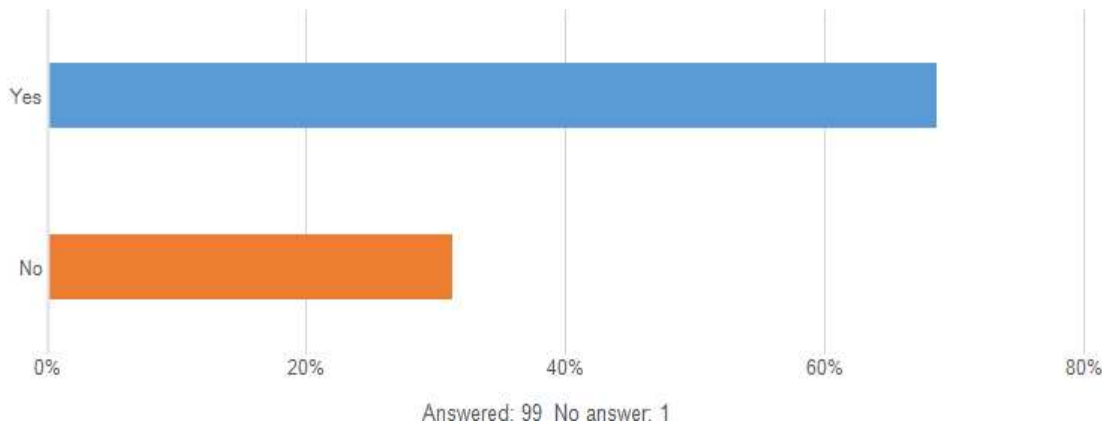
Most (N=63; 63.6%) indicated “No”, 36 (36.4%) indicated “Yes” to b) More pool space being used (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Changes to learn to swim lesson operation b) More pool space being used



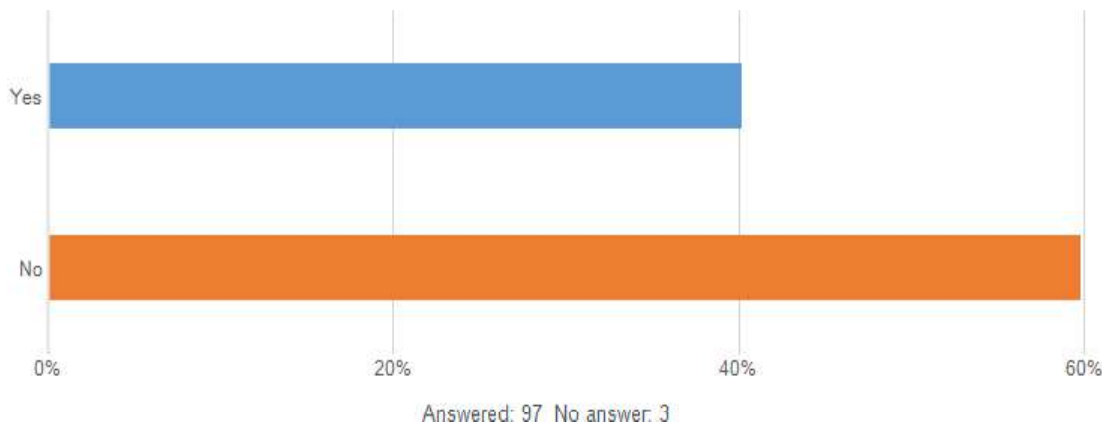
Most (N=68; 68.7%) indicated “Yes”, 31 (31.3%) indicated “No” to c) Increased child enrolment (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Changes to learn to swim lesson operation c) Increased child enrolment



Most (N=58; 59.8%) indicated “No”, 39 (40.2%) indicated “Yes” to d) Increased number of teachers employed (Figure 8).

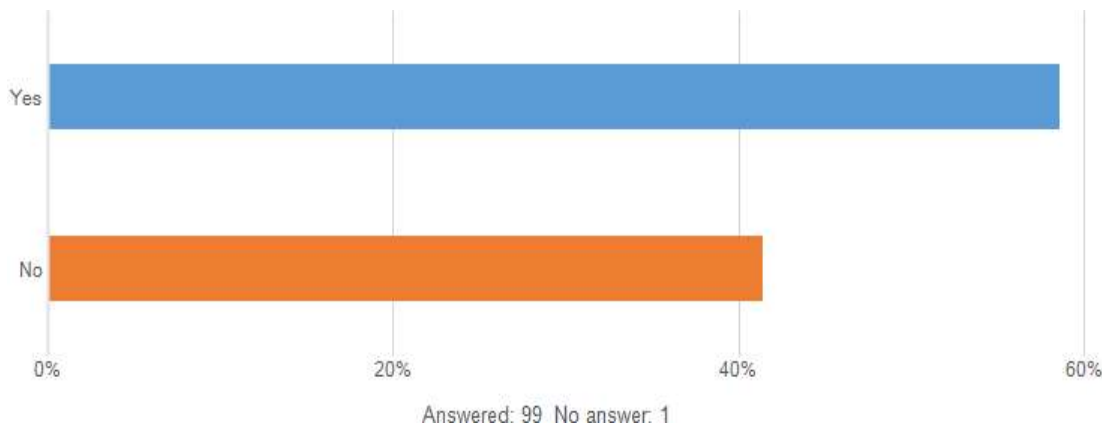
Figure 8: Changes to learn to swim lesson operation d) Increased teachers employed



Most (N=58; 58.6%) indicated “Yes”, 41 (41.4%) indicated “No” to e) Increased hours for existing staff (swim teachers) (Figure 9).

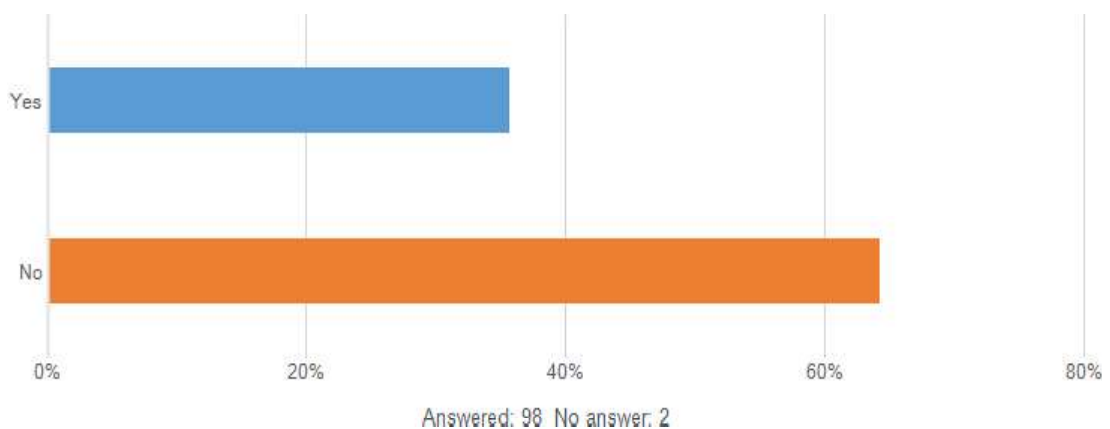


Figure 9: Changes to learn to swim lesson operation e) Increased hours for existing teachers



Most (N=63; 64.3%) indicated "No", 35 (35.7%) indicated "Yes" to f) Increased hours for existing staff (non-swim teachers)

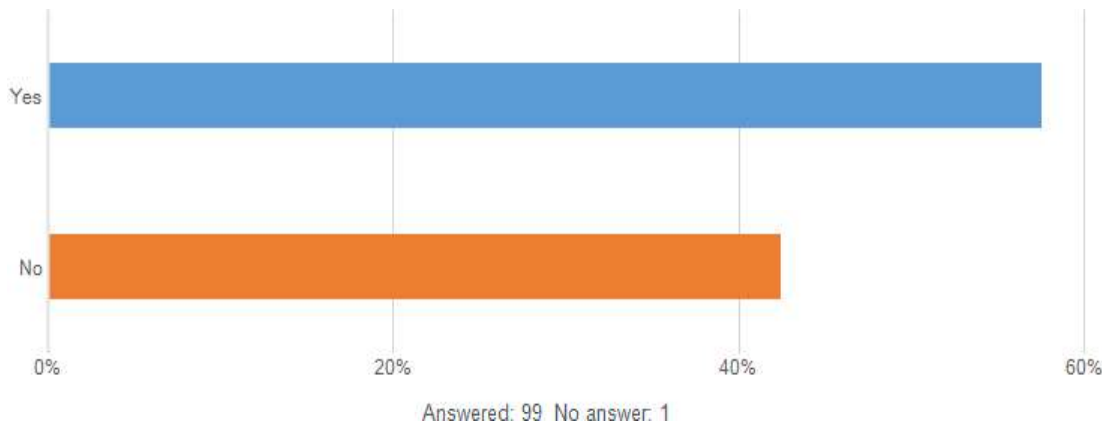
Figure 10: Changes to learn to swim lesson operation f) Increased hours for non-swim teachers



Most (N=57; 57.6%) indicated "Yes", 42 (42.4%) indicated "No" to g) Increased swim school income (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Changes to learn to swim lesson operation g) Increased swim school income



Finally, swim school provider respondents were asked an open-ended question about whether the First Lap voucher program resulted in any other changes in learn to swim lesson operation. Providers described how the First Lap Voucher program has led to a higher demand for swimming lessons as children progress through the program and book extra lessons.

**"The biggest thing that First Lap has done is broken down the barrier holding parents [back] from getting into their first class. Once they try for the first time and their child enjoys it, they stay"**

However, it has also resulted in a reduced retention rate with some new enrolments using the vouchers and then withdrawing once the voucher has been used.

**"Parents were enrolling children only to use [the] First Lap voucher which for our centre was only a month worth of lessons after that, customers never came back."**

Providers thought the program has been a huge help to families in easing the cost of living pressures and encouraging young kids to join in swimming lessons.

**"Parents were hardly turning up to lessons and not enrolling their child because they couldn't afford it. Then they used First Lap vouchers and came regularly. They saw the improvement in their child's swimming ability and continued their enrolment after the voucher had run out. They also referred their friends"**

However, there has been more demand than swim schools can accommodate due to a shortage of staff, particularly after COVID shutdowns.

**"While we (and our parents) are super grateful for the assistance provided by First Lap vouchers - our small swim school can only accommodate 460 swimmers 6 days a week and often runs at 90-95% capacity. That has not altered since the introduction of First Lap vouchers. I'm sure the impact on larger swim schools has been greater."**



Respondents also thought the program had increased awareness of the importance of learning to swim and water safety among patrons and there had been an increase in sales of swimwear and accessories.

**"We are now getting loads of enquiries and questions - particularly from parents of Covid babies, who show timidness toward the water and new challenges. It's great for encouraging them to learn this important lifesaving skill"**

Swim schools described how they would benefit from additional funding to employ more staff, which would assist in increasing children's swimming lessons provision.

**"People are just substituting payment with a voucher. It still hasn't fixed the lack of Learn to Swim Instructors that are in short supply Australia wide. This point needs addressing"**

***Please note: As just under 20% of the registered providers completed the survey, these results should be interpreted with caution as survey completion may have been higher among providers who redeemed more vouchers and were more engaged in the program. Data from the provider survey are also used to inform the economic analysis.***

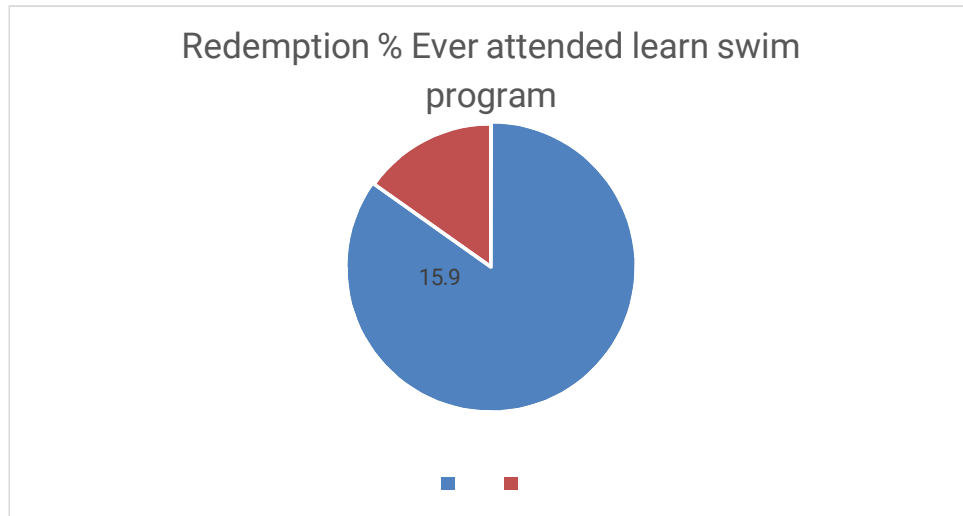
#### 3.4 Number of vouchers redeemed by children who had never attended learn to swim programs

During the 2022-2023 financial year, 36,150 (25.7%) vouchers were *created* for children who had never attended learn to swim programs, compared to 23.8% of vouchers for the 2021-2022 financial year. A total of 19,552 vouchers were *redeemed* for children who had never attended learn to swim program during the 2022-2023 financial year. This was 18.0% of the total vouchers redeemed during the 2022-2023 financial year, higher than the 14.7% reported in the 2021-2022 financial year.

Across both the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 financial years, a total of 88,834 vouchers were created and 42,349 vouchers were redeemed for children who have never attended learn to swim programs. This was 47.7% of created vouchers for this group, substantially lower than the overall redemption rate of 71%, and 15.9% of the total number of redeemed vouchers (Figure 12).

***While the proportion of the total number of vouchers redeemed increased from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023, the lower redemption rates among children who had never participated in swimming lessons compared to other children indicate that these families still experience barriers to voucher redemption. The detailed reasons for non-redemption are presented in section 3.6.***

Figure 12: Vouchers redeemed for children who had never attended learn to swim programs, 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023

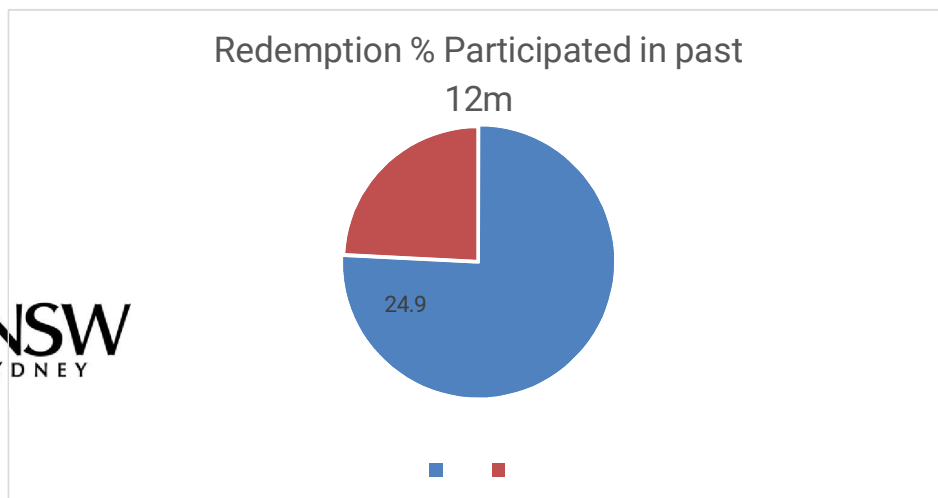


*3.5 Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children who had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months*

During the 2022-2023 financial year, 49,561 vouchers were created for children who had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months, 34.5% of all vouchers created. A total of 28,460 vouchers (57.4%) were redeemed for children who had not participated in a learn to swim program *within the past 12 months*. This was 25.6% of the total vouchers redeemed, slightly higher than the 24.3% reported in the 2021 – 2022 financial year.

Across both the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 financial years, a total of 131,330 vouchers were created and 66,289 vouchers were redeemed (50.5%) for children who had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months. This was 24.9% of the total redeemed vouchers (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Voucher redeemed for children who had not attended learn to swim programs, past 12 months, 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023





In logistic regression modelling, adjusting for all other relevant variables (i.e., age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, and area level SES), children who had *not participated in the past 12 months* were LESS LIKELY (lower odds; OR=0.20) to have redeemed vouchers in 2022-2023, than those who had participated in swimming lessons in the past 12 months. These odds were similar for children in both financial years (2021 – 2022 lower odds; OR=0.17).

***These redemption data across both financial years indicate that while First Lap vouchers were redeemed by over 66,000 children who had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months, redemption rates among these children (50%) were much lower than the overall redemption rate of 73%.***

***The reasons for this may be multiple and related, including swim school capacity where preference is typically given to children already participating, wider industry staff shortages and the need to contribute to additional lesson costs beyond the voucher amount. Some of these reasons are explored in more detailed in section 3.6.***

### *3.6 Survey responses to questions relating to parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs*

A total of 14,126 parent/carers completed Survey 2, 15.5% of the 91,135 parent/carers who consented to be contacted for the program evaluation. Table 1 displays Survey 2 completion by sociodemographic variables, among the total of all created vouchers during the 2022 – 2023 financial year. A higher proportion of parent/carers of non- Indigenous children (11.7%) completed the survey than parent/carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (9.4%). A higher proportion of parent/carers living in high socioeconomic areas completed the survey than parent/carers living in low socioeconomic areas e.g. 11.9% in Quartile 4 (highest) compared to 10.0% in Quartile 1 (lowest). A slightly higher proportion of regional/remote (11.9%) than metro (11.4%) parent/carers completed Survey 2.

These survey respondent groups were similar to the Survey 1 respondent population except that a higher proportion of CaLD than non-CaLD parent/carers completed Survey 1.

***The p value  $\leq 0.05$  throughout this report indicates statistically significant variation among the group categories (e.g. age group). As with Survey 1, these differences should be considered when interpreting survey findings as the survey completion representativeness was not reflective of the whole population of parent/carers who created a voucher.***



Table 1: Survey completion by sociodemographic variables \*indicates statistically significant variation at  $p \leq 0.05$

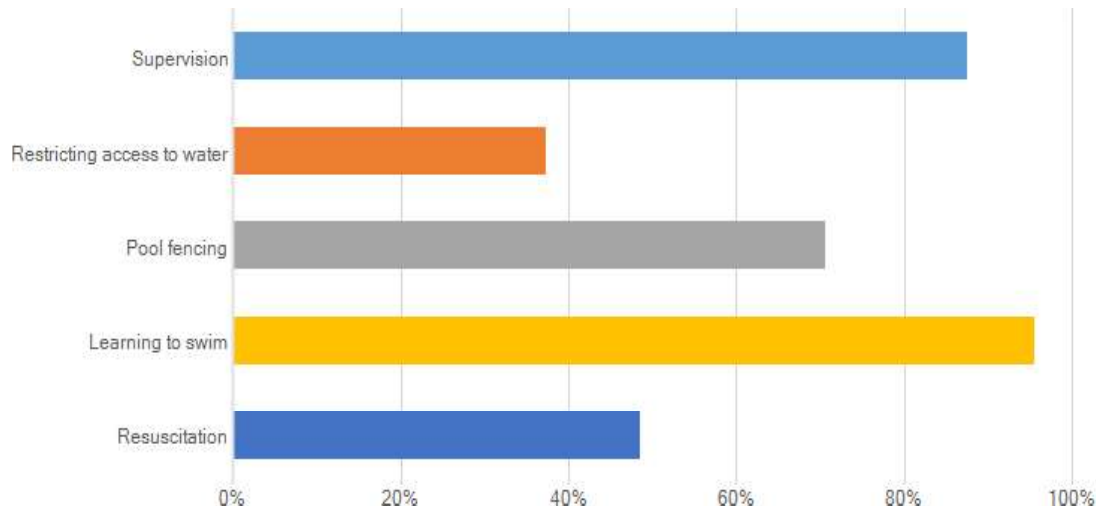
Variable	Completed Survey 2 (2023) N(%)	
	Yes	No
<b>Age*</b>		
3 years	3885 (10.7)	32587 (89.3)
4 years	5888 (12.2)	42525 (87.8)
5 years	4222 (11.6)	32151 (88.4)
6 years	838 (11.1)	6726 (88.9)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	7601 (11.5)	58586 (88.5)
Female	7199 (11.6)	55035 (88.4)
<b>Disability</b>		
Yes	321 (10.6)	2703 (89.4)
No	14312 (11.6)	109349 (88.4)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*</b>		
Yes	630 (9.4)	6067 (90.6)
No	14040 (11.7)	106295 (88.3)
<b>Language spoken at home*</b>		
English	12827 (11.5)	98732 (88.5)
Other (CaLD)	2010 (11.6)	15281 (88.4)
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile*</b>		
1 (low)	2311 (10.0)	20757 (90.0)
2	4035 (11.7)	30506 (88.3)
3	3377 (12.1)	24493 (87.9)
4 (high)	5114 (11.9)	37978 (89.1)
<b>Location*</b>		
Metro	11681 (11.4)	90420 (88.6)
Regional/Remote	3156 (11.9)	23315 (88.1)

Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about their knowledge and awareness of strategies to help keep children safe around water. **All the answer options are evidence-based strategies.**

In Survey 2 (2022 – 2023), of 14,119 respondents (who could select multiple responses), 12,357 parent/carers indicated *Supervision* (87.5%), 5282 indicated *Restricting access to water* (37.4%), 9961 indicated *Pool fencing* (70.6%), 13,486 indicated *Learning to swim* (95.5%) and 6844 indicated *Resuscitation* (48.5%) (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Knowledge of water strategies, 2022-2023 (can select multiple options)



There were differences by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 2).

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (89.8%) than 6 years old (83.2%); speaking English (89.7%) rather than another language at home (72.4); and living in a Regional/Remote area (92.1%) than Metropolitan (86.1%) area selected **Supervision**.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (39.8%) than 6 years old (33.5%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (43.9%) than non-Indigenous (56.1%); speaking English (37.1%) rather than another language at home (19.0%); and living in a Regional/Remote area (44.5%) than a Metropolitan (35.4%) area selected **Restricting access to water**.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (74.6%) than 6 years old (63.6%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (77.3%) than non-Indigenous (70.1%); speaking English (75.7%) rather than another language at home (35.2%); and living in a Regional/Remote area (79.4%) than a Metropolitan (67.9%) area selected **Pool fencing**.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (96.4%) than 6 years old (93.4%); speaking English (96.5%) rather than another language at home (87.9%); living in a high socioeconomic area (95.6%) rather than a low socioeconomic area (93.3%); and living in a Regional/Remote area (97.3%) rather than Metropolitan area (94.9%) selected **Learning to swim**.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (51.7%) than 6 years old (45.0%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (60.4%) than non-Indigenous (47.7%); speaking English (52.8%) rather than another language at home (18.9%); and living in a Regional/Remote area (57.8%) rather than a Metropolitan area (45.8%) selected **Resuscitation**.

***The differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups indicate that water safety strategies need to be specifically tailored towards CaLD families, with input from CaLD stakeholders at all stages.***



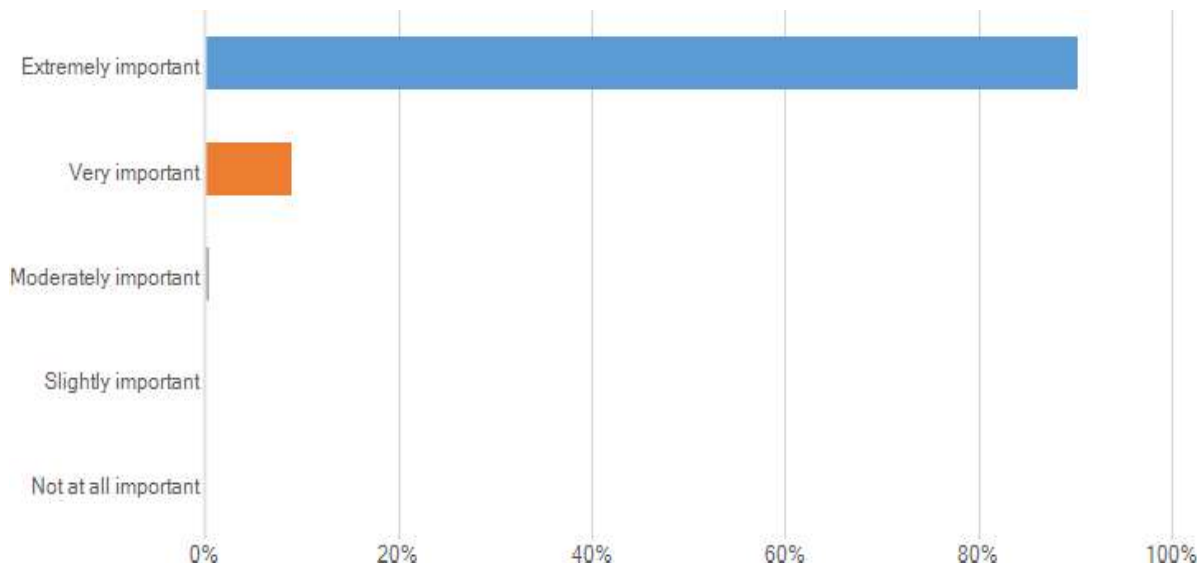
Table 2: Knowledge and awareness of strategies to help keep children safe around water, 2022-23 \*indicates statistically significant difference in groups at p≤0.05

Variable	Supervision N(%)		Restricting water access N(%)		Pool fencing N(%)		Learning to swim N(%)		Resuscitation N(%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Age</b>										
3 years	3340 (89.8)*	381 (10.2)*	1482 (39.8)*	2239 (60.2)*	2776 (74.6)*	945 (25.4)*	3588 (96.4)	133 (3.6)	1922 (51.7)*	1799 (48.3)*
4 years	4925 (87.6)*	697 (12.4)*	2102 (37.4)*	3520 (62.6)*	3981 (70.8)*	1641 (29.2)*	5373 (95.6)	249 (4.4)	2724 (48.5)*	2898 (51.5)*
5 years	3470 (85.8)*	574 (14.2)*	1450 (35.9)*	2594 (64.1)*	2722 (67.3)*	1322 (32.7)*	3827 (94.6)	217 (5.4)	1857 (45.9)*	2187 (54.1)*
6 years	667 (83.2)*	135 (16.8)*	269 (33.5)*	533 (66.5)*	510 (63.6)*	292 (36.4)*	749 (93.4)	53 (6.6)	361 (45.0)*	441 (55.0)*
<b>Gender</b>										
Male	6361 (87.2)	931 (12.8)	2732 (37.5)	4560 (62.5)	5129 (70.3)	2163 (29.7)	6967 (95.5)	325 (4.5)	3511 (48.1)	3781 (51.9)
Female	6017 (87.6)	851 (12.4)	2559 (37.3)	4309 (62.7)	4839 (70.5)	2029 (29.5)	6541 (95.2)	327 (4.8)	3339 (48.6)	3529 (51.4)
<b>Disability</b>										
Yes	266 (85.5)	45 (14.5)	124 (39.9)	187 (60.1)	228 (73.3)	83 (26.7)	298 (95.8)	13 (4.2)	159 (51.1)	152 (48.9)
No	11982 (87.5)	1705 (12.2)	5110 (37.3)	8577 (62.7)	9637 (70.4)	4050 (29.6)	13060 (95.4)	627 (4.6)	6612 (48.3)	7075 (51.7)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</b>										
Yes	537 (89.1)	66 (10.9)	265 (43.9)*	338 (56.1)*	466 (77.3)*	137 (22.7)*	581 (96.4)	22 (3.6)	364 (60.4)*	239 (39.6)*
No	11727 (87.3)	1702 (12.7)	4975 (37.0)*	8454 (63.0)*	9411 (70.1)*	4018 (29.9)*	12805 (95.4)	624 (4.6)	6411 (47.7)*	7018 (52.3)*
<b>Language spoken at home</b>										
English	11062 (89.7)*	1274 (10.3)*	6331 (37.1)*	10711 (62.9)*	9338 (75.7)*	2998 (24.3)*	11908 (96.5)*	428 (3.5)*	6514 (52.8)*	5822 (47.2)*
Other	1344 (72.4)*	513 (27.6)*	550 (19.0)*	2352 (81.0)*	654 (35.2)*	1203 (64.8)*	1633 (87.9)*	224 (12.1)*	351 (18.9)*	1506 (81.1)*
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile</b>										
1 (lowest)	1824 (83.6)*	357 (16.4)*	808 (37.0)*	1373 (63.0)*	1442 (66.1)*	739 (33.9)*	2034 (93.3)*	147 (6.7)*	1022 (46.9)*	1159 (53.1)*
2	3498 (89.8)*	397 (10.2)*	1621 (41.6)*	2274 (58.4)*	2921 (75.0)*	974 (25.0)*	3755 (96.4)*	140 (3.6)*	2110 (54.2)*	1785 (45.8)*
3	2820 (87.9)*	390 (12.1)*	1179 (36.7)*	2031 (63.3)*	2275 (70.9)*	935 (29.1)*	3059 (95.3)*	151 (4.7)*	1558 (48.5)*	1652 (51.5)*
4 (highest)	4264 (86.9)*	643 (13.1)*	1696 (34.6)*	3211 (65.4)*	3354 (68.4)*	1553 (31.6)*	4693 (95.6)*	214 (4.4)*	2175 (44.3)*	2732 (55.7)*
<b>Location</b>										
Metropolitan	9584 (86.1)*	1554 (13.9)*	3940 (35.4)*	7188 (64.6)*	7557 (67.9)*	3571 (32.1)*	10560 (94.9)*	568 (5.1)*	5092 (45.8)*	6036 (54.2)*
Regional/ Remote	2822 (92.1)*	243 (7.9)*	1364 (44.5)*	1701 (55.5)*	2435 (79.4)*	630 (20.6)*	2981 (97.3)*	84 (2.7)*	1773 (57.8)*	1292 (42.2)*



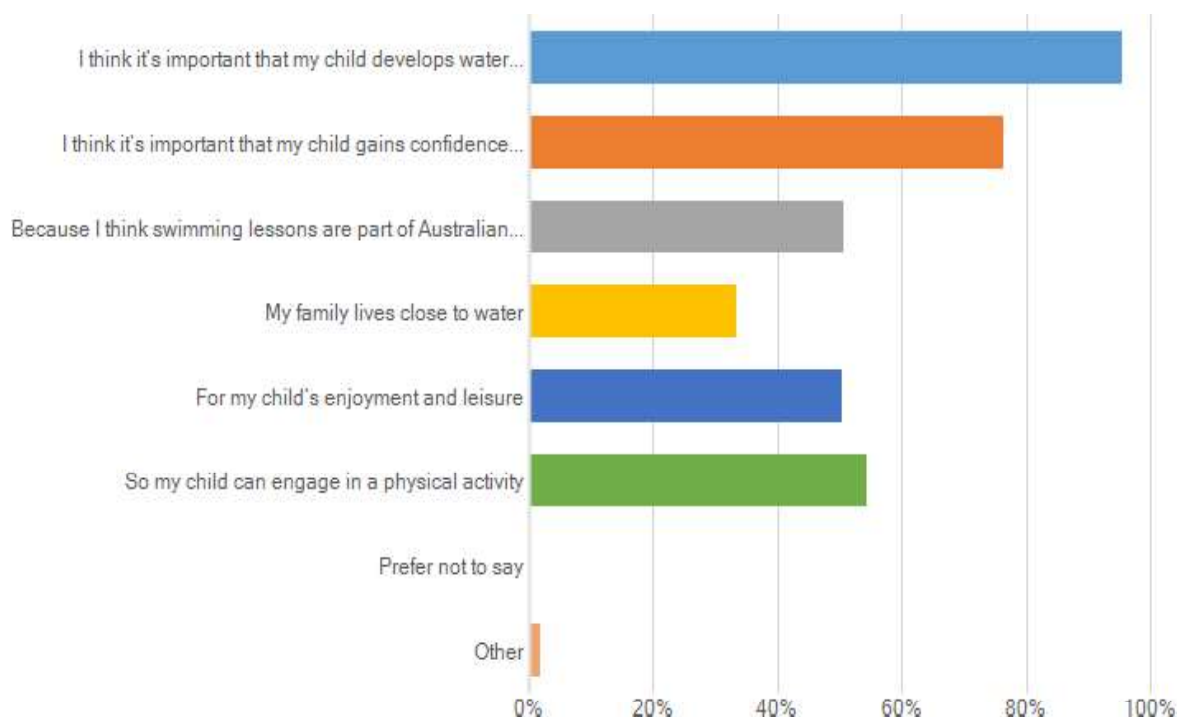
Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about how important they think it is for their child to learn to swim. Of 14,126 responses, the vast majority (12,756; 90.3%) indicated *extremely important*, 1280 (9.1%) indicated *very important* and 72 (0.5%) indicated *moderately important* (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Perceived importance for child to learn to swim, 2022-2023**



Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about why they applied for a First Lap voucher. Of 14,126 respondents (who could select multiple responses), 13,503 indicated *I think it's important that my child develops water safety and survival skills* (95.6%), 10,796 indicated *I think it's important that my child gains confidence in the water* (76.4%), 7144 indicated *Because I think swimming lessons are part of Australian culture* (50.6%), 4731 indicated *My family lives close to water* (33.5%), 7121 indicated *For my child's enjoyment and leisure* (50.4%), 7696 indicated *So my child can engage in a physical activity* (54.5%) and 263 indicated *Other* (1.9%) (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Reasons for applying for voucher, 2022-2023 (can select multiple)



“Other” responses were explored in depth through qualitative content analysis that revealed that parents acknowledged the importance of swimming as a life skill, the high cost of lessons, and the need for water safety. Some already had their children enrolled in swimming programs and utilized the voucher as a discount, while others emphasized the affordability aspect and the financial relief it provided. Several mentioned owning swimming pools or living in areas with water bodies, highlighting the need for water safety. Parents of children with disabilities emphasized the therapeutic and safety benefits of swimming. Overall, the financial assistance provided by the program was seen as a valuable opportunity to make swimming lessons more accessible and affordable for families.

There were differences by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 3). A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (95.2%) than 6 years old (93.8%); speaking English (96.2%) rather than another language at home (89.4%) and living in a Regional/Remote area (97.0%) rather than a Metropolitan area (94.8%) selected ***It's important my child develops water safety & survival skills.***

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (76.9%) than 6 years old (70.4%); speak English (77.3%) than another language at home (66.9%); live in a high socioeconomic (76.0%) rather than in a low socioeconomic area (71.3%); and live in a

Regional/Remote area (75.0%) rather than a Metropolitan area (79.1%) selected ***It's important my child gains confidence in the water.***

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: speaking English (50.9%) rather than another language at home (49.1%); living in a high socioeconomic (48.1%) rather than low socioeconomic area (42.7%) selected ***Because I think swimming lessons are part of Australian culture.***

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (54.8%) than 6 years old (47.6%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (59.7%) than non-Indigenous (46.2%); speaking English (54.8%) rather than another language at home (49.8%) selected ***So my child can engage in physical activity.***

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (55.0%) than 6 years old (40.7%); female (50.9%) than male (49.9%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (59.7%) than non-Indigenous (46.2%); speaking English (51.4%) rather than another language at home (40.5%); and living in a Regional/Remote area (54.8%) rather than a Metropolitan area (48.6%) selected ***For my child's enjoyment and leisure.***

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (31.8%) than 6 years old (28.4%); not living with a disability (56.4%) than living with a disability (43.6%), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (40.5%) than non-Indigenous (32.7%); speaking English (36.6%) rather than another language at home (10.2%); and living in a Regional/Remote area (43.9%) rather than a Metropolitan area (30.1%) selected ***My family lives close to water.***

***The differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups indicate that water safety strategies need to be specifically tailored towards different groups, especially CaLD families and families living in low socioeconomic areas.***



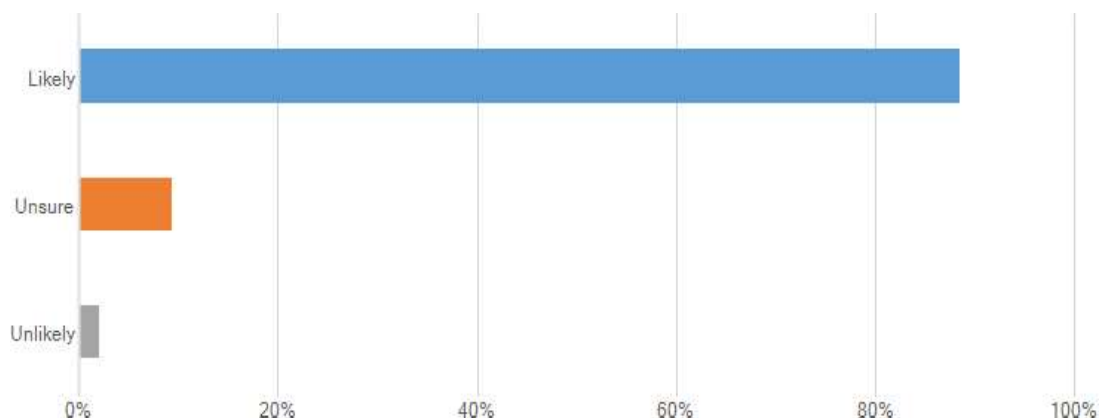
Table 3: Reasons for applying for First Lap voucher, 2022-2023 \*indicates statistically significant difference in groups at p≤0.05

Variable	Water safety/survival N(%)		Gain water confidence N(%)		Australian culture N(%)		Physical activity N(%)		Enjoyment & leisure N(%)		Live close to water N(%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Age</b>												
3 years	3700 (95.2)*	185 (4.8)*	2989 (76.9)*	896 (23.1)*	1923 (49.5)	1962 (50.5)	1739 (54.8)*	1436 (45.2)*	1745 (55.0)*	1430 (45.0)*	1364 (35.1)*	2521 (64.9)*
4 years	5638 (95.8)*	250 (4.2)*	4541 (77.1)*	1347 (22.9)*	2966 (50.4)	2922 (49.6)	2349 (52.1)*	2160 (47.9)*	2224 (49.3)*	2285 (50.7)*	1954 (33.2)*	3934 (66.8)*
5 years	4010 (95.0)*	212 (5.0)*	3135 (74.3)*	1087 (25.7)*	2128 (50.4)	2094 (49.6)	2877 (51.0)*	2768 (49.0)*	2525 (44.7)*	3120 (55.3)*	1314 (31.1)*	2908 (68.9)*
6 years	786 (93.8)*	52 (6.2)*	590 (70.4)*	248 (29.6)*	413 (49.3)	425 (50.7)	2785 (49.9)*	2795 (50.1)*	2437 (43.7)*	3143 (56.3)*	265 (31.6)*	573 (68.4)*
<b>Gender</b>												
Male	7263 (95.6)	338 (4.4)	5739 (75.5)	1706 (23.7)	3803 (50.0)	3798 (50.0)	4130 (54.3)	3471 (45.7)	140 (43.6)*	181 (56.4)*	2544 (33.5)	5057 (66.5)
Female	6839 (95.0)	360 (5.0)	5493 (76.3)	1862 (24.5)	3611 (50.2)	3588 (49.8)	3872 (53.8)	3327 (46.2)	7171 (50.1)*	7141 (49.9)*	2347 (32.6)	4852 (67.4)
<b>Disability</b>												
Yes	306 (95.3)	15 (4.7)	232 (72.3)	89 (27.7)	150 (46.7)	171 (53.3)	180 (56.1)	141 (43.0)	239 (44.0)	304 (56.0)	95 (29.6)	226 (70.4)
No	13636 (95.3)	674 (4.7)	10888 (76.1)	3424 (23.9)	7185 (50.2)	7127 (49.8)	7735 (54.0)	6577 (46.0)	9343 (46.7)	10653 (53.3)	4735 (33.1)	9577 (66.9)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</b>												
Yes	608 (96.5)	22 (3.5)	472 (74.9)	158 (25.1)	331 (52.5)	299 (47.5)	322 (51.1)	308 (48.9)	299 (47.5)	331 (52.5)	255 (40.5)*	375 (59.5)*
No	13370 (95.2)	670 (4.8)	10671 (76.0)	3369 (24.0)	7016 (50.0)	7024 (50.0)	7616 (54.2)	6424 (45.8)	7030 (50.1)	7010 (49.9)	4586 (32.7)*	9454 (67.3)*
<b>Language spoken at home</b>												
English	12341 (96.2)*	486 (3.8)*	9915 (77.3)*	2912 (22.7)*	6528 (50.9)*	6299 (49.1)*	7023 (54.8)*	5804 (45.2)	6595 (51.4)*	6232 (48.6)*	4693 (36.6)*	8134 (63.4)*
Other	1796 (89.4)*	214 (10.6)*	1344 (66.9)*	666 (33.1)*	904 (45.0)*	1106 (55.0)*	1000 (49.8)*	1010 (50.2)*	815 (40.5)*	1195 (59.5)*	206 (10.2)*	1804 (89.8)*
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile</b>												
1 (low)	2184 (94.5)*	127 (5.5)*	1648 (71.3)*	663 (28.7)*	1066 (46.1)*	1245 (53.9)*	1194 (51.7)*	1117 (48.3)*	1066 (46.1)*	1245 (53.9)*	610 (26.4)*	1701 (73.6)*
2	3878 (96.1)*	157 (3.9)*	3154 (78.2)*	881 (21.8)*	2066 (51.2)*	1969 (48.8)*	2247 (55.7)*	1788 (44.3)*	2141 (53.1)*	1894 (46.9)*	1617 (40.1)*	2418 (59.9)*
3	3230 (95.6)*	147 (4.4)*	2568 (76.0)*	809 (24.0)*	1674 (49.6)*	1703 (50.4)*	1813 (53.7)*	1564 (46.3)*	1664 (49.3)*	1713 (50.7)*	1093 (32.4)*	2284 (67.6)*
4 (high)	4845 (94.7)*	269 (5.3)*	3889 (76.0)*	1225 (24.0)*	2626 (51.3)*	2488 (48.7)*	2769 (54.1)*	2345 (45.9)*	2539 (49.6)*	2575 (50.4)*	1579 (30.9)*	3535 (69.1)*
<b>Location</b>												
Metro	11077 (94.8)*	604 (5.2)*	8764 (75.0)*	2917 (25.0)*	5866 (50.2)	5815 (49.8)	6268 (53.7)	5413 (46.3)	5682 (48.6)*	5999 (51.4)*	3512 (30.1)*	8169 (69.6)*
Regional / Remote	3060 (97.0)*	96 (3.0)*	2495 (79.1)*	661 (20.9)*	1566 (49.6)	1590 (50.4)	1755 (55.6)	1401 (44.4)	1728 (54.8)*	1428 (45.2)*	1387 (43.9)*	1769 (56.1)*



Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about how likely they are to continue with swimming lessons after using the voucher. The vast majority indicated they were *likely* to continue (11,524; 88.5%) and 1226 were *unsure* (9.4%) and 273 were *unlikely* (2.1%).

Figure 17: Likelihood to continue with swimming lessons after using the voucher, 2022-2023



Of the 1449 parent/carers indicated they were *unsure* or *unlikely* to continue with swimming lessons after using the voucher, 88.3% and 93.2% had redeemed a voucher, respectively. In comparison, 91.1% of parents/carers who indicated they were *likely* to continue had redeemed a voucher and these high proportions reflect the bias of the survey respondents towards high redemption levels, relative to the 70.0% of *all* children who had redeemed a voucher.

There were differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 4). A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (89.7%) than 6 years old (84.2%); non-Indigenous (89.1%) rather than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (77.7%); speaking a language other than English at home (90.6%) than speaking English at home (88.2%), living in a high socioeconomic (91.8%) than low socioeconomic (85.3%) area and living in a Metropolitan area (89.6%) rather than a Regional/Remote area (84.3%) indicated they were ***likely to continue with swimming lessons after using the voucher.***

**The differences in these findings by these priority population groups indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living in low socioeconomic areas and in regional and remote areas may experience barriers to continuing with swimming lessons such as cost. However, the numbers in these groups who are unsure or unlikely are a very small proportion of the overall program participants.**

**While parents of older children were less likely to continue with swimming lessons after using the First Lap voucher, this may be either due to the perception that their child had reached higher or sufficient swimming proficiency or that they would not continue with swimming lessons after their child was no longer eligible for the First Lap voucher.**



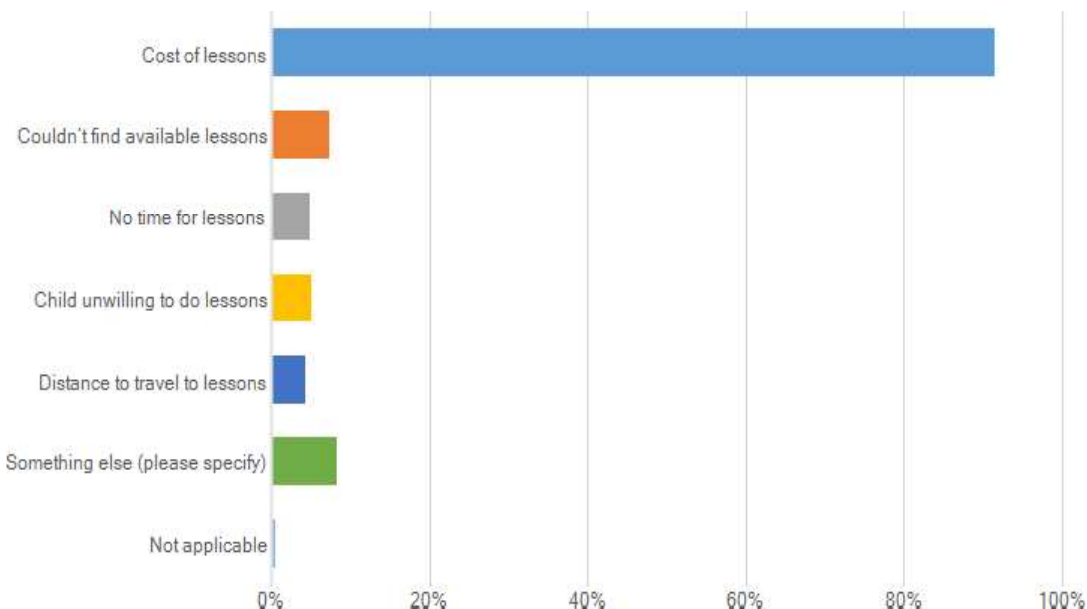
Table 4: Likelihood to continue with swimming lessons after using First Lap voucher, 2022-2023 \*indicates statistically significant difference in groups at  $p \leq 0.05$

Variable	Likelihood to continue with swimming lessons N(%)		
	Likely	Unsure	Unlikely
<b>Age*</b>			
3 years	3087 (89.7)	303 (8.8)	52 (1.5)
4 years	4677 (88.7)	488 (9.3)	110 (2.1)
5 years	3350 (88.0)	370 (9.7)	86 (2.3)
6 years	615 (84.2)	86 (11.8)	29 (4.0)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	6008 (88.5)	1241 (9.4)	278 (2.1)
Female	5698 (88.6)	610 (9.5)	126 (2.0)
<b>Disability</b>			
Yes	246 (86.0)	29 (10.1)	11 (3.8)
No	11336 (88.6)	1191 (9.3)	261 (2.0)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*</b>			
Yes	428 (77.7)	96 (17.4)	27 (4.9)
No	11187 (89.1)	1125 (9.0)	243 (1.9)
<b>Language spoken at home*</b>			
English	10242 (88.2)	1118 (9.6)	253 (2.2)
Other	1490 (90.6)	129 (7.8)	25 (1.5)
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile*</b>			
1 (low)	1677 (85.3)	232 (11.8)	57 (2.9)
2	3152 (86.2)	407 (11.1)	98 (2.7)
3	2655 (88.3)	289 (9.6)	62 (2.1)
4 (high)	4248 (91.8)	319 (6.9)	61 (1.3)
<b>Location*</b>			
Metro	9308 (89.6)	874 (8.4)	201 (1.9)
Regional/ Remote	2424 (84.3)	373 (13.0)	77 (2.7)

These parents/carers indicated different reasons for their response (parent/carers could select more than one reason). A total of 1368 said *Cost of lessons* (91.4%), 112 said *Couldn't find available lessons* (7.5%), 73 said *No time for lessons* (4.9%), 76 said *Child unwilling to do lessons* (5.1%), 65 said *Distance to travel to lessons* (4.3%). As well, 125 said *Something else* (8.4%) (Figure 18).



Figure 18: Reasons for being unsure or unlikely to continue, 2022-2023 (can select multiple)



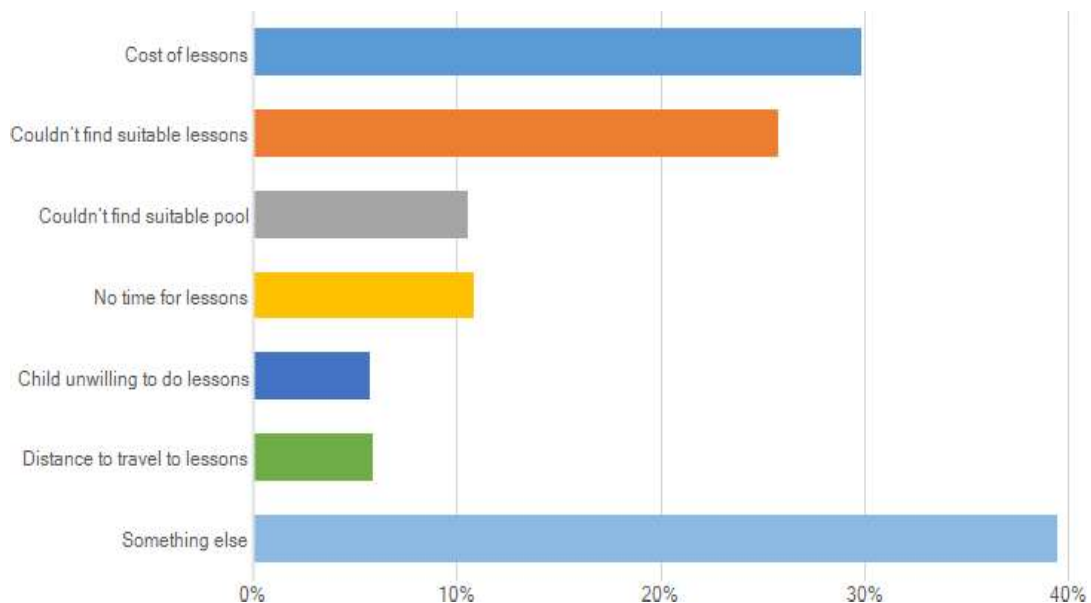
These 'Something else' responses were explored in depth through qualitative content analysis that revealed several additional reasons. Parent/carers described facing challenges of affording swimming lessons and the rising cost of living. The barrier of their local outdoor pool being a seasonal facility which was closed during winter months was also mentioned. They also spoke about poorly organized lessons or unsatisfactory instructors. Other factors such as illness, lack of progress in lessons and scheduling conflicts were also mentioned. Some parents/carers described how their child has developed fears or has a physical condition that affect their ability to participate. The availability of alternative sports also influenced their decision to continue or discontinue swimming lessons.

Parent/carers who had created a voucher but indicated that they had **not redeemed the** voucher were asked about the reasons why. Of the 1103 respondents (who could select more than one response), 327 said *Cost of lessons* (29.8%), 284 said *Couldn't find suitable lessons* (25.7%), 116 said *Couldn't find suitable pool* (10.5%), 120 said *No time for lessons* (10.9%), 63 said *Child unwilling to do lessons* (5.7%) and 65 said *Distance to travel to lessons* 5.9%. As well, 435 said *Something else* (39.6%), 380 of whom provided an open-ended response (Figure 19).

***These findings give an indication of barriers to redemption and where future efforts should be concentrated to facilitate voucher redemption, particularly for the overall cost of lessons even with a voucher, as well as lesson availability.***



Figure 19: Reasons for not redeeming voucher, 2022-2023 (can select multiple)



These 'Something else' responses were explored in depth through qualitative content analysis that revealed several additional reasons:

- *Perceived ineligibility*: Many individuals mentioned that they thought they were not eligible for the voucher due to various reasons, such as already using it in a previous year, the child being too old or too young, or the child being enrolled in school.
- *Unavailability of registered providers*: Some individuals stated that the swim schools or centers they attended were not registered to accept the vouchers, or the providers were in the process of becoming registered but faced delays.
- *Challenges with redeeming*: Several people encountered issues with redeeming the voucher, such as technical errors, swim schools not being able to process the voucher, or the voucher not showing up in the Service NSW app.
- *Lack of availability or waiting lists*: Many mentioned that there were no available spots for swimming lessons, either due to high demand, waiting lists, or limited capacity at their preferred swim schools.
- *Personal circumstances*: Various personal circumstances were mentioned as reasons for not using the voucher, including illness, overseas travel, moving houses, lack of time, work commitments, or other co-curricular activities.
- *Issues with the swimming program*: Some individuals mentioned issues with the swimming program itself, such as not catering to special needs children, pool conditions (cold water), or lack of instructors.



Other reasons mentioned include difficulties in applying for the voucher, forgetting to use it, problems with the pool accepting vouchers, dissatisfaction with the swim school, or not being aware of the voucher's availability. The 'Something else' reasons for not redeeming the voucher in the 2021 – 2022 financial year were also explored in more detail in a student project (see Appendix 6: Parent/carer experiences and challenges of redeeming the NSW First Lap swimming lessons voucher in 2021-2022). The reasons identified were similar to those identified in 2022 – 2023 and included external circumstances, program parameters, parent/carer (user) side challenges and swim school (provider) side challenges.

***Beyond contextual and circumstantial factors, these reasons for First Lap voucher non-redemption represent barriers to swimming lesson participation for preschool-aged children. Swim school and lesson availability, accessibility, and affordability could be addressed through improved engagement and communication with both the user and provider side.***

### *3.7 Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, low SES children, and children living with a disability*

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 282,420 children aged 3-5 years living in NSW, comparable to the First Lap program eligible population in 2022-2023. In 2022 – 2023, vouchers were also created for 7610 children aged 6 years.

Vouchers were created for 143,776 children aged 3-5 years in the First Lap program during the 2022-2023 financial year, an uptake of approximately 51% of **all eligible children**. In the 2022-2023 financial year, vouchers were redeemed for 111,280 children, 77.4% of all vouchers created and approximately 39.0% of all eligible children.

#### *3.7.1 CaLD children*

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 84,484 **CaLD** (speaking a language other than English at home) children aged 3-5 years living in NSW, 29.9% of all children aged 3-5 years in NSW.

In the 2022-2023 financial year, there were 19,160 vouchers created for CaLD children; approximately 22.7% of all eligible CaLD children and 13.3% of all vouchers created.

There were 12,947 vouchers redeemed for CaLD children, 67.6% of all vouchers created for CaLD children; 15.3% of eligible CaLD children and 11.6% of total redeemed vouchers.

***- The proportion of vouchers created for CaLD children was 17% lower than expected given the NSW population proportion of CaLD children (13% versus 30%)***

***- The number of vouchers created among eligible CaLD children was 29% lower than the NSW population proportion of eligible CaLD children***



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**(23% versus 51%)**

**- The proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for CaLD children was also lower than for all children for whom vouchers were created (68% versus 77%)**

**- The proportion of the total number of vouchers redeemed in the 2022 –2023 financial year was lower for the eligible population of CaLD children (15%) than for all children (39%)**

Data were examined for the four main non-English speaking language groups of Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, other CaLD and non-CaLD. (Table 5).

Table 5: Voucher redemption by Language group

<b>Language</b>	<b># eligible population</b>	<b># vouchers created</b>	<b>% eligible population created</b>	<b># vouchers redeemed</b>	<b>% created vouchers redeemed</b>	<b>% eligible population redeemed</b>
<b>All CaLD</b>	84,484	19,160	22.7	12,947	67.6	15.3
<b>Arabic</b>	8267	1420	17.2	803	56.5	9.7
<b>Cantonese</b>	2764	1211	43.8	908	75.0	32.9
<b>Mandarin</b>	10,604	4890	46.1	3594	73.5	33.9
<b>Vietnamese</b>	2804	949	33.8	561	59.1	20.0
<b>Other CaLD</b>	60,045	10,690	17.8	7081	66.2	11.8
<b>Non-CaLD</b>	197,936	124,449	62.9	98,204	78.9	49.6

**- These findings indicate that all four language groups, as well as CaLD families overall, had lower rates of voucher creation and redemption than families who spoke English at home**

**- There were differences by language group. Families speaking Cantonese or Mandarin at home had creation and redemption rates only slightly lower (2-4% lower for redemption) than overall rates**

**- Arabic, Vietnamese and Other CaLD families had creation and redemption rates much lower (11-21% lower for redemption) than overall rates**

### 3.7.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 15,792 **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** children aged 3-5 years living in NSW, 5.6% of all children aged 3-5 years in NSW.



In the 2022 – 2023 financial year, there were 7705 vouchers created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, an uptake of approximately 48.8% of all eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 5.4% of all vouchers created.

There were 5106 vouchers redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, 66.3% of all vouchers created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, 32.3% of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 3.6% of total redeemed vouchers.

- ***The proportion of vouchers created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in 2022 – 2023 is similar to the NSW population proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (5.6% and 5.4%)***
- ***Voucher creation among eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was only 2% lower than for all eligible children (49% versus 51%)***
- ***However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was 11% lower (66%) than for all children (77%)***
- ***The proportion of the total number of vouchers redeemed was lower for the eligible population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (32%) than for all children (39%)***

### 3.7.3 Children living in regional and remote areas

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that of the 282,420 children aged 3-5 years living in NSW there are 99,811 (23.2%) and 2,407 (0.9%) living in **regional and remote areas**, respectively.

In the 2022-2023 financial year, there were 27,240 vouchers created for children living in regional areas and 506 vouchers created for children living in remote areas. That is an uptake of approximately 27.3% and 21.0% of all eligible children in regional and remote areas, respectively, and 18.9% and 0.4% of all vouchers created, respectively.

There were 21,366 vouchers redeemed for children living in regional areas, 78.4% of all vouchers created for children in regional areas, 21.4% of eligible children living in regional NSW and 19.2% of total redeemed vouchers.

There were 355 vouchers redeemed for children living in remote areas, 70.2% of all vouchers created for children in remote areas, 14.7% of eligible children living in remote NSW and 0.3% of total redeemed vouchers.



- **The proportion of vouchers created for regional children was slightly lower than the NSW population proportion of regional children (19% versus 23%)**
- **Voucher creation among eligible regional children was 24% lower than for all eligible children (27% versus 51%)**
- **The proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for regional children was slightly higher (78%) than for all children (77%)**
- **However, the proportion of the total number of vouchers redeemed for the eligible population of regional children was 18% lower (21%) than for all children (39%)**
  
- **The proportion of the very small number of remote children among all the created and redeemed vouchers were population comparable (both under 1%)**
- **Voucher creation among eligible remote children was much lower than for all eligible children (21% versus 51%)**
- **The proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for remote children living in regional areas was only 7% lower than for all children (70% versus 77%)**
- **However, the proportion of the total number of vouchers redeemed for the eligible population of remote children was 25% lower (14%) than for all children (39%)**

#### 3.7.4 Children living with a disability

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 5592 children aged 3-5 years living with a disability living in NSW, 2.0% of the total children aged 3-5 years.

In 2022 – 2023, there were 3321 vouchers created for **children living with a disability**, an uptake of approximately 55.4% of all eligible children living with a disability and 2.3% of all vouchers created.

There were 2167 vouchers redeemed for children with disability, 65.3% of all vouchers created for children with a disability, 36.2% of eligible children with a disability and 1.9% of total redeemed vouchers.

- **The proportion of vouchers created for children with a disability was comparable to the NSW population proportion of children with a disability (both 2%)**
- **Voucher creation among eligible children with a disability was slightly higher than for all eligible children (55% versus 51%)**
- **However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for children with a disability was 12% lower (65%) than for all children (77%)**
- **The proportion of the total number of vouchers redeemed for the eligible population of remote children was only 3% lower (36%) than for all children (39%)**





## 4 Short- Term Outcomes (1 year)

The section reports on data from the 2022 – 2023 financial year. Short- Term (1 year) Outcomes from the 2021 – 2022 financial year are contained in the interim report (Appendix 1).

### *4.1 Preschool aged children participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the program vouchers*

Data from section 3.1 indicate that 266,366 children participated in learn to swim programs through redemption of program vouchers during the 2022 - 2023 financial year.

### *4.2 Learn to swim providers register to become a Program provider*

Data from section 3.2 indicate that during the 2021- 2022 and 2022-2023 financial years, 581 Learn to swim providers registered to become a Program provider.

### *4.3 Preschool aged children participate in learn to swim programs for the first time (new participation)*

Data from section 3.4 indicate that a total of 19,552 preschool aged children participated in learn to swim programs for the first time during the 2022 - 2023 financial year through redemption of a program voucher. In both the 2021 - 2022 and 2022 – 2023 financial years, a total of 42,349 children participated in learn to swim programs for the first time that were subsidised by the program vouchers (as determined by voucher redemption).

However, it is unclear whether the First Lap program met its objective of increasing preschool aged children participating in learn to swim programs as data on the baseline (initial) levels of participation in NSW and other Australian jurisdictions is unknown.

### *4.4 Preschool aged children who had previously participated in learn to swim programs, but not within the past 12 months, recommence learn to swim programs*

A total of 8646 preschool aged children who had previously participated in learn to swim programs, but not within the past 12 months, recommenced learn to swim programs during the 2022-2023 financial year through redemption of a program voucher. This was 7.8% of the total redeemed vouchers.

In both the 2021 - 2022 and 2022 – 2023 financial years, a total of 26,934 children participated in learn to swim programs for the first time that were subsidised by the program vouchers (as determined by voucher redemption). This was 10.1% of the total redeemed vouchers.



*4.5 Establish baseline of parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs*

Data from the interim report (Appendix 1) indicates baseline measures of parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs among parents/carers. This provided an initial data timepoint for comparison with future survey data that are presented in section 5.6 *Increased level of parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety (Medium term outcomes)*.

*4.6 Preschool aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with a disability, participate in learn to swim classes*

Data from section 2.7 indicate the number and proportion of preschool aged children from CaLD backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability and children living in regional and remote areas, participated in learn to swim classes through redemption of a program voucher.

However, in logistic regression modelling of 2022 – 2023 financial year data, adjusting for all *other* relevant variables (including age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, area level SES):

- Children living with a disability were 0.5 times LESS LIKELY to redeem a voucher than children with no disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 0.6 times LESS LIKELY to redeem a voucher than *non-Indigenous* children
- Children who spoke a language other than English at home were 0.6 times LESS LIKELY to redeem a voucher than children who spoke English at home
- Families living in regional areas were 1.2 times MORE LIKELY to redeem vouchers, but families living in remote families were 0.4 times LESS LIKELY to redeem vouchers, than urban families

***These findings indicate, through analysis that adjusts for other sociodemographic contributing factors, that strategies to overcome the disparity in redemption seen in the priority population groups of children living with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and CaLD children are still needed.***

***Voucher redemption among regional children was higher than for metropolitan children indicating that this priority population group is being well reached through the program. While the number of children living in remote areas in NSW is small, redemption among children living in remote areas was low which may be indicative of low facility provision, seasonal facilities and distances required to travel to facilities.***



## 5 Medium-Term Outcomes (2 years)

### *5.1 Increased number of preschool-aged children who participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the program vouchers, Year on Year*

In the 2021 – 2022 financial year a total of 221,333 vouchers were created and 155,086 vouchers were redeemed (70.1%). Vouchers were created for approximately 46.5% of all eligible children (3–6-year-olds) in NSW and were redeemed for approximately 32.6% of all eligible children (3–6-year-olds) in NSW.

In the 2022 – 2023 financial year a total of 143,776 vouchers were created and 111,280 vouchers were redeemed (77.4%). Vouchers were created for approximately 50.9% of all eligible children (3–5-year-olds) in NSW and were redeemed for approximately 39.4% of all eligible children (3–5-year-olds) in NSW.

***These data indicate a 6.8% Year on Year increase in eligible preschool-aged children who participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the First Lap program vouchers.***

Vouchers were created for a total of 296,141 individual children in either financial year and redeemed for 277,488 (71.0%) of these children.

### *5.2 Improved sector service provision facilitated by program eligibility requirements, communications and consultations*

Evaluation outcomes relevant to service provision are presented in section 3.3. The increase in eligible preschool-aged children who participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the program vouchers could be attributed in part to improved sector service provision facilitated by program eligibility requirements, communications and consultations as well as other factors such as increased parent/carer program awareness and industry measures to increase the number of qualified swimming teachers post Covid-19 restrictions.

### *5.3 Maintained participation of preschool-aged children who in year 1 of the program had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months*

A total of 81,732 vouchers were redeemed in 2021 – 2022 for children who had had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months, 24.9% of the total vouchers redeemed. A total of 26,036 vouchers were created for these children in the 2022 – 2023 financial year, 19,605 (75.3%) of which were redeemed.



***This redemption rate of 75% is close to the overall 2022 – 2023 financial year redemption rate of 77% indicating that the First Lap program has been effective in initiating medium term continual participation in swimming lessons among children who had not participated in swimming lessons in the 12 months before the program was launched.***

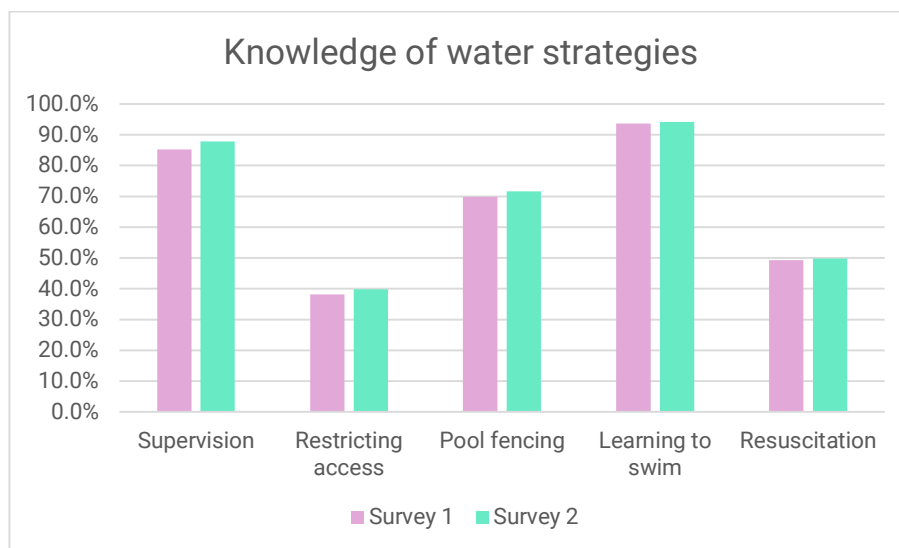
A total of 22,797 vouchers were redeemed in 2021 – 2022 for children who have never attended learn to swim program, 14.7% of the total vouchers redeemed. A total of 18,770 vouchers were created for these children in the 2022 – 2023 financial year, 13,690 (72.9%) of which were redeemed.

***This redemption rate of 73% is also quite close to the overall 2022 – 2023 financial year redemption rate of 77% indicating that the First Lap program has been effective in initiating medium term continual participation in swimming lessons among children who had never participated in swimming lessons when the First Lap program was launched.***

#### 5.4 Increased level of parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety

A total of 2256 parent/carers completed both surveys. This is 10.7% of parent/carers who completed Survey 1, 15.2% of parent/carers who completed Survey 2, 0.8% of all parent/carers who created a First Lap voucher in either 2021 – 2022 or 2022 – 2023 and 1.0% of all parent/carers who created a First Lap voucher in both 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023. Figure 20 shows parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety strategies in survey 1 and survey 2.

**Figure 20 – Knowledge of water strategies (survey 1 and survey 2)**



Tables 6-10 indicate the change in knowledge and awareness of each water safety strategy.



Table 6. Change in knowledge and awareness of supervision as a water safety strategy  
\*indicates statistically significant variation at  $p \leq 0.05$

Supervision 2021 – 2022*	Supervision 2022 – 2023	
	No	Yes
No	104	152
Yes	108	1780

**While most participants (1780) identified the correct strategy at both time points, 152 parent/carers indicated new knowledge and awareness of supervision as a water safety strategy 2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023.**

Further analysis of the change in knowledge and awareness of supervision as a water safety strategy by priority population group was conducted by Corista Karamina Hanum (Kara) as a student research project. Table 7 shows the number and proportion of parent/carers with knowledge of supervision by sociodemographic groups in four different categories across the two survey time points. The group of interest in the First Lap program evaluation is **no-yes**, that is parent/carers who gained knowledge and awareness of supervision as a water safety strategy during the First Lap program period.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of 5 year old children (9.9%) increased knowledge and awareness of supervision as a water safety strategy than parent/carers of 3 year old (6.6%) or four year old (6.0%) children. While a higher proportion of parent/carers of 3 year old (84.8%) or four year old (84.3%) children had knowledge and awareness of supervision at both time points (yes-yes) than parent/carers of 5 year old children (76.8%), the knowledge and awareness increase reduced the difference between age groups in Survey 2.

A higher proportion of CaLD parent/carers (12.6%) increased knowledge and awareness of supervision as a water safety strategy than parent/carers who spoke English at home (6.2%). While a higher proportion of parent/carers who spoke English at home (86.3%) children had knowledge and awareness of supervision at both time points (yes-yes) than CaLD parent/carers children (61.8%) the knowledge and awareness increase reduced the difference between the two groups in Survey 2.



Table 7: Parent/carer knowledge of supervision strategy by sociodemographic group

\*indicates statistically significant difference in groups at  $p \leq 0.05$

Variable (survey 1)	Parent/carer knowledge of supervision strategy N(%)			
	yes-yes	no-yes	yes-no	no-no
<b>Age*</b>				
3 years	705 (84.8)	<b>55 (6.6)</b>	36 (4.3)	35 (4.2)
4 years	768 (84.3)	<b>55 (6.0)</b>	47 (5.2)	41 (4.5)
5 years	304 (76.8)	<b>39 (9.9)</b>	25 (6.3)	28 (7.1)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	920 (83.2)	<b>74 (7.7)</b>	66 (6.0)	46 (4.2)
Female	859 (82.8)	<b>78 (7.5)</b>	42 (4.1)	58 (5.6)
<b>Disability</b>				
Yes	31 (88.6)	<b>0 (0)</b>	4 (11.4)	0 (0)
No	1734 (83.3)	<b>148 (7.1)</b>	99 (4.8)	102 (4.9)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</b>				
Yes	64 (83.1)	<b>6 (7.8)</b>	5 (6.5)	2 (2.6)
No	1700 (83.0)	<b>145 (7.1)</b>	103 (5.0)	101 (4.9)
<b>Language spoken at home</b>				
English	1604 (86.3)	<b>116 (6.2)</b>	79 (4.3)	60 (3.2)
Other	176 (61.8)	<b>36 (12.6)</b>	29 (10.2)	44 (15.4)
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile</b>				
1 (low)	253 (77.6)	<b>24 (7.4)</b>	28 (8.6)	21 (6.4)
2	500 (84.3)	<b>45 (7.6)</b>	29 (4.9)	24 (4.1)
3	419 (86.8)	<b>29 (6.0)</b>	30 (6.2)	19 (3.9)
4 (high)	608 (81.9)	<b>54 (7.3)</b>	31 (4.2)	40 (5.4)
<b>Location</b>				
Metro	1379 (81.6)	<b>125 (9.1)</b>	92 (5.4)	95 (5.6)
Regional/ remote	401 (88.5)	<b>27 (6.0)</b>	16 (3.5)	9 (2.0)



Multinomial logistic regression modelling examined the change in knowledge and awareness of supervision among sociodemographic groups, focusing on the parent/carers whose knowledge changed from 'no' in survey 1 to 'yes' in survey 2 (**no-yes**). There were too few children living with a disability to conduct modelling in this group. Models were adjusted for all other variables in the model.

When compared to parent/carers who had knowledge of supervision as a water strategy at both time points (yes, yes):

- Parent/carers of children aged 3 and 4 years were (0.63 times (0.41-0.98) and 0.57 (0.37-0.89), respectively) *less likely* than parent/carers of children aged 5 years to have *increased knowledge and awareness of supervision* from survey 1 to survey 2 (**no, yes**)
- CaLD parent/carers were 2.71 (1.77-4.13) times *more likely* than parent/carers who spoke English at home to have *increased knowledge and awareness of supervision* from survey 1 to survey 2 (**no, yes**)

No other sociodemographic findings were statistically significant.

***Although supervision is one component of a multi-faceted approach to child drowning prevention, as advocated by the Keep Watch program (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2023a), in almost all cases of fatal unintentional drowning among children 0-4 years old in Australia, a lapse in adult supervision is a contributing factor (Peden & Franklin 2020). The finding that the First Lap voucher scheme is associated with a significant improvement in parent and carer knowledge of supervision as a water safety strategy is a very pleasing finding. Although First Lap is a program aimed at improving participation in swimming lessons, it may be that additional parent/carer education around swimming lessons, such as those conducted by facilities, and facilities running the Keep Watch @ Public Pools (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2023c) program which encourages ‘within arms’ reach’ supervision of young children at facilities via public education resources and wristbands, has also contributed to this improvement in knowledge. The variation in these findings by sociodemographic groups indicate that water safety strategies both within and beyond the First Lap program could particularly focus on parents of younger children (age 3-4 years) and CaLD families.***

Table 8. Change in knowledge and awareness of restricting access to water as a water safety strategy

Restricting access to water 2021 – 2022	Restricting access to water 2022 – 2023	
	No	Yes
No	966	329
Yes	299	550



***There were no significant differences in parent/carer knowledge of restricting access to water from 2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023.***

Table 9. Change in knowledge and awareness of pool fencing as a water safety strategy

Pool fencing 2021 – 2022	Pool fencing 2022 – 2023	
	No	Yes
No	372	226
Yes	192	1354

***There were no significant differences in parent/carer knowledge of pool fencing from 2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023.***

Table 10. Change in knowledge and awareness of learning to swim as a water safety strategy

Learning to swim 2021 – 2022	Learning to swim 2022 – 2023	
	No	Yes
No	16	56
Yes	59	2013

***There were no significant differences in parent/carer knowledge of learning to swim from 2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023. However, the baseline levels of knowledge of this strategy were already very high at 2013 (over 95%).***

Table 11. Change in knowledge and awareness of resuscitation as a water safety strategy

Resuscitation 2021 – 2022	Resuscitation 2022 – 2023	
	No	Yes
No	768	282
Yes	277	817

***There were no significant differences in parent/carer knowledge of resuscitation from 2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023.***





## References

1. Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (2023a) Campaigns and Programs – Keep Watch. Available from: <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/about/campaigns-and-programs/keep-watch> (Date accessed: 24-08-2023)
2. Peden, A. E., & Franklin, R. C. (2020). Causes of distraction leading to supervision lapses in cases of fatal drowning of children 0–4 years in Australia: A 15-year review. *Journal of paediatrics and child health*, 56(3), 450-456.
3. Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (2023c) Safety Programs, Child Supervision – Keep Watch @ Public Pools. Available from: <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/Aquatic-Risk-and-Guidelines/safety-programs/child-supervision/keep-watch-at-public-pools> (Date accessed: 24-08-2023)

### *5.5 Increased number of preschool-aged children from CALD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability, who participate in learn to swim classes*

Data on the number of preschool-aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability who participate in learn to swim classes does not exist within NSW or in Australian states/territories indicating that there are no baseline data available to directly examine increases during the period of First Lap program implementation. As well, First Lap data provides the number of voucher redemptions rather than actual participation.

The number of children in priority population groups across the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 financial years who redeemed a voucher for learn to swim classes is presented in Table 12. These data have not been combined across years as there were self-reported differences in priority group identification e.g., a child’s disability status may have changed, or a child may have moved to/from a regional area. As well, children may identify within more than one priority population group.

Table 12. Number of children from priority populations who redeemed a voucher

	2021 – 2022	% of redemptions	2022 - 2023	% of redemptions
Living with a disability	3556	2.3	2167	1.9
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	6435	4.1	5106	4.6
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	18,354	11.8	12,947	11.6
Regional/remote	26,963	17.4	21,721	19.5



***These data show that while the total number of redemptions among priority population groups was lower in the 2022 – 2023 financial year than the 2021 – 2022 financial year, this can be attributed to the smaller eligible population in the second financial year.***

***The proportion of redemptions for children living with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children was similar in both financial years. There was a 2% increase in the proportion of regional/remote children from the 2022 – 2023 financial year than the 2021 – 2022 financial year.***



## 6 Other First Lap voucher findings

### 6.1 Age and gender: redemption

The evaluators have also analysed data to give results for child year of age and gender. In the 2022 – 2023 financial year:

- Vouchers were redeemed for 34,004 3 year olds, 74.7% of vouchers created for this age
- Vouchers were redeemed for 40,617 4 year olds, 77.1% of vouchers created for this age
- Vouchers were redeemed for 30,292 5 year olds, 79.7% of vouchers created for this age

Vouchers were also redeemed for 6082 6 year olds (79.9% of vouchers created for this age) and for 26 7/8 year olds.

In logistic regression modelling of data from the 2022 – 2023 financial years, adjusting for all other relevant variables (gender, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, participation in the past 12 months):

- Compared to children aged 3 years, children aged 4 and 5 years were 1.4 and 1.9 times MORE LIKELY to redeem, respectively

In the 2022 – 2023 financial year:

- Vouchers were redeemed for 54,183 females, 77.9% of vouchers created for females
- Vouchers were redeemed for 56,729 males, 76.9% of vouchers created for males

In logistic regression modelling of data from the 2022 – 2023 financial years, adjusting for all other relevant variables (age, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, participation in the past 12 months):

- Compared to females, vouchers were 0.9 times LESS LIKELY to be redeemed for males

### 6.2 Area-level SES: Participant characteristics

The evaluators used Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) data to calculate SES quartiles for each participant based on their postcode, known as area-level SES.

Table 13 displays the demographic and priority population characteristics of participants who created a voucher in the 2022 – 2023 financial year according to area-level SES



quartile. There were differences for age, disability, Indigenous status, language other than English spoken at home (CaLD) and remoteness, but no gender differences.

- A lower proportion of younger children than older children were in the lower SES quartiles
- A higher proportion of children with a disability were in the lower SES quartiles
- A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander than non-Indigenous children were in the lower SES quartiles
- A higher proportion of CaLD children than non-CaLD children were in the lowest SES quartiles but this was also the case for the highest SES quartile
- A higher proportion of children in regional/remote areas were in the lower SES quartiles

Table 13: Participant demographic and priority population characteristics, 2022 – 2023, area-level SES \*indicates statistically significant difference in groups at  $p \leq 0.05$

Variable	Area level socioeconomic quartile N (%)			
	1 (lowest)	2	3	4 (highest)
<b>Age*</b>				
3 years	7682 (16.9)	11,906 (26.2)	10,083 (22.2)	15,792 (34.7)
4 years	9369 (17.8)	13,820 (26.3)	11,489 (21.9)	17,877 (34.0)
5 years	6826 (18.0)	10,158 (26.8)	8128 (21.4)	12,819 (33.8)
6 years	1467 (19.3)	2227 (29.3)	1503 (19.8)	2397 (31.6)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	12,987 (17.6)	19,632 (26.6)	15,933 (21.6)	25,150 (34.1)
Female	12,298 (17.7)	18,374 (26.5)	15,178 (21.9)	23,590 (34.0)
<b>Disability*</b>				
Yes	755 (22.7)	1018 (30.7)	686 (20.7)	861 (25.9)
No	24,039 (17.4)	36,443 (26.4)	30,040 (21.8)	47,343 (34.3)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*</b>				
Yes	2091 (28.3)	3234 (43.7)	1266 (17.1)	802 (10.8)
No	22,837 (17.0)	34,215 (25.5)	29,549 (22.0)	47,598 (35.5)
<b>Language spoken at home*</b>				
English	21,014 (16.9)	34,970 (28.1)	26,942 (21.7)	41,370 (33.3)
Other	4333 (22.5)	3153 (16.4)	4264 (22.1)	7525 (39.0)
<b>Location*</b>				
Metro	18,102 (15.8)	21,522 (18.7)	27,875 (24.3)	47,360 (41.2)
Regional/ Remote	7245 (25.2)	16,601 (57.8)	3331 (11.6)	1535 (5.3)

***These data highlight how priority population groups of children living with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CaLD children and children living in regional and remote areas are more highly represented among the lowest SES quartile.***

***Therefore, program approaches targeted towards families in the lower SES groups will reach each of these priority population groups.***



### 6.3 Area-level SES: Redemption

The evaluators analysed postcode data to give results for area level SES using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure. In the 2022 – 2023 financial year:

- Vouchers were redeemed for 16,559 children in the *lowest* SES quartile (1), 65.3% of vouchers created in this quartile
- Vouchers were redeemed for 29,823 children in the 2<sup>nd</sup> *lowest* SES quartile (2), 78.2% of vouchers created in this quartile
- Vouchers were redeemed for 24,657 children in the 2<sup>nd</sup> *highest* SES quartile (3), 79.0% of vouchers created in this quartile
- Vouchers were redeemed for 39,749 children in the *highest* SES quartile (4), 81.3% of vouchers created in this quartile

In logistic regression modelling, adjusting for all other relevant variables (age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, language other than English spoken at home, location, participation in the past 12 months):

- Compared to children living in the lowest socioeconomic area quartile (1), children living in quartiles 2, 3 and 4 were MORE LIKELY to redeem (1.8, 2.0 AND 2.3 times, respectively)

***These findings indicate that redemption rates remained the lowest in the most disadvantaged quartile in the 2022 – 2023 financial year, similar to the previous financial year. The direct cost of vouchers to the two higher SES groups was approximately \$6,440,600 in the 2022 – 2023 financial year.***

### 6.4 Understanding barriers to redeeming a swimming lesson voucher for preschool children

A student project undertaken between February – April 2023 using data from the 2021 – 2022 financial year described characteristics of preschool children whose parent/carer indicated they experienced barriers to participating in swimming lessons, and how those barriers affected swimming lesson voucher program use (Appendix 7).

Data on age, sex, living with a disability, Indigenous status, area-level socioeconomic status, remoteness, previous participation in swimming lessons, and selected barriers to participation were analysed as predictors of existing barriers to participation and voucher redemption. A total of 79,553 parent/carers indicated that their child had not participated in swimming lessons in the last 12 months and responded to the question about barriers to participation.



- Cost was indicated as a barrier by parent/carers of Indigenous children (OR 2.8; 95% CI 2.3-3.4), children with disabilities (OR 1.2; 95% CI 1.1-1.3), and families residing in low socioeconomic areas (OR 1.72; 95% CI 1.63-1.8)  
Parent/carers were less likely to redeem the voucher when cost was a barrier (OR 0.9; 95% CI 0.8-0.9) or when they considered swimming lessons were not important (OR 0.8; 95% CI 0.7- 1.0)
- No effect was found for the other barriers after adjustment for sociodemographic variables
- Regional and remote families were much more likely than metropolitan families to indicate difficulty finding an available swim school (OR 3.9; 95% CI 2.6-5.8)
- CALD families were less likely to indicate that cost was a barrier (OR 0.5; 95% CI 0.5-0.6) but more likely to consider their child too young for swimming lessons (OR 2.3; 95% CI 2.1-2.5), consider swimming lessons unimportant (OR 1.7; 95% CI 1.4-2.1), have difficulty finding a swim school (OR 1.4; 95% CI 1.2-1.6), or COVID-19 as barriers (OR 1.51; 95% CI 1.4-1.6)

***These findings indicate that priority population groups face barriers to participation in swimming lessons that influenced voucher redemption. Efforts to improve availability of swimming lessons should continue, particularly those targeting Indigenous children, multicultural communities, regional/remote families and children living with a disability. Targeted financial support for families most likely to indicate that cost was a barrier, including Indigenous families, families of children with disabilities, and those residing in low socioeconomic areas, may be required to increase equity in participation rates. Further suggestions to increase priority population group voucher creation and redemption rates are provided in section 9 Recommendations.***



## 7 Swim school industry data

This section of the report describes two phases of research conducted with selected industry organisations as part of the evaluation. In part one of this section, data sourced direct from industry are summarised. In part two of this section, themes from one-on-one semi-structured interviews with industry, are documented including verbatim quotes.

### 7.1 Participation data

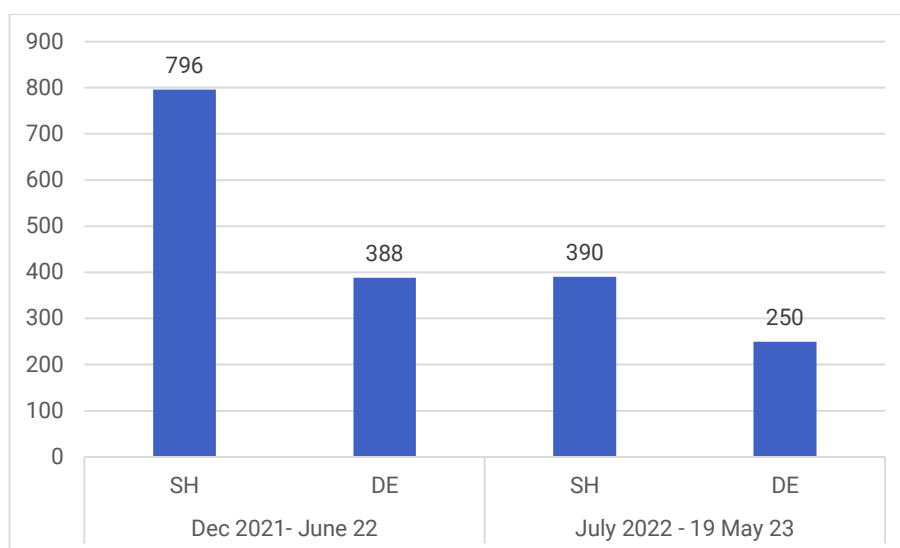
Data were sourced from Royal Life Saving NSW, YMCA and Belgravia. All providers were briefed about the evaluation and were requested to provide the same data. The variation in capturing student data and functionality in exporting data resulted in significant variation between providers. As such, data were summarised by provider and not grouped. Historical data, that is pre-First Lap scheme commencement and ideally, pre the COVID-19 pandemic, was also requested, though could not be extracted for the purposes of this report.

#### Royal Life Saving Society – New South Wales (RLS NSW)

RLS NSW runs two sites in Sydney, Seven Hills and Denistone East. Royal Life Saving NSW also redeemed vouchers for families in the region who wished to use the vouchers for holiday intensive programs, although only data were provided for these two sites.

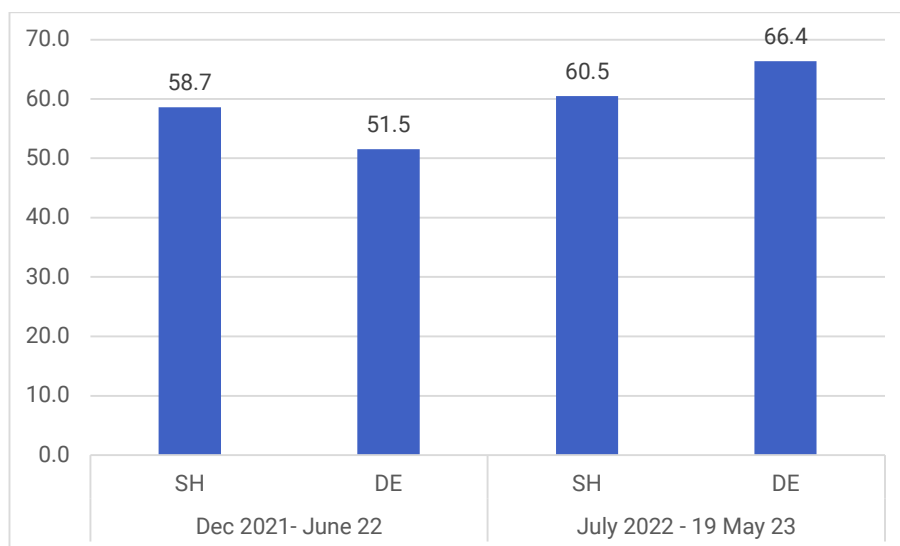
In total 1,824 vouchers were used across both sites between December 2021 and 19 May 2023. Figure 21 shows the number of children who used a First Lap voucher at either Seven Hills (SH) or Denistone East (DE) for each of the two years the First Lap program has been running.

Figure 21: First Lap Vouchers used by site and time period



Based on the above data, it was able to be determined which student remained enrolled as of May 2023 (Figure 21). It can be seen that over 50% of students who used a First Lap voucher remained enrolled as at 19 May 2023, with understandably higher proportions in the most recent reporting period.

**Figure 22: Percentage of students still enrolled**



#### Limitations/Data issues

- Vouchers were also able to be used via RLSNSW, by families in regional areas in NSW, on holiday programs, however these data were not provided. As such data reflects people residing in major cities postcodes and attending two facilities in Sydney.
- Using RLSNSW data, it was not possible to identify those who had initially enrolled using a First Lap voucher, as start date in the database shows the child's start date at their current level and not at the level they enrolled at.
- Data on disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse status are not currently collected about children attending these facilities.

#### YMCA

Data received from YMCA comprises data on First Lap vouchers redeemed through Service NSW, and First Lap vouchers redeemed through Links (a swim school database) for 24 facilities across New South Wales. Data were provided for the period January 2022 to December 2022. The names of these facilities and their corresponding remoteness classification can be found in Table 14.





Table 14: YMCA facilities that provided data by facility name and remoteness classification

Facility name	Remoteness classification	Pool name	Remoteness classification
Bankstown	Major Cities	Bellingen	Outer Regional
BHill	Outer Regional	BHill Pool	Outer Regional
Camden	Major Cities	Caringbah	Major Cities
Centrepont (Blayney)	Inner Regional	Dorrigo	Outer Regional
Epping	Major Cities	Grt Lakes (Forster)	Inner Regional
Hawk Oasis (South Windsor)	Major Cities	Kendall Community Pool	Inner Regional
Laurieton Memorial Baths	Inner Regional	Manning/Taree	Inner Regional
Mt Annan	Major Cities	Oberon	Inner Regional
Penrith	Major Cities	Port Macquarie	Inner Regional
Ryde	Major Cities	St Ives	Major Cities
Tea Gardens	Inner Regional	Wauchope	Inner Regional
West Pymble/Kuringai	Major Cities	Wingham	Inner Regional

In data provided, a total of 3,764 vouchers were processed through the venue’s Links Database in 2022 (Figure 22). Across all venues the most popular period on a number basis for redemption of vouchers was June, likely before the end of the financial year.



Figure 23: First Lap vouchers for YMCA venues through Links Database by month, 2022

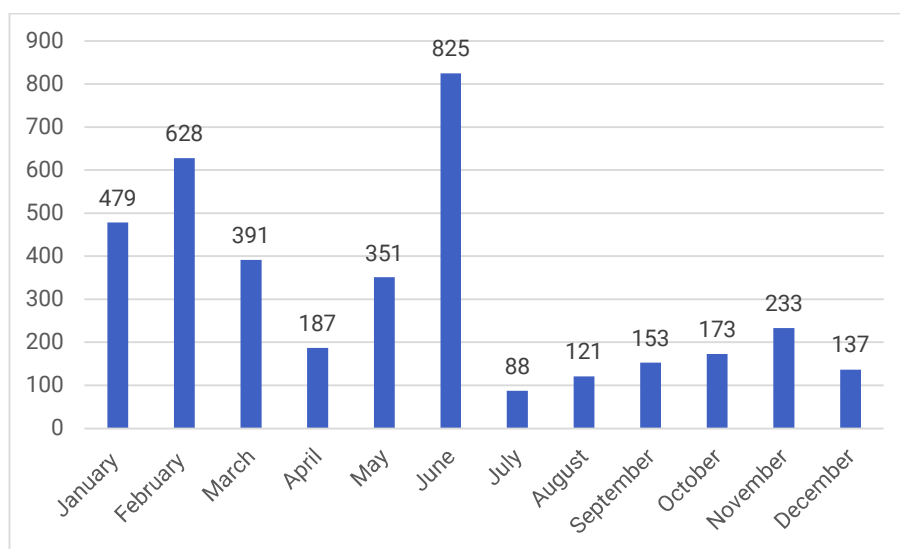


Table 15 shows the breakdown of first lap vouchers run through the Links Database in 2022 by facility. Mt Annan with 1,091 vouchers and West Pymble/Kuringai with 753 were the YMCA facilities who redeemed the most vouchers. In total 3,310 vouchers were redeemed via Service NSW in 2022. Table 2 shows the breakdown of first lap vouchers run through the Links Database in 2022 by facility.

Table 15: First Lap vouchers through Links Database redeemed via Service NSW by facility, 2022

Facility name	Number of vouchers run through Links Database	Number of vouchers redeemed via Service NSW
Bankstown	0	0
Bellingen	36	61
Bass Hill	0	0
Bass Hill Pool	171	144
Camden	0	0
Caringbah	0	0
Centrepont (Blayney)	253	215
Dorrigo	24	0
Epping	0	0
Grt Lakes (Forster)	383	322



Hawk Oasis (South Windsor)	443	439
Kendall Community Pool	26	13
Laurieton Memorial Baths	3	3
Manning/Taree	318	259 (no data July - Aug 2022)
Mt Annan	1,091	952
Oberon	14	12
Penrith	0	0
Port Macquarie	212	210
Ryde	0	0
St Ives	0	0
Tea Gardens	10	10
Wauchope	21	22
West Pymble/Kuringai	753	648
Wingham	6	0

In total, First Lap vouchers redeemed through Service NSW make up 35% of the pre-school learn to swim enrolment base across the 24 YMCA facilities for which data were provided. The breakdown of First Lap vouchers redeemed through Service NSW as a proportion of the learn to swim enrolment base by facility for the 2022 calendar year are shown in Table 16. N/A indicates data were not provided for this facility.

Table 16: First Lap vouchers redeemed through Service NSW as a proportion of pre-school learn to swim enrolment base by facility, 2022

Facility name	First Lap Vouchers redeemed as a proportion of pre-school learn to swim enrolment base
Bankstown	N/A
Bellingen	69%
Bass Hill	N/A
Bass Hill Pool	25%
Camden	0%
Caringbah	N/A
Centrepont (Blayney)	38%
Dorrigo	0%
Epping	N/A



Great Lakes (Forster)	34%
Hawk Oasis (South Windsor)	45%
Kendall Community Pool	N/A
Laurieton Memorial Baths	N/A
Manning/Taree	43%
Mt Annan	33%
Oberon	26%
Penrith	N/A
Port Macquarie	27%
Ryde	N/A
St Ives	N/A
Tea Gardens	N/A
Wauchope	N/A
West Pymble/Kuringai	33%
Wingham	0%

#### Limitations/Data issues

- It is unclear if vouchers redeemed through Service NSW and those run through the Links database differ or if there is some duplication between the two systems.
- Financial data provided for the Links database, in some cases, did not round to a whole number. To identify number of vouchers redeemed via Links by month of the year and season, financial data were divided by \$100.
- It is unclear if those facilities where zero vouchers were redeemed offer preschool aged learn to swim or not. If not, this may explain the zero First Lap vouchers in 2022 redeemed at these facilities.
- Note data were not provided by Manning/Taree for First Lap vouchers redeemed through Service NSW for the months of July and August 2022, therefore data for this facility is likely to be an underestimate.

#### Belgravia Leisure

Data received from Belgravia Leisure comprises 18 facilities across NSW for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years. The names of these facilities and their corresponding remoteness classification can be found in Table 17.



Table 17: Belgravia facilities that provided data by facility name and remoteness

Facility name	Remoteness classification	Facility name	Remoteness classification
Andrew Boy Charlton (Sydney)	Major Cities	Auburn	Major Cities
Bathurst	Inner Regional	Cabarita	Major Cities
Cook and Phillip (Sydney)	Major Cities	Forbes	Outer Regional
Gunyama (Zetland)	Major Cities	Ian Thorpe (Sydney)	Major Cities
Kurri Kurri	Major Cities	Lakeside Leisure Centre (Raymond Terrace)	Major Cities
Moree	Outer Regional	Parkes	Outer Regional
Prince Alfred (Sydney)	Major Cities	Singleton Swim & Gym	Inner Regional
Tilligerry	Inner Regional	Tomaree	Inner Regional
Wenden (Miller)	Major Cities	Whitlam Leisure Centre (Liverpool)	Major Cities

In total, 6,208 First Lap vouchers were redeemed across the facilities across both financial years. The number of First Lap vouchers used, the total number of pre-school learn to swim enrolments and the proportion who used a First Lap voucher are displayed in Table 18.

Belgravia reports, across the 18 facilities, that 78% of those aged 3-6 who enrolled and used a First Lap voucher at some point during their enrolment in the 21/22 financial year remained enrolled as at 30 June 2023. In addition, 84% of those aged 3-6 who enrolled in 22/23 and used a First Lap voucher at some point during their enrolment were still enrolled as at 10 August 2023.



Table 18: First Lap voucher use and proportion of all enrollees using a voucher by Belgravia facilities

Facility name	2021/22			2022/23		
	Number of First Lap Vouchers redeemed	Enrolments	% of enrolments using First Lap	Number of First Lap Vouchers redeemed	Enrolments	% of enrolments using First Lap
Andrew Boy Charlton (Sydney)	Not provided	110	-	64	Not provided	-
Auburn	500	516	96.9	370	712	
Bathurst	433	339	127.7	255	517	49.3
Cabarita	84	Not provided	-	Not provided	152	-
Cook and Phillip (Sydney)	Not provided	696	-	Not provided	534	-
Forbes	NA	NA	-	0	16	0.0
Gunyama (Zetland)	Not provided	639	-	Not provided	933	-
Ian Thorpe (Sydney)	Not provided	712	-	Not provided	1229	-
Kurri Kurri	522	644	81.1	376	561	67.0
Lakeside Leisure Centre (Raymond Terrace)	593	672	88.2	386	649	59.5
Moree	9	9	100.0	21	48	43.8
Parkes	NA	NA	-	0	18	0.0
Prince Alfred (Sydney)	Not provided	20	-	Not provided	3	-
Singleton Swim & Gym	509	530	96.0	271	584	46.4
Tilligerry	0	8	0.0	5	20	25.0
Tomaree	30	35	85.7	0	15	0.0
Wenden (Miller)	317	Not provided	-	220	Not provided	-



Whitlam Leisure Centre (Liverpool)	852	Not provided	-	455	Not provided	-
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#### Limitations/Data issues

- Data presented are incomplete due to some First Lap Vouchers being categorised as a generic government voucher rather than the individual program and thus could not be extracted to be provided for the purposes of this report.
- Data on children from priority groups using First Lap vouchers is not reported.
- Data on first time enrollers who used to the First Lap voucher to enrol is not reported.
- For those first-time enrollers who used a voucher and remained enrolled after the voucher value had been used, it is not reported for how long they remain(ed) in swimming lessons.
- Many of the centres for which data were provided went through a data migration process during the 2022/23 financial year, as such data presented in this report are likely to be an underreport.
- Note data provided by the facility in Bathurst (Table 17) shows more first lap vouchers in 2021/22 than enrolments, this is because vouchers were redeemed on the last day of the financial year, but the enrolment attached to the voucher commenced in 2022/23.

#### 7.2 Learn to swim provider interviews

One-on-one interviews with representatives from industry, commonly swim school coordinators were conducted in July and August 2023. In total, six interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams and were audio recorded and transcribed. A discussion guide was used as a prompt for the interview, this can be found in Appendix 8.

Analysis of transcriptions was conducted to identify themes in interviewee responses. Selected quotes are provided verbatim to support the themes identified. Due to the anonymous nature of the research, quotes are not attributed to specific individuals, facilities or providers. In total the five interviews comprised facilities in major cities, and one in an area classified as inner regional. Points of discussion and relevant quotes are now presented grouped under overarching topics.

#### Ease of redemption

Several interviewees discussed the ease of using First Lap vouchers. This differed from Active Kids vouchers which were more labour intensive to redeem.



***“Umm, yeah, so the First Lap voucher was quite easy, especially with the QR code.”***

***“It was really easy to scan vouchers as well through the app. They just with the QR code scan, we found that really easy. Actually a lot easier than Active Kids vouchers.”***

Some providers indicated there was some confusion around redemption, specifically eligible age ranges and also usage of First Lap vouchers with vouchers from another scheme:

***“I guess that was a little bit of confusion initially as to whether and a child could use First Lap and Active Kids at the same time.”***

***“And also like just with the wide age range that was eligible to use it similar with the Active Kids as like were they were they only meant to be for people who are in preschool or if they're in school, could they use it and vice versa with the Active Kids with the only people who are enrolled in school or could they have it beforehand because it was the whole up until 5 or 4 1/2 or whatever it was and it was just that blurry age range.”***

There were also inevitably challenges towards the end of the financial year when vouchers were expiring or when systems were not working:

***“Yes, I mean we obviously had people wanting to use them right up until like the last minute and didn't necessarily understand why they couldn't if we like for administration reasons, we weren't able to process it, that was more so an issue with the active kids because it was a more time consuming task.”***

***“Changing like in terms of how they claim and things like that, it's really simple to be able to do as long as we've got equipment that works and things like that and the system is working because I know last year, financial year end of 2022 financial year, the system completely crashed at one stage and I couldn't get the voucher scanned or they wouldn't scan them. And then the actual code for some people wasn't showing up on the bottom of them when they were through their app and things like that. So we couldn't actually claim for some people because the barcode, the QR code wouldn't scan and then I couldn't physically get the number from them and things like that, you know. So I end up giving it to them anyway, even though that means we lost out the money. ”***

A challenge identified in setting up a facility to receive First Lap vouchers was the need for a separate device to process the vouchers on:





***“At the beginning it was a little bit more fiddly because we had to set it up on a separate device. Like an iPad or that sort of thing where you're able to scan the QR codes and some staff found that they had to either purchase a new tablet or that sort of thing for that.”***

***“I don't like the fact that you can't do it on the same say phone or your laptop. You have to have separate devices. That's a pain in the backside.”***

Another challenge was identified in that the need for a unique email address meant that the centre's account for First Lap is often linked to an individual's email and not a centre, and that can cause issues if staff move on, particular for seasonal facilities:

***“The fact that the registration was linked to an individual's work email rather than an organizational email could present issues in the future. You gotta be very on top of who is actually linked to your centre account and all that”***

A challenge was also identified internal to the business around the redemption of vouchers:

***“Something else is annoying too, but that's not anyone's fault. Is whenever they send us their voucher, but we don't redeem it straight away. Then we just assume that it's ready, ready to go, and just say they're ready. Used it somewhere else and they've forgotten. I find that really hard because I've already given them the credit. Because then we have to go into links and then redeem it there as well. So then it's an accountable if you know more. So it's actually been used.”***

One facility's policy around use of vouchers when already on a family membership, may explain why some families may have registered for the voucher but then not been able to redeem:

***“Umm, so from my understanding it's been very easy to do. I think under certain memberships that we have within the centre because a lot of our, a lot of our learn to swim under like a family membership. So they get like a reduced learn to swim price and then they get a reduced gym price. So under certain memberships they can't use the voucher.”***

### **Impacts on enrolment and use of voucher**

Within the discussions, interviewees were asked to reflect on who they saw using the vouchers. Many interviewees indicated the vouchers are predominately being used by existing families as cost-of-living relief:



***"I would say it's mostly people already in the program using it to get discounted lessons. About 80/20."***

***"It'd be definitely less than 5% in terms of people who are completely new to the centre. we had a few who were new to the centre in terms of they hadn't swum before, but they had older siblings that had swim here."***

Several interviewees indicated that in their opinion, the First Lap voucher was used in association with enrolment among the pre-school age group:

***"Swimming is everything really. It saves lives, but we definitely notice that it definitely increased the numbers here because they want to use the voucher, but also they can't afford swimming lessons, but they can now for \$100 worth of lessons."***

***"Umm, the infant classes, regardless of the voucher, always popular, but the preschool ones have gone up quite higher during the last couple of months."***

Two interviewees mentioned changes over time, seeing different groups using the First Lap voucher at the beginning of the scheme versus when the scheme was further underway:

***"So it's like when that when they're first released, it was really just the people who were already booked in and then towards when the voucher was getting close to expiring, then we would have a lot of new people wanting to just use the voucher and they would only want to swim for the five lessons or we would have some people that used to swim with us. And we're like, oh, yeah, I've got the voucher. Let's come back to swimming."***

***"I think initially yes. And then I think it kind of like the excitement or whatever kind of started to wear off umm, and then it kind of just started being those who were already swimming would use it. In the last six months I think we haven't necessarily had any that have come purely just to use the first lap voucher the only first lap that have been coming through of a people that have already been enrolled."***

### **Use of voucher and ongoing participation**

For those using the vouchers as a new enrollee, some centres had minimum attendance policies that required children to attend more lessons than the voucher of the scheme would cover:

***"We have a 12-week minimum commitment so even enrolling and using a voucher, for several lessons, means they need to do a minimum of 12 weeks."***



***“So ideally I run the same as active kids, so make them do 8 weeks just because having them different numbers makes it really difficult because then all the reception stuff don't understand if it's a first lap or it's active kids they have to, they don't all look look deeper so they know straight away if I do if there's any \$100 voucher on there it they have to do 8 weeks before they cancel out because that's what active kids is.”***

In terms of use of the voucher, due to one facility's policy of free pool entry for children enrolled in swimming lessons, several interviewees reported deliberate fortnightly use of the First Lap voucher value to extend participation:

***“So we definitely notice, so they wouldn't do it every week, but they'll do it once every two weeks, so then they'll come on the odd week to come. And just to practice their skills. So they're getting, like almost weekly lessons, but on their own, if you know, that means. So they're trying to make that voucher, just a just expand if you know.”***

***“They're fairly good value for money once they're in the door, in that we let them swim in other days and all that sort of stuff to come and practice. It's designed to encourage them to come and help practice their skills.”***

It was generally felt, that parents understood the need to continue on with lessons, if they could afford it, due to children not being able to learn to swim in such a small amount of lessons:

***“You really most people understand, and particularly when their kids are that young. So between the three and five, so type age group, they understand that they're not gonna learn to swim within five weeks, that it's gonna be like an ongoing thing.”***

### **Encouraging retention over the winter months**

An unintended consequence mentioned by many of the interviewees was the First Lap voucher contributing to retention over the winter months, when typically a drop off in swimming lesson enrolment and attendance is seen:

***“There were some families who would traditionally stop for a term and the first lap. Some of them would continue swimming. However, some of them would kind of hold it as a user voucher as kind of like a free holding space in the class. So they wouldn't necessarily come, but they'd be able to be able to stay enrolled because the class fees weren't coming out of their pocket sort of thing for five weeks.”***

***“And if you think, I think it has in relation to probably retention as well, I think where people might pull their small kids out of swimming lessons during winter for example, I***



***think they've continued on to use those vouchers. so generally in winter you'd expect to see about a 20% drop off in enrolments, we're sitting at about 5-10% drop at the moment."***

### **Impacts on enrolment among culturally and linguistically diverse groups**

One interviewee reflected on unique impacts on culturally and linguistically diverse groups seen at the centre, where, they believed, the presence of the First Lap voucher for the younger age group, prompted enrolment earlier than some culturally groups would typically enrol their children and the challenges this presented:

***"Because it is younger than our particular culture would normally start when I say that the culture, you know the predominant culture for our centre? The kids were very nervous and scared and so not necessarily happy to be in the water. parents of this particular culture go OK, well, if the child's not happy, we'll pull them out. so that was a bit also a big reason as to why that only stayed for the five lessons. Yeah, that normally start when they start at school."***

### **Encouraging families to enrol their younger children**

Several interviewees also reflect on the First Lap voucher likely encouraging families to enrol younger siblings into learn to swim:

***"But I would say what it has contributed to, I think this is just my opinion, but I think so in existing families that already had their school age kids swimming, I think people do see the value in having their school age kids swimming because they're at school and they need to swim and all that sort of stuff. But I think it has prompted them to put younger siblings in swimming lessons potentially earlier. So whereas they might not have started their older children until they were five and at school, I think having the vouchers has made them go. OK. We'll start them at three or four because we are getting this voucher."***

### **Industry views on program**

Overwhelmingly, industry views on the program were very positive:

***"I just think they've been fantastic like my kids are older, so I wasn't eligible for them, but I think that the greater incentive for parents to get their kids into swimming lessons gives them that financial handout, for the moment, that most families need, and it's so good to see all these kids learning how to swim"***

***"Because I've had a really good impact on the learn to swim environment and yeah, like as I said before, the more kids we can get into, learn to swim because as we all know, we're surrounded by water here."***



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***“Kids that would have otherwise missed out because maybe not even financial, maybe their parents hadn't thought of it. Some people just don't think of swimming lessons. And then I hear about, you know.”***

### **Age group appropriateness**

When asked about views around the age group of the scheme, perspectives from industry were generally supportive of the age group for the First Lap scheme:

***“In terms of swimming lessons, as long as the parent is bringing them to the centre when they're small, to familiarize them with water, I think 3 is probably around that age group. That's the age we have them in the water by themselves with their instructor around the parents and the water. So I think definitely get more value having them in the water early. But I think from three is sort of good.”***

***“If anything, I think it's probably a bit too old. I by thinking first lap I would be like, OK, well, let's get the parents in the water with the with the two year olds or whatever. I get them in earlier and also help educate the parents as well.”***

### **Impacts on business**

Although difficult to definitively attribute impacts on enrolment and thus business to the scheme, industry views were that the First Lap scheme likely contributed to increased enrolment and thus increased employment for instructors and additional pool space being used:

***“I believe we have had an increase in our preschool program. Before this we were only doing one most mornings (9-12pm) we only have one teacher, umm we've now got two teachers every morning. I guess that uses up a bit more, more pool space and whatnot.”***

***“So this increase in numbers, means our instructors are getting more hours”***

***“Yes, but very hard to identify how much is because of like directly related to the scheme and how much is a result of like recovering from COVID and that period where no one had swimming lessons for a period of time and then people have sort of panicked about the whole water safety, that sort of thing, if that makes sense. We've had huge group in our learn to swim after like all the lockdowns and that sort of thing to the point where I think we peaked at just over 1200 in summer of this year and prior to that we would have been like below the 1000 for the last how many years. So like, it's quite a bit of right, but that's across the whole program with the considering you First Lap and your Active Kids and the COVID recovery, so.”***



## **Industry views regarding scheme value reduction or removal**

There were some thoughts shared around the impact on business if the scheme were to be reduced or removed, and businesses having to consider this in their budgetary processes:

***"It would be interesting to see, and I know we were considering this one, we went through our budget process. What would happen if the scheme went away? Because I think we were looking, I think it was about 40K worth of first lap vouchers were redeemed for the last 12 month period. So, like significant amount of money you're that's just for the [Centre] or I should say that's the amount of money for a program that does sort of 70-80K a month if that makes sense. So that's a bit a decent impact. It'll be interesting to see what happened in terms of like budgeting and financials. If it was just to drop off automatically, the customer service team have said that parents have said to make comments to them about it would be good if the voucher went back to \$100 instead of the \$50."***

***"I think with the cost of living situation, there would be grateful to get anything unless they like the other end and just really can't afford it. And then \$50 won't be enough of an impact. So they won't do it."***

## **Challenges facing industry**

Although generally views on the scheme are very positive and the industry is in favour of the scheme contributing, industry did face challenges in implementing the scheme. One of these challenges was ensuring staffing levels were adequate to support demand:

***"What we've really struggled with is having amount of instructors available and so that's sort of been a limiting factor. Umm, if that makes sense and because all of our instructors like to work mornings and that's primarily when they would teach a lot of the preschool classes would be like mornings and week afternoons, I guess yes, but we've been limited by instructor availability in the amount of instructors we have available. And also like space in our classes."***

***"I tend to believe had the industry as a whole, not us specific or anything, had more facilities had the qualified teachers available. I tend to believe that more children would have gotten into lessons. Umm, because we did have a fair few, especially towards the end that would be like I've called around others from schools, but they're all full. And we're full as well. here were people who were potentially wanting to use them, but for lack of umm, available positions in various centres, they couldn't."***

One way to combat this could be assistance by way of funding for swim teachers to become qualified, particularly to teach the pre-school age group:



***"I think help with like funding for the qualifications. So for course training and that sort of stuff would be helpful. Umm, that would probably be the main one, like assistance in terms of like training and even like I don't know I it's hard to do, but it'd be good to do like something like traineeships, all that sort of stuff or like even if there's some way to set people up who are interested in doing learn to swim."***

***"Like even when we go and pay for their qualifications, like from the Centre budget, it's hard to keep them and get them through the process. Ideally it would be good if there would be a way to like pay them for any shadow hours and that sort of stuff they do, which again is hard because everyone's confident a different point."***

Pool space and space in classes to be able to move children through levels was also identified as a challenge in administering the scheme within an industry at capacity:

***"So in summer, like when I was opening classes, they would fill up like straight away, so there wasn't as much room to kind of move people around the program that I think the Council would really like there to be. And we have, like lane spacing issues. So we can't, under Council regulations, extend the program further on certain days because we need three to four lanes for the public. So new people coming in sometimes we can't, like accommodate to their every need. So I would like to hope that they came in and they were able to find a spot if it was in winter, that would be really easy for them to do. But in summer, it's really hard to even move the kids that we currently have, let alone open them for new enrolments."***

### **Vouchers as a marketing and parental education opportunity**

Several interviewees reflected on the broader value of the vouchers in marketing the importance of learn to swim:

***"It's the educational piece. It's the fact that you can even tie a lot of the marketing resources where you talk about water safe, like swimming, being a skill for life and all that sort of thing into being able to use the vouchers as well."***

While facilities do attempt to provide parental education on water safety, particularly the importance of supervision given the applicability of the Keep Watch @ Public Pools program for this age group, it was thought that the parental education component was nonetheless challenging:

***"I think some parents, yes. But I think to be honest, a lot of parents do tend to see it as 1/2 hour child free time."***



## Future of the program and suggestions

Generally industry were very supportive of the scheme and in favour of it continuing:

***"I guess it's hard because I'm not yet I wasn't in the position of having a child who needed to use it like mine was too old. So I don't really know that the personal impact of using them. But I know, just from chatting to friends and stuff, they definitely did find it helpful. Just that little bit of relief sort of thing.***

***"I definitely think it should stay. I don't have children, but I know like with the current state of everything financially how important it is for kind of fitness and Wellness, and especially something like this is a really big priority for the government and for Australia, just in general. I know that if I was a parent, my kids swimming lesson would be probably the first thing to be chucked out the window. If I had bills to pay, I had food to put on the table. I've cancelled my gym membership like a couple of times over the past, like 2 years, so I know how easily those things that are really important for children's development and socially and for them to even no such as skill as swimming and especially because we were just in lockdown for so many years and lots of kids have gone without learning to do that and we're going into summer if it is a good summer and it's not as rainy, we will definitely see the effects of not having swimming be like a priority for kids, which is really unfortunate. But yeah, I think it's a really good initiative and it's good to stay families kind of supported even after covenant be given these extra little pushes to try and keep their kids enrolled in something that could potentially save their life down the line."***

One interviewee felt strongly that the scheme should remain universal in its eligibility:

***"I think in some ways swimming is an expensive thing to do, but it's also a life saving skill that is required. I think there are a lot of people who work really hard and so don't fall into the eligibility or family situation means that they don't fall into the eligibility. But that doesn't mean that they shouldn't get, umm assistance to do something like swimming lessons. Everybody who does fit the eligibility sees the benefit of doing swimming lessons and so they potentially wouldn't use it anyway."***

One suggestion for the future of the program were making it consistent with Active Kids for ease of industry use and redemption:

***"It should be consistent to make it a lot easier for us as facilities, because otherwise you know we have to manage and if people are cancelling out afterwards, making sure people are either doing 5 weeks or 8 weeks just makes it even more. It makes it hard for us."***





## 8 Economic Evaluation

The Economic Evaluation detailed in section 8 was conducted by Siyuan (Tony) Wang under the supervision of Dr Blake Angell

### 8.1 Overview of economic evaluation

As highlighted through this report, the First Lap program has reached communities across the state, encouraging participation in swimming lessons, alleviating cost pressures facing families, improving the knowledge of parents around key water safety principles and has been well received by the learn to swim industry. These benefits have come with the costs associated with the delivery of a statewide voucher program. To inform ongoing policy decisions around investment into the program we conducted a cost-benefit analysis (CBA), a comprehensive method of economic evaluation, to assess the relative costs and benefits of the First Lap program and allow for comparison of the comparative value of investing in the program as opposed to alternative uses of government funding.

### 8.2 Economic evaluation method

We conducted a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of the First Lap voucher program over 2021/22 and 2022/23. A CBA is a systematic approach to estimating the relative economic benefits and costs of a project or policy. It is a tool used to help decision-makers make choices to maximise the impact, or benefit, of public expenditure. CBAs involve identifying all relevant costs and benefits associated with a program and assessing the relative size of the benefits compared to the costs. To do so, we use a benefit cost ratio which expresses the ratio of the value of benefits to the value of costs. A benefit-cost ratio greater than 1 suggests economic evidence in support of the program as the value of benefits is larger than that of costs. CBAs are the preferred method of economic evaluation by NSW Treasury as they allow for comparison of the relative value of different programs across different areas of government expenditure. The approach used in this evaluation has followed the steps specified in the CBA guidelines (NSW Treasury 2023).

### Objective of this evaluation

To conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the First Lap Voucher program relative to a hypothetical situation where the policy was not implemented.

### Identifying the costs of First Lap

We sought to identify the total costs associated with running the First Lap program across NSW. This included costs associated with voucher redemptions, employee



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expenses, Service NSW costs associated with running the program and other operating expenses. These data were extracted from the NSW Office of Sport financial records.

### Identifying the benefits of First Lap

To identify the benefits associated with the First Lap program we attempted to capture all benefits to both families and industry, specifically swim lesson providers, that accrued from the program. The benefits included and the data sources used to estimate them are summarised in Table 19.

Table 19 – Overview of Benefits included in CBA and data sources used

Benefits included	Data sources
<b>Increased economic activity for swim schools</b>	Average estimate of providers as to increased economic activity at their centres flowing from First Lap redemptions, average profit margins of swim schools, average swim teacher salaries, previous estimates of total economic activity of swim schools
<b>Benefits to children and families including greater access to swimming lessons and associated benefits, the financial impact of the vouchers for families</b>	Willingness to pay estimates obtained through a parental survey to capture the value of swimming lessons to families, voucher redemption data, reported impact on parental choice to participate in swimming lessons from parental survey

### Provider benefits

To estimate the benefits of First Lap to swim school providers we included questions in our survey of providers about their estimated proportional increase in profit that they ascribed to the program, additional swim lesson activity and extra staff hired. We used these data to estimate the increase in economic activity for providers using publicly available data on wage rates for swim school staff and average economic activity for providers. Due to the uncertainty of available data we generated two estimates to provide a band of the potential benefits to industry as a result of the program. The first, and most conservative estimate, we have termed the Salary Estimate. Here we used the data obtained through the provider survey of the impact of First lap on the:

- Increase in the number of swim teachers to provide additional swim lessons
- Increase in the number of employment hours of existing swim teachers
- Increase in the number of employment hours of existing non-swim teachers
- Increase in aquatic centres income



Along with publicly available data on the national aquatic industry workforce, we estimated the increase in economic activity that resulted from First Lap. For the upper estimate of industry benefits, which we have termed the Broader Economic Estimate, we used the provider survey data on the estimated percentage increase in profit they experienced as a result of First Lap and previous estimates of the economic activity of the Australian aquatic industry (Royal Life Saving Australia National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report 2023) to derive a value for the economic activity attributable to the average facility:

- Average swim teacher salary rate at \$31 per hour, working 34 weeks per year
- Average non-swim teacher salary rate at \$33 per hour, 37 weeks per year
- Swim and non-swim salaries take up of 30-60% of total swim school income.

This was then used to estimate the value of the additional activity. Estimated total provider benefit was calculated as the total increased income of swim and non-swim teachers \* profit margin \* average rate of increase in economic activity found in the survey, and then applied to the total providers across the state.

This estimate incorporates both direct economic impact of the swim school sector as well as the indirect economic impact, which incorporates downstream economic impacts of swim schools such as service providers to the facilities and additional use of utilities. As such, we think this is likely an upper estimate for the provider benefits that have accrued from First Lap. While it is known that some providers have been more engaged in the First Lap program and are thus more likely to have experienced these benefits, it is uncertain how representative the providers who responded to the provider survey of the broader swim school community. As such we made the conservative assumption that the average estimated increase in economic activity found in the survey of 100 providers (20% response rate) applied to 200 providers across the state (out of a total of 574 providers onboarded during the period of the evaluation), while the remainder were assumed to have experienced no increase in activity because of First Lap.



## Consumer Benefits

As touched on throughout this report, there are a range of benefits for children and their families associated with the First Lap program that vary across the population. For some, the voucher will represent financial relief to pay for swimming lessons that they may already have attended and funded privately. For others, the program has likely allowed them to enrol and attend swimming lessons that they otherwise may not have been able to afford. There are a range of benefits associated with learning to swim, including for example, potential improvements in physical activity and fitness, opportunities for socialising and to build confidence and self-esteem and improvements in water safety. To the extent that First Lap enables additional access to swimming lessons, the benefits that people associate with the voucher may exceed its actual monetary value. To assess this, we included a contingent valuation question within the parent and carer survey to assess the value that the population on average place on swimming lessons through an estimation of their willingness to pay to access lessons.

Box 1 provides a high-level overview of the contingent valuation methodology (Carson 2012). The method has been used widely across different sectors of economic policy making to estimate the monetary value of access to various public goods or services. Here we used the method to estimate the willingness to pay for a term of swimming lessons and, using data on the number of lessons accessed with the First Lap voucher, derived a value for these additional lessons. Importantly, contingent valuation allows respondents to provide a dollar estimate for their value for the program without us specifying or restricting the specific features that contribute to that value (for example improved safety and confidence in the water, increased physical activity and social opportunities and the recreational enjoyment from leisure activities).

We ascribed this value of benefit to the proportion of respondents to the parent and carer survey who stated that they only participated in swimming lessons because of the First Lap voucher. Those who indicated they would have participated in swimming lessons regardless

### Box 1 – Contingent Valuation

Contingent valuation is an economic method used to estimate the value people place on things that don't have a market price, like environmental benefits or cultural heritage. It involves asking individuals how much they would be willing to pay, or willing to accept, for a certain thing. This helps in understanding the economic importance of intangible assets. Contingent valuation plays a role in policy decisions and resource management by giving insight into public preferences. Here we have employed the contingent valuation method to estimate the total value that families place on access to swimming lessons, letting them consider the various types of benefits that swimming lessons convey on their family.



were assumed to receive a benefit of \$100 (equal to the value of the voucher). Given the high level of respondents who stated they would have participated in swimming lessons anyway, and the likelihood that respondents to the survey were more likely to be engaged with swimming lessons than the broader state population, we believe this would be a conservative assumption. Key assumptions used in the CBA are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20 – Key assumptions made in CBA

<b>Key challenges and assumptions in analysis</b>	<b>Addressed by</b>	<b>Further tests of impact on results</b>
<b>Monetising the consumer benefits of the program</b>	We incorporated a contingent valuation question in the survey of parents to identify the amount they valued swimming lessons, the impact that First Lap had on being able to enrol in swimming lessons and conservatively assumed the proportion of respondents who indicated they would have enrolled in swimming lessons regardless of First Lap applied across the state.	Consumer benefits and benefit-cost ratio will increase if the proportion of people across NSW who are enticed into enrolling in swimming lessons is greater than the proportion who responded to the parent and carer survey.
<b>Disparate and uncertain provider benefits</b>	Used two methods to estimate benefits to provide an upper and lower bound for benefits. Conservative estimation of the spread of benefits as applying to only 200 providers across the state on the assumption that the providers who engaged with the survey might also be more engaged with the First Lap program.	Sensitivity analysis of the benefit-cost ratio if this was increased to 300 providers
<b>Long term benefits of the program are uncertain.</b>	We left long-term benefits out of our analysis.	If there are significant longer term benefits from the program, the benefit-cost ratio would be higher.



## Sensitivity Analyses

To test the impact of key assumptions made and uncertainties in our analysis to the results, we carried out several sensitivity analyses varying key parameters of both the benefit and cost arms of the evaluation. Specifically, we tested several potential scenarios involving expansion of uptake of the program (15% increase in increase in redemption), more widespread benefits to providers (up to 300 providers benefiting from increased activity across the state), an increase in administrative costs, or specifically if it was rolled out to target specific socioeconomic cohorts.

The methodology for different SEIFA estimations followed the same method described above, but instead of conducting calculations on the whole surveyed population, we conducted subgroup analysis based on their SEIFA quartiles, and then applied the benefit estimates from each SEIFA quartile to the entire state. The rationale behind this was to understand how different groups, based on socioeconomic status or geographical location, valued the program differently, as well as to see if the program was particularly valued (or disvalued) by a certain cohort.

### 8.3 Economic evaluation results

#### Costs

Cost data were extracted from Office of Sport financial records and are summarised in Table 21.

Table 21 – Costs of implementing the First Lap program by financial year

Cost	2021-22	2022-23
Voucher Redemption	\$14.1M	\$10.5M
Employee Expenses	\$0.3M	\$0.4M
Service NSW costs	\$1M	\$1.2M
Other operating expenses	\$0.1M	\$0.1M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15.8M</b>	<b>\$12.2M</b>

*\*all data rounded to nearest \$0.1M*

In total, across 2021/22 and 2022/23, approximately \$28 million was spent delivering the First Lap program. The vast majority of this cost related to the costs associated with voucher redemption (\$24.6M over the two years) followed by costs incurred by Service NSW in running and hosting the platform required to deliver and use the vouchers (\$2.2M over two years).



## **Benefits**

### ***Provider benefits***

On average, providers reported an average increase in income of 13.6% including an additional 12 lessons per centre and 7.7 additional swim teachers employed per centre. Across the state, assuming these benefits were felt by 200 providers, this equated to an estimated increase of \$6.4 million provider benefits per year using the Salary Estimate method. For the Broader Economic method, using the estimate found by PWC in 2022 of total swim school economic activity of \$2.8 billion, we estimate that the benefits to providers could be as high as \$17.9 million dollars per year.

### ***Consumer benefits***

Through the contingent valuation question, participants were willing to pay an average of approximately \$181 for a term of swimming lessons. Deriving a valuation for the number of lessons covered by the first lap suggests that these respondents were attributing around \$108 in benefits to the voucher they received. This valuation was relatively stable across SEIFA quartiles, demonstrating the value that all groups placed on accessing swimming lessons (Tables 22). Almost all survey respondents (98%) indicated they would have participated in swimming lessons without the First Lap voucher and so were ascribed a valuation of \$100. In total, we estimate that approximately \$26.5 benefits were accrued by consumers across the two years because of the First Lap program.

### **Total Benefit-Cost Ratio**

The estimated benefit-cost ratio across both years was found to be between 1.4-2.3 (depending on the method used to estimate provider benefits), showing the estimated benefits to be greater than the costs. The scenarios modelled through sensitivity analyses demonstrated that this result was robust to variation in a range of key assumptions, maintaining a positive benefit-cost ration across all scenarios tested including with higher costs and uptake. Table 22 outlines the key results of this analysis. We found that the value ascribed to learn to swim programs did not vary significantly across socioeconomic groups (SEIFA quartiles, see Appendix 9).



Table 22: Results of CBA (\$M)

Benefit	2021/22		2022/23		Total	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)
Total provider benefit	6.4	17.9	6.4	17.9	12.8	35.8
Total consumer benefit	15.4	15.4	11.1	11.1	26.5	26.5
Total benefit	21.8	33.3	17.5	29	39.3	62.3
Total cost	15.8	15.8	12.2	12.2	28	28
Benefit-cost ratio	1.38	2.11	1.43	2.38	1.40	2.23

***We found the First Lap program to have had a positive impact for both consumers in the form of lower costs for, and sometimes access to, swimming lessons and for industry through greater economic activity.***

***Across all scenarios modelled, estimated benefits were greater than costs. There were several key uncertainties in this analysis, many of which are common to CBAs of social service programs around the quantification and monetisation of benefits. We have highlighted these throughout this report and applied the best available data to inform our analysis. When data limitations were evident, we sought to apply conservative assumptions and tested the impact of these through sensitivity analysis.***

***The results demonstrate the great value that the population places on learning to swim. Benefits were greatest for those who were enabled to access swimming lessons by the program, who otherwise would not have been able to afford lessons. Given the extent of parents and carers reporting cost as a major barrier to accessing swimming lessons in other parts of this report, focusing the program on enhancing the ability of these groups to access swimming lessons will likely maximise consumer benefits of the program. It is likely that industry benefits can be similarly maintained if these groups are successfully targeted as they are likely to be a large part of the stimulated demand found to have been delivered by the program.***

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## 9 Recommendations

Findings from the evaluation indicate that priority population groups face significant barriers to participation in swimming lessons. Efforts to improve supply-side availability of swimming lessons should continue, particularly those aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, multicultural (CaLD) communities, rural/remote dwelling families and children with disabilities. Targeted financial support for families most likely to indicate that cost was a barrier, particularly those from priority population groups, is important to increase these group's participation rates.

Given that it is unclear whether the First Lap program met its objective of increasing preschool aged children participating in learn to swim programs as data on the baseline levels of participation are unknown, a NSW population surveillance measure could be used to collect these data. This measure could be included in the NSW Health Child Population Health Survey and ask parent/carers of children aged 3-6 years to report whether or not their child had participated in swimming lessons in the preceding 12 months.

The following recommendations are suggested as ways to increase redemption among priority populations groups (Box 2).

### **Box 2: Recommendations to increase redemption among priority populations groups**

- 1. Establish specific program governance groups to guide all stages of the program for each priority population group (children living with a disability, Aboriginal children, CaLD children), to include community leaders, families and community organisations at the state and local level.**
- 2. Raise awareness of the program and encourage voucher creation among regional & remote families and work with regional providers to ensure swimming lesson provision that meets customer demand. While the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed was higher than for metropolitan areas, regional families may not have created vouchers if they thought they could not be redeemed locally.**



**3. Offer a higher voucher amount (\$200 - \$250) to low socioeconomic families, who are more highly represented among priority population groups (children living with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CaLD children and children living in regional and remote areas). This value reflects the true cost of one term of swimming lessons and largely removes the need for parent/carer co-contribution.**

**4. To generate cost savings that could be directed to offer a higher voucher amount (\$200 - \$250) to low socioeconomic families, establish means testing for the voucher that would focus future eligibility on the two lowest SES quartiles, approximately half of the pre-school aged children in NSW. Such means testing could result in substantial savings that could be directed towards providing the higher voucher amount (\$200 - \$250) to low socioeconomic families. For example, voucher redemption costs in the 2022 – 2023 financial year were \$6,440,600 for the two highest SES quartiles (3 and 4).**

**5. Means testing could take the form of future program eligibility based on eligibility for Family Tax Benefit Part A, as is planned for the new combined Active and Creative Kids Program from 2024. Approximately half of families in NSW receive Family Tax Benefit Part A, a similar number to the number of families in the two lower SEIFA quartiles. Alternatively, means testing could be based on a family holding a Health Care Card, similar to the KidSport program in Western Australia that would include all families with a child living with a disability.**

## **Acknowledgements**

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# **First Lap Voucher Program Evaluation**

**Interim findings**

**November**

**2022**

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Amy Peden**

**School of Population Health  
UNSW Sydney**

## Summary

Swimming skills are an evidence-based component of drowning prevention but many Australian children miss out on learn to swim education. Voucher programs may reduce swimming lesson cost and increase participation, especially among priority populations.

The First Lap voucher program provides two New South Wales (NSW) state government funded \$100 vouchers for parent/carers of children aged 3-6 years who are not enrolled in school to contribute to swimming lesson costs, one per financial year during 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023.

UNSW Sydney are the independent evaluators of the First Lap voucher program. The First Lap program evaluation aims to determine the effectiveness of the program in meeting objectives of increasing preschool aged children participating in learn to swim programs and building parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of preschool aged children learning to swim. This report presents interim evaluation findings from the 2021 – 2022 financial year.

During the first six months of First Lap during the 2021 – 2022 financial year, 221,218 vouchers were created for eligible preschool children (3-6 years) and those in kindergarten in 2021 or 2022. This was approximately 46.5% of the 476,101 eligible children aged 3-7 years living in NSW (from 2021 Census data). Of the created vouchers, 154,859 (70%) were redeemed, approximately 32.5% of all eligible children.

A total of 14.7% of redeemed vouchers were redeemed by children who had not participated in swimming lessons previously or had not participated during the past 12 months 24.9%. However, most (61.4%) redeemed vouchers were redeemed for children who were already participating in lessons.

The proportion of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed in the first 6 months of operation of the First Lap program were lower for the eligible population of CaLD children (15.8% and 17.7% lower, respectively). The proportion of vouchers created for CaLD children was also 25% lower than for all children (21.7% versus 46.5%). The proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for CaLD children was 10% lower (60.3%) than for all children (70.0%). These findings indicate that greater efforts are needed to raise program awareness, encourage voucher creation and facilitate opportunities for redemption among CaLD families and communities.

The proportion of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the first 6 months of operation is comparable to the NSW population proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The proportion of vouchers created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was only 3% lower than for all children (46.5% versus 43.9%). However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was 15% lower (55.2%) than for all children (70%), indicating a need to improve opportunities for redemption.

The proportion of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed for children with a disability in the first 6 months is comparable to the NSW population proportion of children with a disability. A slightly higher proportion of vouchers created for children with a

disability (48.5%) than for all children (46.5%). However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for children with a disability was lower (58.1%) than for all children (70.0%). This indicates that greater efforts are needed to improve opportunities for redemption for children with a disability.

Further, a higher proportion of vouchers were redeemed by families living in the highest socioeconomic areas (Quartile 4; 76.1%) than families living in the lowest socioeconomic areas (Quartile 1; 56.0%).

Overall, these findings indicate that the First Lap vouchers are being redeemed at lower rates for children who have not previously or recently engaged in swimming lessons, or priority population groups in the first six months of operation.

There were 21,292 responses to the parent/carer survey, 17.5% parent/carers of the 121,609 parent/carers who consented to be contacted for the program evaluation and completed on behalf of their eldest or only eligible child. Survey responders were more likely to be parent/carers of older children, non-Indigenous, speak a language other than English at home and live in a higher socioeconomic area when compared to the overall voucher created population but there were no differences by gender, disability status or geographical location.

The survey findings indicate initial knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs. The most common reasons given for not redeeming the voucher were a lack of availability of lessons and the cost of lessons. The survey responses also provide important foundational data on the contribution of the voucher to overall parent/carer expenditure on swimming lessons and future intentions to pay for swimming lessons that are important for the economic evaluation.

## 1.1 Background

The First Lap voucher program provides two New South Wales (NSW) state government funded \$100 vouchers for parent/carers of children aged 3-6 years who are not enrolled in school to contribute to swimming lesson costs, one per financial year during 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023.

The core objectives of the program are to

1. Increase the number of preschool aged children, who did not participate in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months, participating in learn to swim programs.
2. Build knowledge and awareness amongst parents and carers of the importance of preschool aged children learning to swim.

At the time the First Lap program was launched on 1 December 2021, it was recognised that COVID-19 had significantly impacted the commencement of swimming lessons for pre-school aged children over the previous 18 months. For this reason, for the first six months of the First Lap voucher, 1 December 2021 to 30 June 2022, eligibility was expanded to include children in kindergarten in 2021 or 2022. On 1 July 2022, First Lap eligibility reverted to children aged 3 to 6 years not enrolled in school, as originally intended.

The evaluation of the program will provide an understanding of how the program has impacted participation rates of preschool aged children in learn to swim programs, particularly within Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, children with disability, and regional, remote priority populations as well as low socio-economic status (SES) areas. These groups have previously been identified as being underrepresented in formal or structured swimming lessons.

The evaluation will also examine whether the program has influenced the attitudes and motivations of parents and carers about the importance of learn to swim programs and water safety. Further, the evaluation will examine whether the program has impacted or enhanced the ability of the aquatics sector to deliver fit-for-purpose learn to swim programs. An economic evaluation will be conducted to assess the cost- effectiveness of the program.

### EVALUATION AIMS:

1. Provide understanding of program impact on learn to swim participation rates, particularly CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, disability, regional and remote priority populations
2. Examine program influence on parent/carer knowledge, awareness, motivation for learn to swim programs and water safety
3. Examine program impact on aquatics sector delivery of learn to swim programs
4. Conduct economic evaluation to assess program cost-effectiveness & cost-benefit

First Lap evaluation activities, data sources and data collection timeframes during the First Lap program first six months (January – July 2022) and progress to date are summarised in Table 1.



A program logic model was developed to explain the inputs, activities and intended outputs, and outcomes, which guides the evaluation (Figure 2). The findings of this interim report are presented for the outputs and short term (1 year) outcomes.

The full evaluation protocol, including methods, is in Appendix 1.

**Table 1. First Lap evaluation activities, data sources and data collection timeframes**

<b>Evaluation component and type</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Data collection timeframes</b>
<b>Phase 1 (January – July 2022)</b>			
1.1 Impact/outcome Quantitative	Retrospective collection of baseline participation data and historical data if possible (pre-1 December 2021 program commencement) enrolment data from key public, private and not-for profit providers across metropolitan and rural locations	Registered provider data	April – 2022 – April 2023 <b>IN PROGRESS</b>
1.2 Impact/outcome Economic Quantitative	Assessment of voucher creation & redemption, baseline sociodemographic, previous swim lesson participation and reasons for non-participation, reasons for applying, enrolment with voucher data	Office of Sport voucher creation and redemption data	July 2022 <b>COMPLETE</b>
1.3 Impact/outcome, Economic Quantitative	Online Survey 1 of parents and carers knowledge and attitudes of learn to swim programs and water safety, voucher use	Parent/carer survey	July 2022 <b>COMPLETE</b>
1.4 Impact/outcome Economic Quantitative	End of financial year 2021-22 redemption data Data collected and analysed and added to economic modelling	Office of Sport voucher creation and redemption data	July 2022 <b>COMPLETE</b>

Current		Outcomes				
situation/Needs	Evidence	Program Components/Activities	Outputs	Mechanism of Change	Short- Term (1 year)	Medium-Term (2 years)
Concerns over the level of swimming capability of children living in NSW and the impact of this on water safety. The First Lap Voucher Program seeks to increase participation of preschool-aged children in learn to swim classes and to build parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of preschool-aged children learning to swim	Children are missing out on vital learn to swim education, particularly those from low socio-economic, rural and remote locations, Aboriginal CaLD and children with a disability. As a result, there are gaps of achievement of basic swimming and water safety skills and knowledge  September 2020 enrolments in swimming lessons decreased by 25% Year on Year  Every Australian child should be able to achieve the fundamental stage milestones of the National Swimming and Water Safety Benchmark by the age of 6 years  Cost of lessons is a barrier to participation	1x\$100 learn to swim voucher per financial year for every preschool-aged child residing in NSW to be used to pay for eligible intensive or weekly/term-based learn to swim programs or part thereof  Technology platform to support voucher transactions  Sector consultation including peak bodies and a cross section of learn to swim providers (private, public, sole trader)  Program business rules, guidelines, and terms & conditions for participants and providers.  Sector communications focusing on educating potential providers about the program's eligibility criteria and how to promote voucher use  Communications aimed at improving parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of the importance of preschool-aged children learning to swim.	1. Total number of voucher redemptions  2. Number of eligible providers onboarded  3. Survey responses from providers  4. Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children who have never attended learn to swim programs.  5. Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children who have not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months  6. Survey responses to questions relating to parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs.	By providing every preschool aged child in NSW a \$100 learn to swim voucher every year, we can increase participation of preschool-aged children in learn to swim programs and build parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety	1. Preschool-aged children participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the Program vouchers  2. Learn to swim providers register to become a Program provider  3. Preschool-aged children participate in learn to swim programs for the first time (new participation)  4. Preschool-aged children who had previously participated in learn to swim programs, but not within the past 12 months, recommence learn to swim programs  5. Establish baseline of parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety  6. Increased level of parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety	1. Increased number of preschool-aged children participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the Program vouchers, YoY  2. Improved sector service provision facilitated by program eligibility requirements, communications, and consultations  3. Maintained participation of preschool-aged children who in year 1 of the program had not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months  4. Increased level of parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety  5. Increased number of preschool-aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability, participate in learn to swim classes

Targeted communications aimed at increasing awareness of the program in priority populations including CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability

Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability

Preschool-aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability, participate in learn to swim classes

**External Factors:**

- COVID-19 restrictions on the learn to swim industry
- The ability of providers in regional/remote areas to meet program demand

**Assumptions:**

- Participation of preschool-aged children in learn to swim programs will lead to attainment of swimming and water safety skills.
- Voucher redemptions are an appropriate measure of program participation

**Figure 1: First Lap Program Logic Model**

This interim report is based on data received from the Office of Sport at the following time points (Table 2)

**Table 2: Data received by UNSW Sydney evaluators from the Office of Sport (Appendix 2)**

<b>Data type</b>	<b>Date received</b>
1. Voucher creation data - 217,800 parent/carers	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
2. Redemption data (all)	29 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
3. Voucher creation data - 3418 parent/carers	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2022

Parent/carer survey data (Appendix 3) were accessed by the evaluators directly through the Survey Manager platform. The survey, distributed in August 2022, was not sent to the 1.5% parent/carers for whom data were not available until October 2022.

## **1 First Lap Evaluation activities**

### *1.1 Retrospective collection of baseline participation data and historical data if possible*

The evaluators are collaborating with industry partners, including Royal Life Saving and YMCA, to gain an understanding of NSW preschool age children learn to swim baseline participation data and historical data. At November 2022, data are being prepared by industry partners to inform the evaluation.

### *1.2 Assessment of voucher creation & redemption*

Creation (N = 221,218) and redemption (N = 154,859) data for the 2021 – 2022 financial year were received by the evaluators from the NSW Office of Sport during July - October 2022 (Table 2). These data indicate that 70% of vouchers were redeemed. Results from the data analysis are described in sections 2 (Outputs), 3 (Short- Term (1 year) Outcomes) and 4 (Other findings) of this report.

### *1.3 Parent/carer online survey 1*

The first parent/carer survey was distributed to parent/carers who consented to take part in the program evaluation during August 2022. Parent/carers who had registered more than one child for the program using the same email were sent one survey only. A total of 21,292 responses were received (17.5%).

***The proportion of survey respondents who redeemed a voucher was 97.4%, compared the 70% of total redemptions indicating that respondents are a biased sample of parents/carers who were more likely to redeem vouchers.***

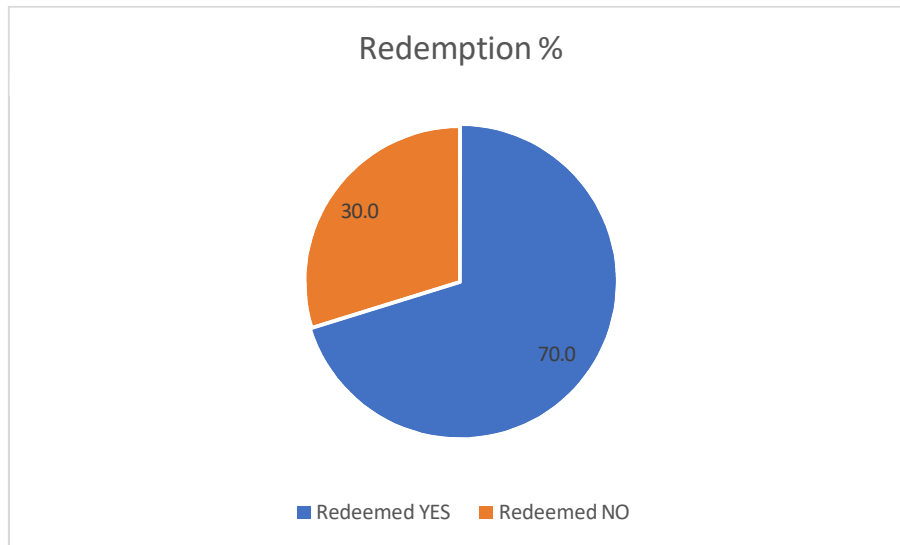
### *1.4 Preliminary economic evaluation*

Collected data lay the foundation for a future economic evaluation of the program once the impact on other outcomes is ascertained. The method to be used is outlined in the attached protocol but will be based on program cost data (including cost of vouchers, staff and other administration costs), willingness to pay valuations elicited from parents and carers, redemption data, estimates of the impact of the program on participation in swimming lessons and the economic effect for providers. Modelled estimates for downstream health savings may also be included as appropriate based on the results of the impact evaluation.

## 2 Outputs

### 2.1 Total number of voucher redemptions

During the 2021-2022 financial year, 154,859 vouchers were redeemed by parent/carers who had created a voucher. This was 70.0% of the total 221,218 vouchers created for preschool (and kindergarten) children.



### 2.2 Number of eligible providers onboarded

During the 2021-2022 financial year, 488 providers were onboarded. Of these, 470 providers (96.3%) redeemed program vouchers.

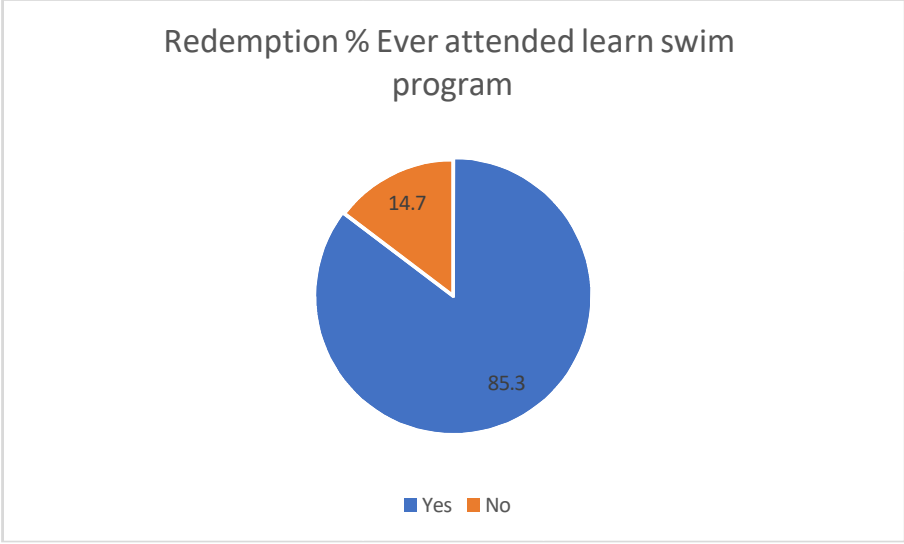
### 2.3 Survey responses from providers

The provider survey will be distributed to all onboarded providers in December 2022.

### 2.4 Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool and kindergarten children who have never attended learn to swim programs.

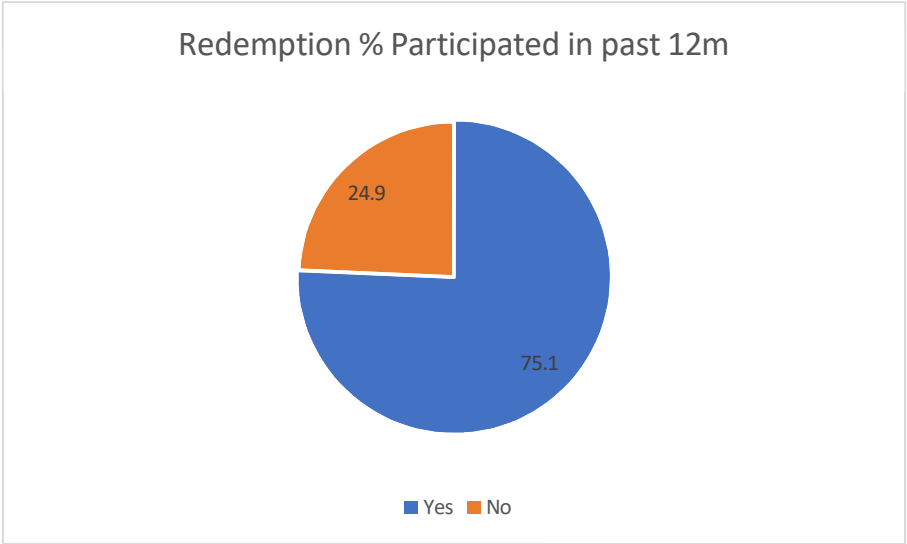
During the 2021-2022 financial year, 52,675 (23.8%) vouchers were created for preschool and kindergarten children who have never attended learn to swim programs. A total of 22,797 vouchers were redeemed for preschool and kindergarten children who have never attended learn to swim program. This was 14.7% of the total vouchers redeemed.

***These findings indicate that greater efforts are required to facilitate voucher redemption among children who have never attended learn to swim programs.***



*2.5 Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool-aged children who have not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months*

During the 2021-2022 financial year, 81,732 (37.4%) vouchers were created for preschool and kindergarten children who have not participated in a learn to swim program within the past 12 months. A total of 37,829 vouchers were redeemed for preschool-aged (and kindergarten) children who have not participated in a learn to swim program *within the past 12 months*. This was 24.9% of the total vouchers redeemed.



In logistic regression modelling, adjusting for all other relevant variables (age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, area level SES), children who had *not participated in the past 12 months* were LESS LIKELY (lower odds; OR=0.17) to have redeemed vouchers, than those who had participated in swimming lessons in the past 12 months.

**These redemption data indicate that as the proportions of children who had not participated in a learn to swim program *within the past 12 months* (24.9%) were much lower than the overall redemption rate of 70.0% of all vouchers created. Most vouchers were redeemed by children who are already participating in swimming lessons.**

**The reasons for this may be multiple and related, including swim school capacity where preference is typically given to children already participating and wider industry staff shortages, and means the First Lap program has partially achieved its program objective 1, based on data from the first financial year of operation. More efforts are needed to reach children who have not participated in a learn to swim program in the past 12 months.**

*1.1 Survey responses to questions relating to parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs.*

Table 3 displays survey completion by sociodemographic variables, among the population of all created vouchers. A slightly higher proportion of parent/carers of older children completed the survey than parent/carers of younger children. A higher proportion of parent/carers of non-Indigenous children (9.7%) completed the survey than parent/carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (7.1%).

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who spoke a language other than English at home (10.5%) completed the survey than parent/carers who spoke English at home (9.4%). A higher proportion of parent/carers living in higher socioeconomic areas completed the survey than parent/carers living in lower socioeconomic areas.

**These differences should be considered when interpreting survey findings as the survey completion representativeness was not reflective of the whole population of parent/carers who created a voucher.**

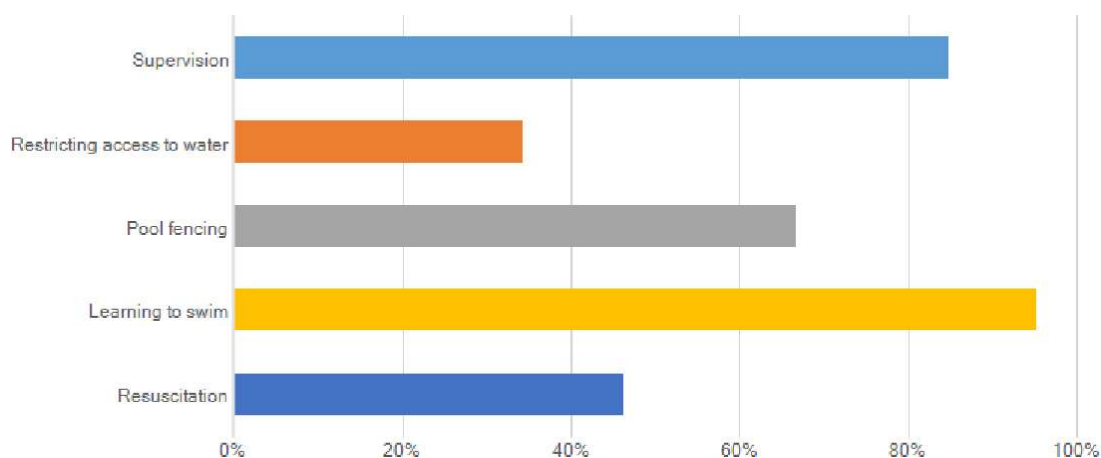
Table 3: Survey completion by sociodemographic variables \*indicates statistically significant difference at  $p \leq 0.05$

Variable	Completed survey N(%)	
	Yes	No
<b>Age*</b>		
3 years	3202 (8.9)	32902 (91.1)
4 years	4567 (8.5)	49158 (91.5)
5 years	5717 (9.9)	52264 (90.1)
6 years	5657 (10.4)	48580 (89.6)
7/8 years	1951 (10.2)	17220 (89.8)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	10674 (9.4)	102514 (90.6)
Female	10380 (9.7)	96953 (90.3)
<b>Disability</b>		
Yes	549 (8.9)	5599 (91.1)
No	20250 (9.6)	191192 (90.4)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*</b>		
Yes	826 (7.1)	10810 (92.9)
No	20083 (9.7)	187314 (90.3)
<b>Language spoken at home*</b>		
English	17890 (9.4)	172758 (90.6)
Other	3204 (10.5)	27366 (89.5)
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile*</b>		
1 (low)	3306 (8.3)	36372 (91.7)
2	5326 (9.4)	51613 (90.6)
3	4662 (9.8)	42862 (90.2)
4 (high)	7799 (10.1)	69211 (89.9)
<b>Location</b>		
Metro	17216 (9.6)	162729 (90.4)
Regional/ Remote	3887 (9.4)	37330 (90.6)

Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about their knowledge and awareness of strategies to help keep children safe around water. All of the answer options are evidence-based strategies. Of 19,944 respondents (who could select multiple responses), 16,976 parent/carers indicated *Supervision* (85.1%), 6881 indicated *Restricting access to water* (34.5%), 13,385 indicated *Pool fencing* (67.1%), 18,981 indicated *Learning to swim* (95.2%) and 9343 indicated *Resuscitation* (46.8%).



Which of the following do you think are strategies to help keep children safe around water?  
(select all that apply)



There were differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 4).

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (88.4%) than 7/8 years old (44.8%); male (85.6%) than female (84.8%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (89.7%) than non-Indigenous (84.9%); speaking English (87.5%) rather than another language at home (70.8%) living in a high socioeconomic (85.6%) than low socioeconomic area (80.2%); and living in a Regional/Remote (89.6%) than Metropolitan (84.1%) area selected *Supervision*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (38.0%) than 7/8 years old (31.9%); male (35.2%) than female (33.7%); children with a disability (42.4%) than without (34.3); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (42.4%) than non-Indigenous (34.1%); speaking English (37.1%) rather than another language at home (19.0%); and living in a Regional/Remote (41.8%) than Metropolitan (32.8%) area selected *Restricting access to water*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 7/8 years old (34.4%) than 3 years old (27.4%); children with a disability (42.4%) than without (34.3); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (77.5%) than non-Indigenous (66.6%); speaking English (72.6%) rather than another language at home (34.7%); living in a high socioeconomic (67.6%) than low socioeconomic (61.5%) area; and living in a Regional/Remote (76.4%) than Metropolitan (65.0%) area selected *Pool fencing*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: speaking English (96.4%) rather than another language at home (88.0%); living in a high socioeconomic (95.8%) than low socioeconomic (92.8%) area; and living in a Regional/Remote (96.7%) than Metropolitan (94.8%) area selected *Learning to swim*.

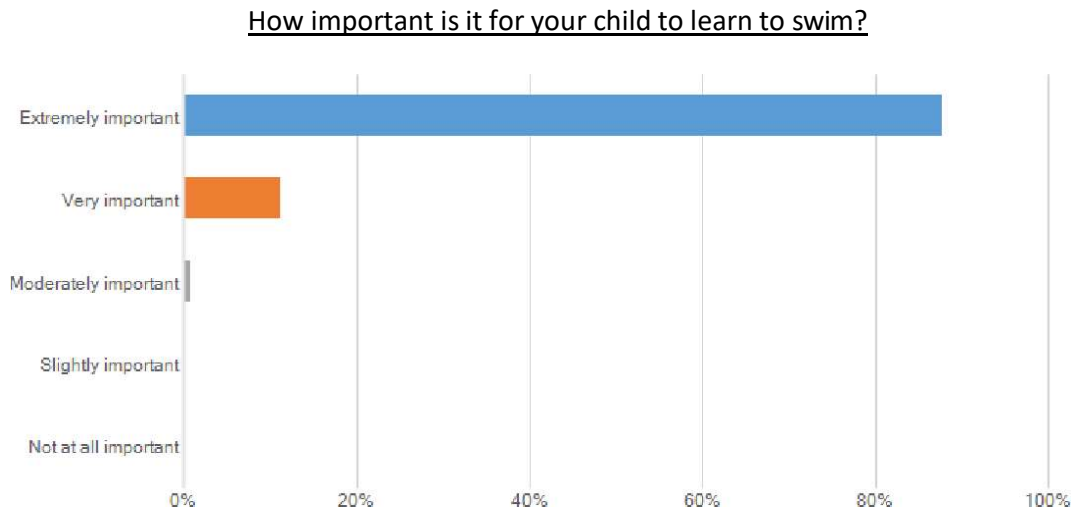
A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (51.4%) than 7/8 years old (44.8%); living with a disability (54.7%) than not (46.7%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (59.7%) than non-Indigenous (46.2%); speaking English (51.9%) rather than another language at home (17.4%); and living in a Regional/Remote (56.2%) than Metropolitan (44.7%) area selected *Resuscitation*.

**The differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups indicate that water safety strategies need to be specifically tailored towards different groups, especially CaLD families.**

Table 4: Knowledge and awareness of strategies to help keep children safe around water \*indicates statistically significant difference at p<0.05

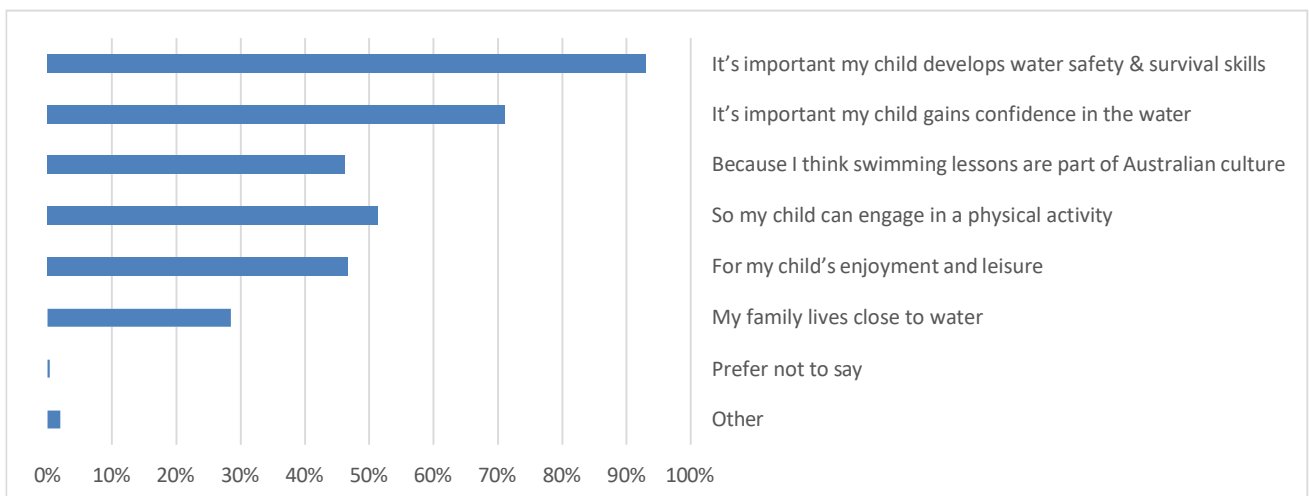
Variable	Supervision N(%)		Restricting water access N(%)		Pool fencing N(%)		Learning to swim N(%)		Resuscitation N(%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Age</b>										
3 years	2689 (88.4)*	354 (11.6)*	1155 (38.0)*	1888 (62.0)*	2208 (72.6)*	835 (27.4)*	2920 (96.0)	123 (4.0)	1563 (51.4)*	1480 (48.6)*
4 years	3778 (87.0)*	567 (13.0)*	1558 (35.9)*	2787 (64.1)*	2990 (68.8)*	1355 (31.2)*	4131 (95.1)	214 (4.9)	2100 (48.3)*	2245 (51.7)*
5 years	4533 (84.5)*	831 (15.5)*	1824 (34.0)*	3540 (66.0)*	3548 (66.1)*	1816 (33.9)*	5095 (95.0)	269 (5.0)	2410 (44.9)*	2954 (55.1)*
6 years	4439 (82.8)*	922 (17.2)*	1760 (32.8)*	3601 (67.2)*	3438 (64.1)*	1923 (35.9)*	5100 (95.1)	261 (4.9)	2449 (45.7)*	2912 (54.3)*
7/8 years	1537 (83.9)*	294 (16.1)*	584 (31.9)*	1247 (68.1)*	1201 (65.6)*	630 (34.4)*	1735 (94.8)	96 (5.2)	821 (44.8)*	1010 (55.2)
<b>Gender</b>										
Male	8627 (85.6)*	1448 (14.4)*	3542 (35.2)*	6533 (64.8)*	6789 (67.4)	3286 (32.6)	9577 (95.1)	498 (4.9)	4756 (47.2)	5319 (52.8)
Female	8315 (84.6)*	1517 (15.4)*	3317 (33.7)*	6515 (66.3)*	6566 (66.8)	3266 (33.2)	9369 (95.3)	463 (4.7)	4564 (46.4)	5268 (53.6)
<b>Disability</b>										
Yes	442 (85.5)	75 (14.5)	219 (42.4)*	298 (57.6)*	368 (71.2)*	149 (28.8)*	495 (95.7)	22 (4.3)	283 (54.7)*	234 (45.3)*
No	16307 (85.2)	2837 (14.8)	6559 (34.3)*	12585 (65.7)*	12837 (67.1)*	6307 (32.9)*	18218 (95.2)	8938 (46.7)*	10206 (53.3)*	2837 (14.8)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</b>										
Yes	705 (89.7)*	81 (10.3)*	333 (42.4)*	453 (57.6)*	609 (77.5)*	177 (22.5)*	754 (95.9)	32 (4.1)	469 (59.7)*	317 (40.3)*
No	16109 (84.9)*	2869 (15.1)*	6469 (34.1)*	12509 (65.9)*	12643 (66.6)*	6335 (33.4)	18055 (95.1)	923 (4.9)	8774 (46.2)*	10204 (53.8)*
<b>Language spoken at home</b>										
English	14920 (87.5)*	2122 (12.5)*	6331 (37.1)*	10711 (62.9)*	12378 (72.6)*	4664 (27.4)*	16427 (96.4)*	615 (3.6)*	8839 (51.9)*	8203 (48.1)*
Other	2056 (70.8)*	846 (29.2)*	550 (19.0)*	2352 (81.0)*	1007 (34.7)*	1895 (65.3)*	2554 (88.0)*	348 (12.0)*	504 (17.4)*	2398 (82.6)*
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile</b>										
1 (lowest)	2424 (80.2)*	598 (19.8)*	1017 (33.7)*	2005 (66.3)*	1859 (61.5)*	1163 (38.5)*	2804 (92.8)*	218 (7.2)*	1354 (44.8)*	1668 (55.2)*
2	4395 (86.8)*	666 (13.2)*	1904 (37.6)*	3157 (62.4)*	3572 (70.6)*	1489 (29.4)*	4835 (95.5)*	226 (4.5)*	2588 (51.1)*	2473 (48.9)*
3	3800 (85.6)*	3800 (85.6)*	1489 (33.6)*	2948 (66.4)*	2998 (67.6)*	1439 (32.4)*	4230 (95.3)*	207 (4.7)*	2078 (46.8)*	2359 (53.2)*
4 (highest)	6356 (85.6)*	1067 (14.4)*	2471 (33.3)*	4952 (66.7)*	4955 (66.8)*	2468 (33.2)*	7111 (95.8)*	312 (4.2)*	3322 (44.8)*	4101 (55.2)*
<b>Location</b>										
Metropolitan	13639 (84.1)*	2582 (15.9)*	5325 (32.8)*	10896 (67.2)*	10540 (65.0)*	5681 (35.0)*	15382 (94.8)*	839 (5.2)*	7249 (44.7)*	8972 (55.3)*
Regional/Remote	3336 (89.6)*	386 (10.4)*	1556 (41.8)*	2166 (58.2)*	2844 (76.4)*	878 (23.6)	3598 (96.7)*	124 (3.3)*	2093 (56.2)*	1629 (43.8)*

Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about how important they think it is for their child to learn to swim. Of 19,910 responses, the vast majority (17,250; 88.0%) indicated *extremely important*, 2192 (11%) indicated *very important* and 167 (0.8%) indicated *moderately important*.



Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about why they applied for a First Lap voucher. Of 20,832 respondents (who could select multiple responses), 19,364 indicated *I think it's important that my child develops water safety and survival skills* (93.0%), 14,780 indicated *I think it's important that my child gains confidence in the water* (70.9%), 9715 indicated *Because I think swimming lessons are part of Australian culture* (46.6%), 5943 indicated *My family lives close to water* (28.5%), 9714 indicated *For my child's enjoyment and leisure* (46.6%), 10,665 indicated *So my child can engage in a physical activity* (51.2%) and 416 indicated *Other* (2.0%). These 'Other' responses will be explored in depth through qualitative content analysis as a student intern project during 2023.

Please identify why you applied for a First Lap voucher (select all that apply)



There were differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 5).

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (95.0%) than 7/8 years old (91.2%); male (93.4%) than female (92.5%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (95.6%) than non-Indigenous (92.8%); speaking English (93.8%) rather than another language at home (88.2%) and living in a Regional/Remote (94.7%) than Metropolitan (92.6%) area selected *It's important my child develops water safety & survival skills*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (76.4%) than 7/8 years old (66.2%); speaking English (72.6%) rather than another language at home (61.7%); living in a high socioeconomic (72.2%) than low socioeconomic area (64.7%); and living in a Regional/Remote (72.7%) than Metropolitan (70.6%) area selected *It's important my child gains confidence in the water*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (49.1%) than 7/8 years old (44.2%); speaking English (47.7%) rather than another language at home (40.3%); living in a high socioeconomic (48.1%) than low socioeconomic (42.7%) area selected *Because I think swimming lessons are part of Australian culture*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (54.8%) than 7/8 years old (47.6%); female (52.0%) than male (50.5%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (59.7%) than non-Indigenous (46.2%); speaking English (52.0%) rather than another language at home (46.3%); living in a high socioeconomic (51.5%) than low socioeconomic (47.4%) area; and living in a Regional/Remote (56.2%) than Metropolitan (44.7%) area selected *So my child can engage in physical activity*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (55.0%) than 7/8 years old (40.7%); female (47.9%) than male (45.4%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (59.7%) than non-Indigenous (46.2%); speaking English (48.3%) rather than another language at home (36.9%); living in a high socioeconomic (47.4%) than low socioeconomic (42.1%) area; and living in a Regional/Remote (56.2%) than Metropolitan (44.7%) area selected *For my child's enjoyment and leisure*.

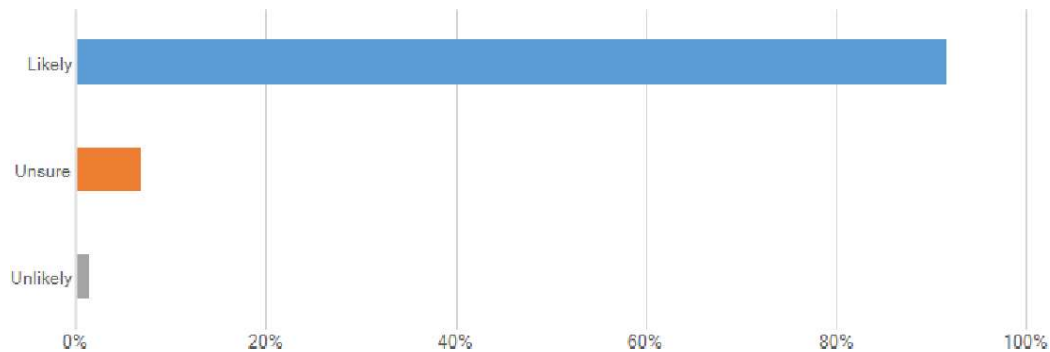
A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (31.8%) than 7/8 years old (28.4%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (38.6%) than non-Indigenous (28.0%); speaking English (32.1%) rather than another language at home (8.3%); living in a high socioeconomic (27.5%) than low socioeconomic (22.4%) area; and living in a Regional/Remote (39.0%) than Metropolitan (26.2%) area selected *My family lives close to water*.

**These differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups indicate that water safety strategies need to be specifically tailored towards different groups, especially CaLD families and families living in low socioeconomic areas.**



Parent/carers were asked a multiple-choice question about how likely they are to continue with swimming lessons after using the voucher. The vast majority indicated they were *likely* to continue (15,764; 91.9%) and 1140 were *unsure* (6.6%) and 242 were *unlikely* (1.4%).

How likely are you to continue with swimming lessons after using the First Lap voucher?



Of the 1382 parent/carers indicated they were *unsure* or *unlikely* to continue with swimming lessons after using the voucher, 95.3% and 94.9% had redeemed a voucher, respectively. In comparison, 97.6% of parents/carers who indicated they were *likely* to continue had redeemed a voucher and these high proportions reflect the bias of the survey respondents towards high redemption levels, relative to the 70% of *all* children who had redeemed a voucher.

There were differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 6).

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (91.6%) than 7/8 years old (88.9%); living without a disability (91.9%) than with a disability (87.8%); non-Indigenous (92.0%) than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (87.1%); living in a high socioeconomic (93.7%) than low socioeconomic (88.7%) area and living in a Metropolitan (92.4%) than Regional/Remote (88.7%) area indicated they were *unlikely to continue with swimming lessons after using the voucher*.

**These differences in these findings by these priority population groups indicate that children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living in low socioeconomic areas and in regional and remote areas may experience barriers to continuing with swimming lessons. However, the numbers in these groups who are unsure or unlikely are a very small proportion of the overall program participants.**

**While parents of older children were less likely to continue with swimming lessons after using the First Lap voucher, this may be due to their child having reached higher or sufficient swimming proficiency.**

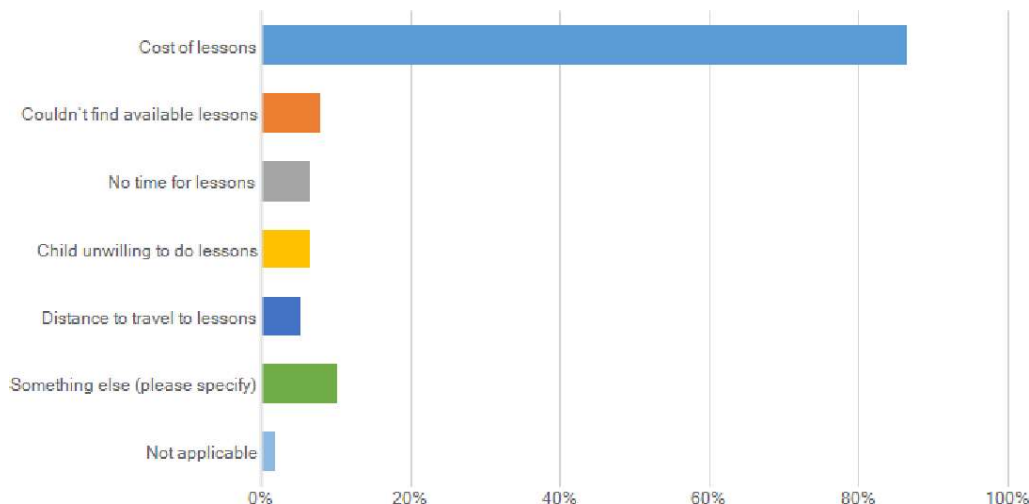
Table 6: Likelihood to continue with swimming lessons after using First Lap voucher \*indicates statistically significant difference at  $p \leq 0.05$

Variable	Likelihood to continue with swimming lessons N(%)		
	Likely	Unsure	Unlikely
<b>Age*</b>			
3 years	2430 (91.5)	185 (7.0)	42 (1.6)
4 years	3580 (92.3)	250 (6.4)	50 (1.3)
5 years	4445 (92.6)	308 (6.4)	47 (1.0)
6 years	4311 (91.5)	319 (6.8)	79 (1.7)
7/8 years	1374 (88.9)	134 (8.7)	37 (2.4)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	8146 (91.9)	586 (6.6)	129 (1.5)
Female	7972 (91.6)	605 (7.0)	122 (1.4)
<b>Disability*</b>			
Yes	373 (87.8)	39 (9.2)	13 (3.1)
No	15574 (91.9)	1131 (6.7)	236 (1.4)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*</b>			
Yes	549 (87.1)	60 (9.5)	21 (3.3)
No	15459 (92.0)	1113 (6.6)	229 (1.4)
<b>Language spoken at home</b>			
English	13901 (91.6)	1044 (6.9)	229 (1.5)
Other	2239 (92.6)	152 (6.3)	26 (1.1)
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile*</b>			
1 (low)	2185 (88.7)	227 (9.2)	50 (2.0)
2	3988 (90.0)	349 (7.9)	93 (2.1)
3	3691 (92.3)	257 (6.4)	51 (1.3)
4 (high)	6275 (93.7)	363 (5.4)	61 (0.9)
<b>Location*</b>			
Metro	13308 (92.4)	900 (6.3)	190 (1.3)
Regional/ Remote	2831 (88.7)	296 (9.3)	65 (2.0)



These parents/carers indicated different reasons for their response (parent/carers could select more than one reason). A total of 1082 said *Cost of lessons* (86.6%), 99 said *Couldn't find available lessons* (7.9%), 82 said *No time for lessons* (6.6%), 83 said *Child unwilling to do lessons* (6.6%), 67 said *Distance to travel to lessons* (5.4%). As well, 128 said *Something else* (10.2%) that will be examined in future qualitative content analysis by a student intern during 2023.

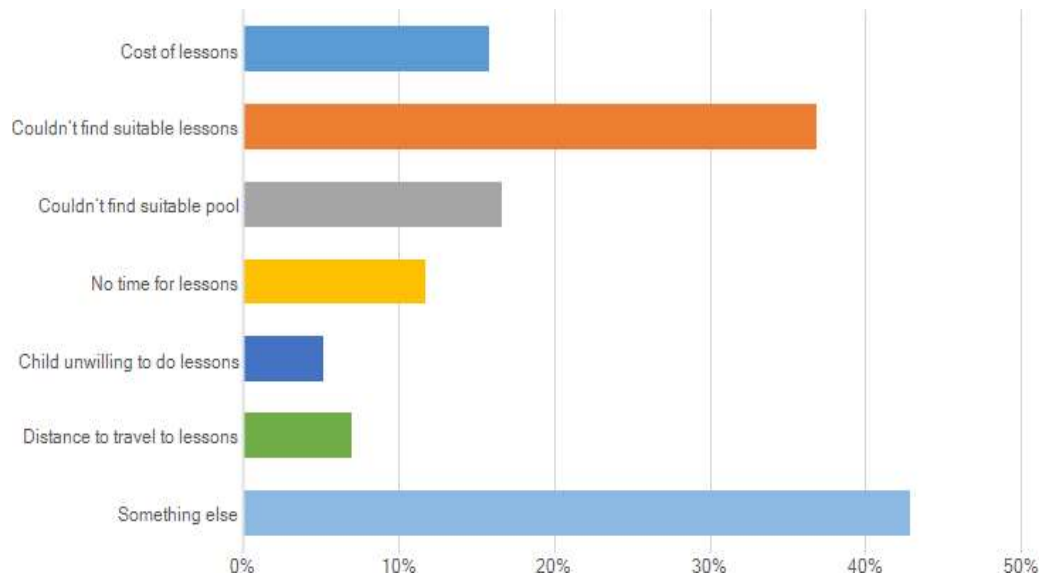
If unsure or unlikely why? Select all that apply



Parent/carers who had created a voucher but indicated that they had **not redeemed the** voucher were asked about the reasons why. Of the 2,707 respondents (who could select more than one response), 478 said *Cost of lessons* (17.7%), 928 said *Couldn't find suitable lessons* (34.3%), 431 said *Couldn't find suitable pool* (15.9%), 300 said *No time for lessons* (11.1%), 149 said *Child unwilling to do lessons* (5.5%) and 256 said *Distance to travel to lessons* 9.5%. As well, 1043 said *Something else* (39.6%) and these responses will be examined through qualitative content analysis by a student intern during 2023.

***These findings give an indication of barriers to redemption and where future efforts should be concentrated to facilitate voucher redemption, particularly for lesson availability, as well as the overall cost of lessons even with a voucher.***

What were your reasons for not redeeming the voucher (select all that apply)



There were differences in some of these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 7) but numbers were very small for some groups, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent/carers so results should be interpreted with caution.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (24.1%) than non-Indigenous (17.3%); living in a low socioeconomic (23.1%) than high socioeconomic area (15.3%); and living in a Regional/Remote (89.6%) than Metropolitan (84.1%) area selected *Cost of lessons*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are living in a Regional/Remote (38.0%) than Metropolitan (33.3%) area selected *Couldn't find suitable lessons*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: non-Indigenous (11.4%) than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (6.2%); and living in a Metropolitan (12.2%) than Regional/Remote (7.1%) area selected *No time for lessons*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: non-Indigenous (5.8%) than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (1.2%); speaking a language other than English (8.1%) than English at home (4.8%); living in a high socioeconomic (67.6%) than low socioeconomic (61.5%) area; and living in a Metropolitan (6.0%) than Regional/Remote (3.6%) area selected *Child unwilling to do lessons*.

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are living in a Regional/Remote (15.8%) than Metropolitan (7.7%) area selected *Distance to travel to lessons*.



*1.2 Number of vouchers redeemed by preschool aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability*

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 476,101 children aged 3-7 years living in NSW, comparable to the First Lap program eligible population although this also included 85 eight year olds.

Vouchers were created for 221,218 children in the First Lap program during the 2021-2022 financial year, approximately 46.5% of all eligible children.

Vouchers were redeemed for 154,859 children, 70.0% of all vouchers created and approximately 32.5% of all eligible children.

In NSW, there are approximately 178,499 children who are NOT CaLD, Aboriginal, living in a regional or remote area or living with a disability, 81.7% of all children aged 3-7 years living in NSW.

There were 131,685 vouchers created for children who are NOT CaLD, Aboriginal, living in a regional or remote area or living with a disability during the 2021-2022 financial year; approximately 73.8% of eligible children who are NOT CaLD, Aboriginal, living in a regional or remote area or living with a disability and 59.5% of all vouchers created.

Vouchers were redeemed for 98,082 children, who are NOT CaLD, Aboriginal, living in a regional or remote area or living with a disability during the 2021-2022 financial year, 74.5% of vouchers created for this group of children, 54.9% of eligible children in this group and 63.3% of total redeemed vouchers.

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 140,901 CaLD (speaking a language other than English at home) children aged 3-7 years living in NSW, 29.6% of the total children aged 3-7 years.

There were 30,554 vouchers created for CaLD children; approximately 21.7% of all eligible CaLD children but only 13.8% of all vouchers created.

There were 18,426 vouchers redeemed for CaLD children, 60.3% of all vouchers created for CaLD children, 13.1% of eligible CaLD children and 11.9% of total redeemed vouchers.

- ***The proportion of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed in the first 6 months of operation of the First Lap program were lower for the eligible population of CaLD children (15.8% and 17.7% lower, respectively) than for all children .***
- ***The proportion of vouchers created for CaLD children was also 25% lower than for all children (21.7% versus 46.5%).***
- ***The proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for CaLD children was also 10% lower (60.3%) than for all children (70.0%).***
- ***These findings indicate that greater efforts are needed to raise awareness of the program, encourage voucher creation and facilitate opportunities for redemption among CaLD families and communities.***

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 26,476 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 3-7 years living in NSW, 5.6% of the total children aged 3-7 years.

There were 11,632 vouchers created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, approximately 43.9% of all eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 5.3% of all vouchers created.

There were 6428 vouchers redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, 55.2% of all vouchers created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, 24.3% of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 4.2% of total redeemed vouchers.

- ***The proportion of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the first 6 months is comparable to the NSW population proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.***
- ***The proportion of vouchers created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was only 3% lower than for all children (46.5% versus 43.9%).***
- ***However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was 15% lower (55.2%) than for all children (70%), indicating a need to improve opportunities for redemption.***

The latest available population geographical area data (at November 2022) are from the 2016 Australian Census. These data indicate that, of the 477,525 children aged 3-7 years in NSW there were 114,973 (24.1%) and 2,584 (0.5%) living in regional and remote areas, respectively.

There were 40,900 vouchers created for children living in regional areas and 306 vouchers created for children living in remote areas, approximately 35.6% and 11.8% of all eligible children in regional and remote areas, respectively, and 18.5% and 0.1% of all vouchers created, respectively.

There were 28,209 vouchers redeemed for children living in regional areas, 69.0% of all vouchers created for children in regional areas, 24.5% of eligible children living in regional NSW and 18.2% of total redeemed vouchers. There were 145 vouchers redeemed for children living in regional and remote areas, 47.4% of all vouchers created for children in remote areas, 5.6% of eligible children living in remote NSW and 0.1% of total redeemed vouchers.

- ***These findings indicate that while the geographical location of eligible children may have changed from 2016 to 2021, the proportion of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed in the first 6 months for the eligible population were lower for regional children (5.6% and 5.9% lower, respectively). Proportions for the very small number of remote children among all the created and redeemed vouchers were population comparable (both 0.1%).***
- ***However, the proportion of vouchers created for children in regional areas and the proportion of vouchers created for children in remote areas were 10.9% and 34.7% lower, respectfully, than for all children (46.5% versus 35.6%; 46.5% versus 11.8%, respectively.***
- ***But the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for children living in regional areas was similar (69.0%) to all children (70.0%) while the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for children living in remote areas was lower (47.4%) than for all children (70%).***

- ***This indicates that greater efforts are needed to raise awareness of the program, encourage voucher creation, and improve opportunities for redemption among regional and remote families.***

Data from the 2021 Australian Census indicate that there are 12,668 children aged 3-7 years with a disability living in NSW, 2.7% of the total children aged 3-7 years.

There were 6,141 vouchers created for children who have a disability, approximately 48.5% of all eligible children living with a disability and 2.8% of all vouchers created.

There were 3,569 vouchers redeemed for children with disability, 58.1% of all vouchers created for children with a disability, 28.2% of eligible children with a disability and 2.3% of total redeemed vouchers.

- ***These findings indicate that the proportion of the total number of vouchers created and redeemed for children with a disability in the first 6 months is comparable to the NSW population proportion of children with a disability.***
- ***A slightly higher proportion of vouchers created for children with a disability (48.5%) than for all children (46.5%).***
- ***However, the proportion of created vouchers that were redeemed for children with a disability was lower (58.1%) than for all children (70.0%).***
- ***This indicates that greater efforts are needed to improve opportunities for redemption for children with a disability.***

## **2 Short- Term (1 year) Outcomes**

### *2.1 Preschool aged children participate in learn to swim programs subsidised by the program vouchers*

Data from section 2.1 indicate that 154,859 preschool aged and kindergarten children participated in learn to swim programs through redemption of program vouchers during the 2021-2022 financial year.

### *2.2 Learn to swim providers register to become a Program provider*

Data from section 2.2. indicate that 578 learn to swim providers registered to become a Program provider during the 2021-2022 financial year. Of these providers with valid postcode data (499; 85.0%), 302 (51.4%) of providers were located in metropolitan areas, 194 (33.0%) were located in regional areas and 3 (0.5%) were located in remote areas.

### *2.3 Preschool aged children participate in learn to swim programs for the first time (new participation)*

Data from section 2.4 indicated that 22,812 preschool aged (and kindergarten) children who were participating in learn to swim programs for the first time during the 2021-2022 financial year through redemption of a program voucher.

### *2.4 Preschool aged children who had previously participated in learn to swim programs, but not within the past 12 months, recommence learn to swim programs*

A total of 14,888 preschool aged children who had previously participated in learn to swim programs, but not within the past 12 months, recommenced learn to swim programs during the 2021-22 financial year through redemption of a program voucher. However, this was only 9.6% of the total redeemed vouchers.

### *2.5 Establish baseline of parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs.*

Data from section 2.6 indicate baseline of parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs from the parent/carer. As the survey was completed during August 2022, this is not a true baseline from the start of the program or the point of vouchers creation but will provide an initial data timepoint for comparison with future vouchers creation, redemption and survey data.

*2.6 Preschool aged children from CaLD, Aboriginal and regional populations, and children with disability, participate in learn to swim classes*

Data from section 2.7 indicate the number and proportion of preschool aged children from CaLD backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability and children living in regional and remote areas, participated in learn to swim classes during the 2021-22 financial year through redemption of a program voucher.

However, in logistic regression modelling, adjusting for all *other* relevant variables (including age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, area level SES and previous participation in the past 12 months):

- Children with *no disability* were 1.4 times MORE LIKELY to redeem a voucher than children with a disability
- *Non-Indigenous* children 1.5 times MORE LIKELY to redeem a voucher than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Children who spoke English at home 1.3 times MORE LIKELY to redeem a voucher than children who spoke a language other than English at home
- Families living in regional areas were slightly (1.03 times) MORE LIKELY to redeem vouchers, but families living in remote families were LESS LIKELY to redeem vouchers, than urban families

***These findings indicate, through analysis that adjusts for other sociodemographic contributing factors, that strategies are necessary to overcome the disparity in redemption seen in the priority population groups of children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and CaLD children. However, voucher program reach among regional children are comparable to metropolitan children.***



### 3 Other findings

#### 3.1 Area-level SES: Redemption

The evaluators have also analysed postcode data to give results for area level SES using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure, from the 2016 Census (as SEIFA data are not yet available for the 2021 Census, at November 2022).

- Vouchers were redeemed for 22,224 children in the lowest SES quartile (1), 56.0% of vouchers created in this quartile
- Vouchers were redeemed for 39,510 children in the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest SES quartile (2), 69.4% of vouchers created in this quartile
- Vouchers were redeemed for 34,507 children in the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest SES quartile (3), 72.6% of vouchers created in this quartile
- Vouchers were redeemed for 58,556 children in the highest SES quartile (4), 76.1% of vouchers created in this quartile

In logistic regression modelling, adjusting for all other relevant variables (age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, participation in the past 12 months):

- Compared to children living in the highest socioeconomic area quartile (4), children living in quartiles 1-3 were LESS LIKELY to redeem
- Children living in the lowest SES quartile 1 were the LEAST LIKELY (lowest odds ratio) to redeem

***These findings indicate, through analysis that adjusts for other sociodemographic contributing factors, that strategies are necessary to overcome the disparity in redemption seen for children living in disadvantaged areas.***

#### 3.2 Age and gender: redemption

The evaluators have also analysed data to give results for child age and gender.

- Vouchers were redeemed for 25,268 3 year olds, 70.0% of vouchers created for this age
- Vouchers were redeemed for 37,852 4 year olds, 70.5% of vouchers created for this age
- Vouchers were redeemed for 40,749 5 year olds, 70.3% of vouchers created for this age
- Vouchers were redeemed for 37,932 6 year olds, 69.9% of vouchers created for this age
- Vouchers were redeemed for 13,058 7/8 year olds, 69.1% of vouchers created for this age
  
- Vouchers were redeemed for 75,739 females, 70.6% of vouchers created for this age
- Vouchers were redeemed for 78,659 males, 69.5% of vouchers created for this age.

In logistic regression modelling, adjusting for all other relevant variables (age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, geography, participation in the past 12 months):

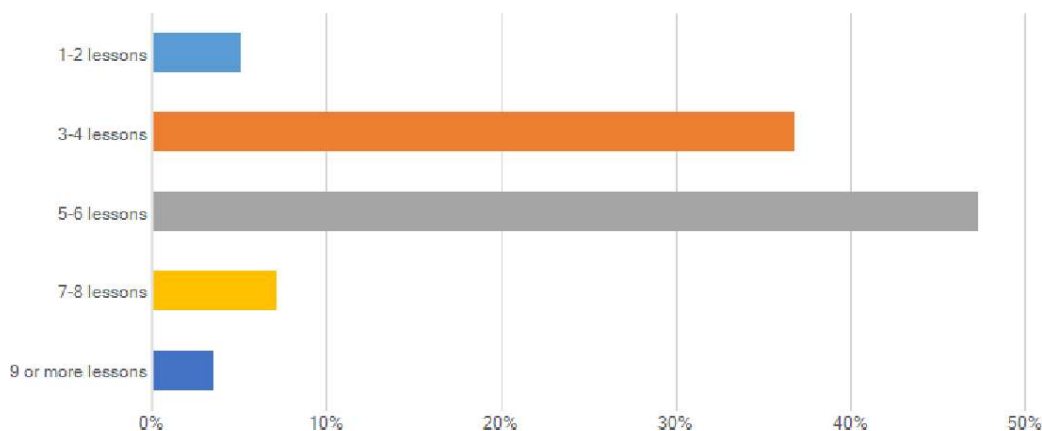
- Compared to children aged 7-8 years, children aged 3, 4 and 5 years were 1.1-1.4 times MORE LIKELY to redeem
- No gender differences

### 3.3 Economic evaluation survey data

Data from the survey also provides the foundations for the future cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit economic analyses. These data also give an indication of the contribution of the voucher to swimming lesson registration and participation.

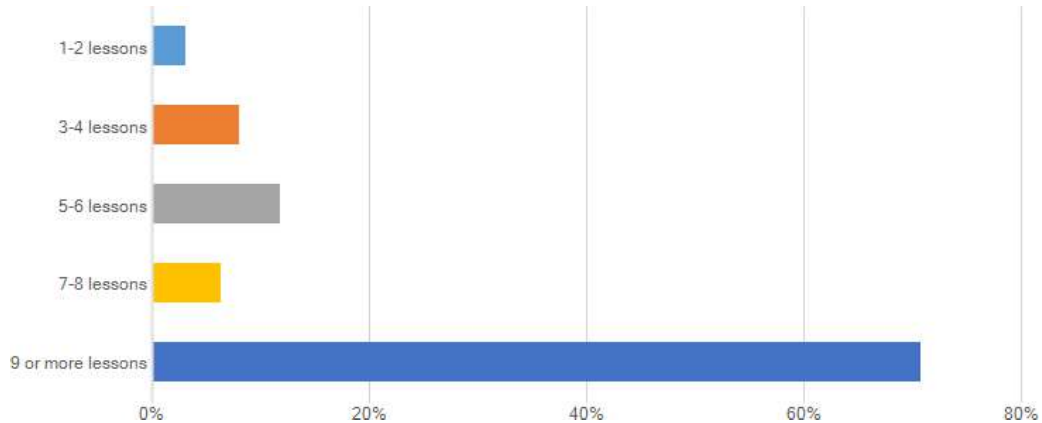
Parent/carers were asked how many swimming lessons the First Lap voucher covered the cost of (e.g. child does one term of lessons at \$200 for 10 lessons, \$100 First Lap voucher covered 5 of these 10 lessons, or child does five private lessons at \$50 per lesson, \$100 First Lap voucher covered 2 of these 5 lessons). A total of 956 responded *1-2 lessons* (5.4%), 6,568 responded *3-4 lessons* (36.8%), 8,390 responded *5-6 lessons* 47.1%, 1,267 responded *7-8 lessons* (7.1%) 644 responded *9 or more lessons* (3.5%).

#### How many swimming lessons did the First Lap voucher cover the cost of?



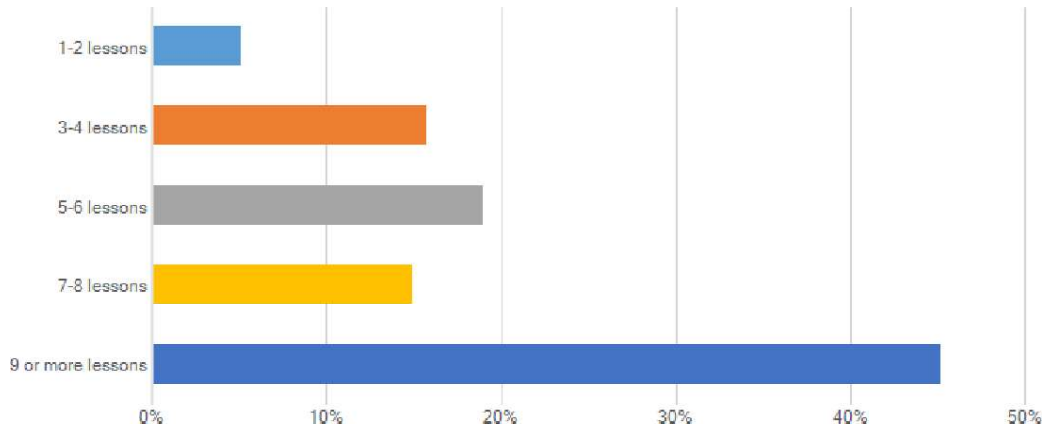
The survey then asked how many swimming lessons the child signed up for in the time period (e.g. school term) in which you redeemed the First Lap voucher (e.g. child does one term of lessons at \$200 for 10 lessons, \$100 First Lap voucher covered 5 of these 10 lessons). A total of 566 parent/carers responded *1-2 lessons* (3.2%), 1,396 responded *3-4 lessons* 7.9%, 2,087 responded *5-6 lessons* (11.8%), 1,085 responded *7-8 lessons* (6.1%) and 12,585 responded *9 or more lessons* (71.0%).

How many swimming lessons did your child sign up for in the time period (e.g. school term) in which you redeemed the First Lap voucher?



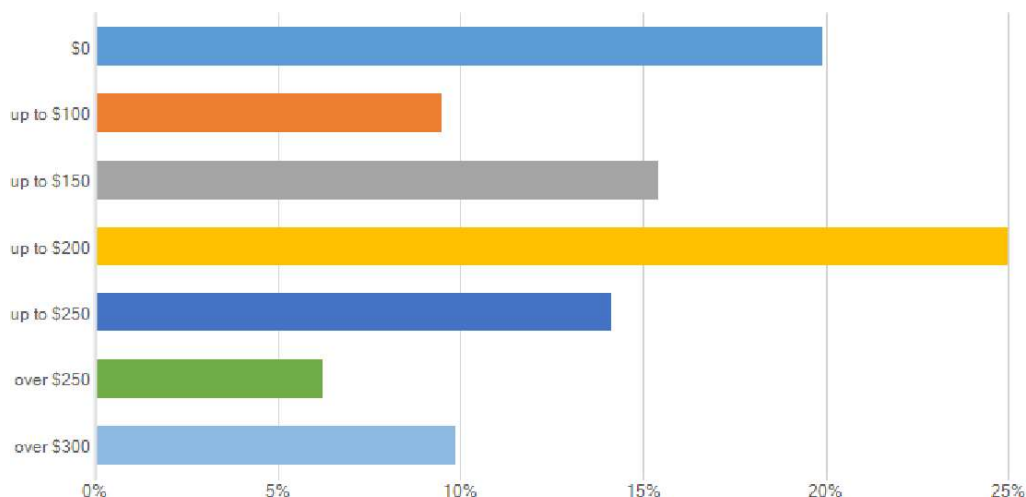
The survey also asked parent/carers how many lessons in this time period (e.g. school term) in which you redeemed the First Lap voucher did the child attend. A total of 886 parent/carers responses 1-2 lessons (5.0%), 2,711 responded 3-4 lessons (15.4%), 3,322 responded 5-6 lessons (18.9%), 2,569 responded 7-8 lessons (14.6%), 8,124 responded 9 or more lessons (46.1%).

How many lessons in this time period (e.g. school term) in which you redeemed the First Lap voucher did your child attend?



Parent/carers were also asked about their previous swimming lesson expenditure during the July 2020 – June 2021 financial year. A total of 3,764 responded \$0 (18.8%), 1,886 responded up to \$100 (9.4%), 3,121 responded up to \$150 (15.6%), 5,125 responded up to \$200 (25.6%), 2,893 responded up to \$250 (14.4%), 1,242 responded over \$250 (6.2%) and 1,997 responded over \$300 (10.0%).

Thinking back to the July 2020 – June 2021 financial year, how much did you pay for one term or holiday intensive period of swimming lessons?



There were differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 8).

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 3 years old (22.6%) than 7/8 years old (17.4%) indicated they had paid \$0 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. Conversely a higher proportion of parent/carers of children who are: 7/8 years old (11.5%) than 3 years old (5.9%) indicated they had paid over \$300 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. Expenditure in the categories between \$0 and over \$300 were similar across age groups.

**These findings may be due to the youngest children not previously being enrolled in swimming lessons.**

A higher proportion of parent/carers of children with a disability (23.5%) than without (18.6%) indicated they had paid \$0 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. However, a higher proportion of parent/carers of children with a disability (23.5%) than without (18.6%) also indicated they had paid over \$300 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year.

**These findings suggest that families of children with a disability have experienced financial and/or other barriers to enrolling in swimming lessons previously, which the First Lap voucher may help ameliorate. However, other families have paid more for their children to take part in swimming lessons which the First Lap voucher can also assist in the cost of.**

A higher proportion of parent/carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (24.6%) than non-Indigenous children (18.5%) indicated they had paid \$0 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. Conversely, a higher proportion of parent/carers of non-Indigenous children (10.1%) than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (7.8%) indicated they had paid over \$300 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year.

**These findings suggest that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have experienced financial and/or other barriers to enrolling in swimming lessons previously, which the First Lap voucher may help ameliorate.**

Similarly, a higher proportion of parent/carers who speak a language other than English at home (24.6%) than speak English at home (17.5%) indicated they had paid \$0 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. Conversely, a higher proportion of parent/carers speak English at home (12.4%) than who speak a language other than English at home (9.5%) indicated they had paid over \$300 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. **These findings suggest that families who speak a language other than English at home have experienced financial and/or other barriers to enrolling in swimming lessons previously, which the First Lap voucher may help ameliorate.**

A higher proportion of parent/carers living in a low socioeconomic (24.5%) than a high socioeconomic area (16.6%) indicated they had paid \$0 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. Conversely, a higher proportion of parent/carers living in a high socioeconomic (11.9%) than low socioeconomic (9.5%) area indicated they had paid over \$300 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. **These findings suggest that families living in low socioeconomic areas have experienced financial and/or other barriers to enrolling in swimming lessons previously, which the First Lap voucher may help ameliorate.**

The same proportion (18.8%) of families living in a Regional/Remote and Metropolitan areas (%) indicated they had paid \$0 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. However, a higher proportion of families living in Metropolitan (10.9%) than Regional/Remote areas (6.0%) indicated they had paid over \$300 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year, with a similar pattern for up to \$250 and over \$250. **These findings suggest that swimming lessons in metropolitan areas are more costly than in regional/remote areas.**

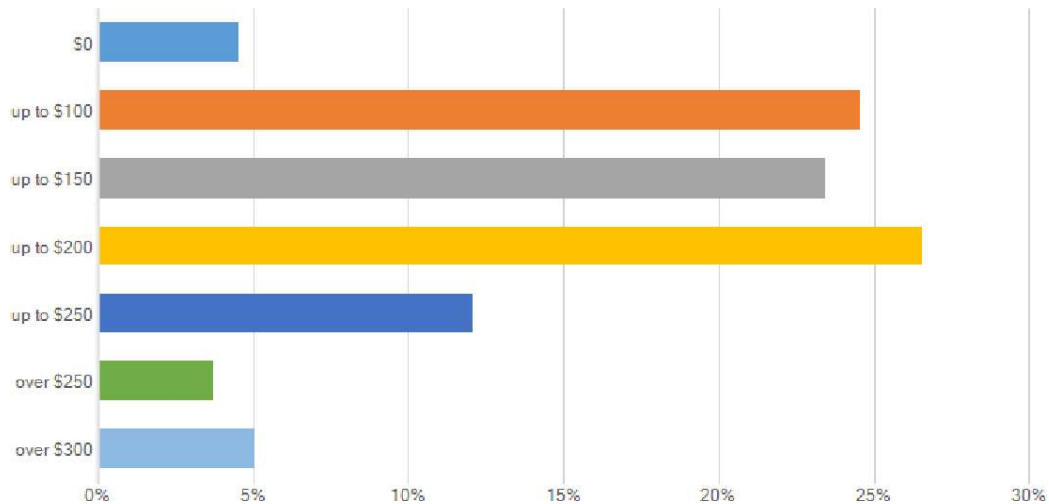
**Overall, these differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups indicate that while the voucher is for \$100, different groups had different previous swimming lesson expenditure levels that may have influenced the financial impact of the voucher on their cost of living.**

Table 8: Previous financial year swimming lessons expenditure\*indicates statistically significant difference at p≤0.05

Variable	\$0	Up to \$100	Up to \$150	Up to \$200	Up to \$250	Over \$250	Over \$300
<b>Age*</b>							
3 years	692 (22.6)	282 (9.2)	435 (14.2)	703 (18.8)	703 (18.8)	179 (5.9)	179 (5.9)
4 years	869 (19.9)	409 (9.4)	678 (15.6)	1127 (25.9)	631 (14.5)	253 (5.8)	389 (8.9)
5 years	945 (17.5)	527 (9.8)	904 (16.8)	1338 (24.8)	792 (14.7)	335 (6.2)	551 (10.2)
6 years	938 (17.4)	487 (9.0)	827 (15.4)	1433 (26.6)	757 (14.1)	360 (6.7)	585 (10.9)
7/8 years	320 (17.4)	181 (9.9)	277 (15.1)	463 (25.2)	268 (14.6)	115 (6.3)	211 (11.5)
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	1933 (19.1)	968 (9.6)	1545 (15.3)	2594 (25.6)	1424 (14.1)	647 (6.4)	1009 (10.0)
Female	1824 (18.5)	915 (9.3)	1572 (15.9)	2522 (25.5)	1465 (14.8)	592 (6.0)	981 (9.9)
<b>Disability*</b>							
Yes	122 (23.5)	40 (7.7)	76 (14.6)	109 (21.0)	58 (11.2)	40 (7.7)	75 (14.4)
No	3572 (18.6)	1816 (9.4)	3002 (15.6)	4960 (25.8)	2807 (14.6)	1177 (6.1)	1889 (9.8)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*</b>							
Yes	194 (24.6)	87 (11.0)	135 (17.1)	184 (23.3)	89 (11.3)	39 (4.9)	62 (7.8)
No	3534 (18.5)	1781 (9.3)	2958 (15.5)	4888 (25.6)	2786 (14.6)	1195 (6.3)	1916 (10.1)
<b>Language spoken at home*</b>							
English	2993 (17.5)	1518 (8.9)	2771 (16.2)	4548 (26.6)	2566 (15.0)	1074 (6.3)	1633 (9.5)
Other	771 (26.4)	368 (12.6)	350 (12.0)	577 (19.7)	327 (11.2)	168 (5.7)	364 (12.4)
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile*</b>							
1 (lowest)	745 (24.5)	383 (12.6)	496 (16.3)	686 (22.6)	300 (9.9)	139 (4.6)	290 (9.5)
2	989 (19.5)	501 (9.9)	1099 (21.6)	1363 (26.8)	520 (10.2)	205 (4.0)	401 (7.9)
3	401 (7.9)	415 (9.3)	637 (14.3)	1218 (27.3)	688 (15.4)	288 (6.5)	419 (9.4)
4 (highest)	1235 (16.6)	586 (7.9)	889 (11.9)	1858 (24.9)	1385 (18.6)	610 (8.2)	887 (11.9)
<b>Location*</b>							
Metropolitan	3061 (18.8)	1495 (9.2)	2153 (13.2)	4137 (25.4)	2563 (15.7)	1114 (6.8)	1773 (10.9)
Regional/ Remote	703 (18.8)	1773 (10.9)	968 (25.9)	988 (26.5)	330 (8.8)	128 (3.4)	224 (6.0)

Parent/carers were also asked about willingness to pay for future swimming lessons if they didn't have a \$100 voucher. A total of 891 parent/carers said \$0 (4.4%), 4,891 said *up to \$100* (24.3%), 4,718 said *up to \$150* (23.4%), 5,418 said *up to \$200* (26.9%), 2,449 said *up to \$250* (12.1%), 773 said *over \$250* (3.8%) and over 1,019 said \$300 (5.1%).

How much would you be willing to pay for one term or holiday intensive period of swimming lessons if you didn't have a \$100 voucher?



There were differences in these findings by sociodemographic and priority population groups (Table 9).

There was a higher proportion of parents/carers of children with a disability than without in the willingness to pay categories of \$0, Up to \$100 and Over \$250 and Over \$300 but a lower proportion of parents/carers of children with a disability than without in the willingness to pay categories of Up to \$150, Up to \$200 and Up to \$250.

There was a higher proportion of parents/carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander than non-Indigenous children in the willingness to pay categories of \$0, Up to \$100 but a lower proportion of parents/carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander than non-Indigenous children in the willingness to pay categories of Up to \$150, Up to \$200 and Up to \$250, Over \$250 and Over \$300.

There was a higher proportion of parents/carers who speak a language other than English at home than speak English at home in the willingness to pay categories of \$0, Up to \$100 and Over \$250 and Over \$300 but a lower proportion of parents/carers who speak a language other than English at home than speak English at home in the willingness to pay categories of Up to \$150, Up to \$200 and Up to \$250.

Similarly, a higher proportion of parent/carers who speak a language other than English at home (24.6%) than speak English at home (17.5%) indicated they had paid \$0 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year. Conversely, a higher proportion of parent/carers speak English at home (12.4%) than who speak a language other than English at home (9.5%) indicated they had paid over \$300 for a period of swimming lessons in the past financial year.

There was a higher proportion of parents/carers living in a low socioeconomic than a high socioeconomic area in the willingness to pay categories of \$0, Up to \$100 and Up to \$150 but a lower proportion of parents/carers living in a low socioeconomic than a high socioeconomic area in the willingness to pay categories of Up to \$200, Up to \$250, Over \$250 and Over \$300.

There was a higher proportion of parents/carers living in a Metropolitan area than a Regional/Remote in the willingness to pay categories of \$0, up to \$200, up to \$250, over \$250 and over \$300 but a lower proportion of parents/carers living in a Metropolitan area than a Regional/Remote in the willingness to pay category of up to \$100.

**These data indicate that the future cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit economic analyses will likely differ by sociodemographic and priority population groups.**



Table 9: Willingness to pay without \$100 voucher \*indicates statistically significant difference at p≤0.05

Variable	\$0	Up to \$100	Up to \$150	Up to \$200	Up to \$250	Over \$250	Over \$300
<b>Age</b>							
3 years	133 (4.3)	747 (24.3)	678 (22.0)	868 (28.2)	381 (12.4)	113 (3.7)	160 (5.2)
4 years	199 (4.5)	1023 (23.4)	1035 (23.6)	1209 (27.6)	547 (12.5)	173 (3.9)	195 (4.5)
5 years	232 (4.3)	1335 (24.6)	1287 (23.7)	1420 (26.1)	690 (12.7)	202 (3.7)	268 (4.9)
6 years	236 (4.4)	1297 (24.0)	1301 (24.0)	1442 (26.6)	630 (11.6)	219 (4.0)	290 (5.4)
7/8 years	91 (4.9)	489 (26.4)	417 (22.6)	479 (25.9)	201 (10.9)	66 (3.6)	66 (3.6)
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	437 (4.3)	2536 (24.9)	2355 (23.1)	2677 (26.3)	1255 (12.3)	397 (3.9)	529 (5.2)
Female	449 (4.5)	2347 (23.6)	2353 (23.7)	2353 (23.7)	1191 (12.0)	376 (3.8)	489 (4.9)
<b>Disability*</b>							
Yes	39 (7.5)	142 (27.2)	107 (20.5)	108 (20.7)	58 (11.1)	27 (5.2)	42 (8.0)
No	825 (4.3)	4657 (24.1)	4548 (23.5)	5261 (27.2)	2363 (12.2)	732 (3.8)	964 (5.0)
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*</b>							
Yes	51 (6.4)	265 (33.4)	179 (22.6)	180 (22.7)	63 (7.9)	19 (2.4)	36 (4.5)
No	829 (4.3)	4569 (23.8)	4490 (23.4)	5194 (27.1)	2380 (12.4)	749 (3.9)	975 (5.1)
<b>Language spoken at home*</b>							
English	695 (4.0)	4089 (23.8)	4135 (24.0)	4715 (27.4)	2139 (12.4)	643 (3.7)	795 (4.6)
Other	196 (6.6)	802 (27.2)	583 (19.8)	703 (23.8)	310 (10.5)	130 (4.4)	224 (7.6)
<b>Area level socioeconomic quartile*</b>							
1 (lowest)	209 (6.8)	926 (30.2)	715 (23.3)	718 (23.4)	250 (8.2)	88 (2.9)	157 (5.1)
2	231 (4.5)	1409 (27.6)	1436 (28.1)	1289 (25.2)	397 (7.8)	141 (2.8)	205 (4.0)
3	199 (4.4)	1058 (23.5)	1054 (23.5)	1206 (26.8)	594 (13.2)	149 (3.3)	233 (5.2)
4 (highest)	252 (3.4)	1497 (20.0)	1513 (20.2)	2205 (29.4)	1208 (16.1)	395 (5.3)	424 (5.7)
<b>Location*</b>							
Metropolitan	744 (4.5)	3857 (23.5)	3516 (21.4)	4500 (27.4)	2197 (13.4)	682 (4.2)	908 (5.5)
Regional/ Remote	147 (3.9)	1033 (27.5)	1202 (32.0)	918 (24.5)	252 (6.7)	91 (2.4)	111 (3.0)

## **4 Interim Conclusions**

During the first six months of operation during the 2021 – 2022 financial year, vouchers were created for 221,218 children of preschool children (age 3-6 years) as well as children in kindergarten. Of the created vouchers, 154,859 (70%) were redeemed for swimming lessons.

Vouchers were redeemed by children who had not participated in swimming lessons previously (14.7%) or had not participated during the past 12 months (24.9%). However, most (61.4%) vouchers were redeemed for children who were already participating in lessons. There were no redemption differences by gender and redemption was slightly lower (69%) for children age 7-8 year than for younger children (70%).

Vouchers were redeemed for children from CaLD backgrounds (who speak a language other than English at home), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with a disability but these redemption rates were lower than for the overall redemption rates (17.7%, 1.2% and 0.4% lower, respectively). Further, a higher proportion of vouchers were redeemed by families living in high socioeconomic areas than families living in low socioeconomic areas. However, redemption proportions for children living in regional and remote areas (18%) were comparable to redemption rates for children living in urban areas when taking account of the population distribution and may have been positively influenced by the high overall proportion of registered providers in regional areas (33%).

Overall, these findings indicate that while some priority population groups were reached by the First Lap program, namely children living in regional and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with a disability, the majority of participants were children who were already engaged in swimming lessons and spoke English at home, in the first six months of operation.

The parent/carer survey results, while completed by just under 18% of registered parent/carers who consented to be invited to take part, give a high number of responses from over 20,000 parent/carers. Survey responders were more likely to be parent/carers of older children, non-Indigenous, speak a language other than English at home and live in a higher socioeconomic area. Survey findings indicate initial knowledge and awareness of water safety, including motivations for participation or discontinuation of learn to swim programs. The parent/carer survey responses also provide important foundational data on the contribution of the voucher to overall parent/carer expenditure on swimming lessons and future intentions to pay for swimming lessons that are important for the economic evaluation.

## **Acknowledgements**

The evaluation team would like to acknowledge the assistance and support from Office of Sport staff and the cross-government steering committee.

## Appendix 2. First Lap evaluation activities, data sources and data collection timeframes

Evaluation component and type	Activity	Data source	Data collection timeframes
<b>Phase 1 (January – July 2022)</b>			
1.1 Impact/outcome  Quantitative	Retrospective collection of baseline participation data and historical data if possible (pre-1 December 2021 program commencement) enrolment data from key public, private and not-for profit providers across metropolitan and rural locations	Registered provider data	April - July 2022  <b>COMPLETE</b>
1.2 Impact/outcome Economic  Quantitative	Assessment of voucher registration & redemption, baseline sociodemographic, previous swim lesson participation and reasons for non-participation, reasons for applying, enrolment with voucher data	Office of Sport voucher creation and redemption data	July 2022  <b>COMPLETE</b>
1.3 Impact/outcome, Economic  Quantitative Qualitative	Online Survey 1 of parents and carers knowledge and attitudes of learn to swim programs and water safety, voucher use	Parent/carer survey	July 2022  <b>COMPLETE</b>
1.4 Impact/outcome Economic  Quantitative	End of financial year 2021-22 redemption data  Data collected and analysed and added to economic modelling	Office of Sport voucher creation and redemption data	July 2022  <b>COMPLETE</b>
<b>Phase 2 (August 2022 – July 2023)</b>			
2.1 Impact/outcome, Economic  Quantitative	Online Survey of registered providers (metro and regional & remote)	Registered provider survey	November 2022  <b>COMPLETE</b>
2.2 Impact/outcome, Economic  Quantitative Qualitative	Online Survey 2 of parents and carers knowledge and attitudes of learn to swim programs and water safety, voucher use	Parent/carer survey	May 2023  <b>COMPLETE</b>
2.3 Impact/outcome  Qualitative	Interviews/focus groups with 30-50 parents and carers (who have and haven't used the vouchers across both metropolitan and regional and remote locations)	Parent/carer focus groups	April - May 2023  Not undertaken due to recruitment and timing issues

2.4 Impact/outcome  Qualitative	One-on-one interviews with select learn to swim providers (metro and regional & remote)	Registered provider interviews	April - May 2023  <b>COMPLETE</b>
2.5 Impact/outcome, Economic  Quantitative	End of financial year 2022-23 voucher creation and redemption data, registered provider data  Data collected and analysed. Data added to economic modelling	Office of Sport voucher creation and redemption data  Registered provider data	July 2023  <b>COMPLETE</b>
2.6 Economic	Cost effectiveness economic modelling finalised	All impact/outcome data and economic data	August 2023  <b>COMPLETE</b>

### Appendix 3 First Lap Data fields

Data field	Description
Created date	The date voucher was created
Unique Identifier	The unique identifier generated by the hashing of the Medicare. Assuming they will remain the same if the registrant returns back to create the voucher. We should be able to track them longitudinally.
Age (years or months)	Age at the time of voucher creation. Calculated based on the date of birth and created date
Gender	Male/female/ prefer not to say
Disability	We do not ask for description or explanation on the type of disability. A very generic question. With options Yes/No/ Prefer not to say
Indigenous status	Aboriginal/TSI/both/None/ Prefer not to say Opt out options available for all sensitive demographic questions
Primary language spoken at home	Similar to Active Kids we decided not to go by place of birth but just language spoken at home. With an option of free text. English  Arabic  Cantonese  Greek  Italian  Mandarin  Vietnamese  Other- {Other free text will start with Other}
Residential postcode	Postcode of the registrant ( assuming it's the same postcode the child is residing)
LGA	Based on Residential address. Determined by the NSW point
Electorate	Same as above
Previous participation	Has ever participated in a learn to swim program? (Yes/No/ Prefer not to say)
Participation in 12 months	Participated in LTS program in last 12 months? Yes/No/ Prefer not to say
Non participation reasons	Why haven't they participated in last 12 months? The cost of swimming lessons is too expensive   I thought my child was too young to participate in swimming lessons

Data field	Description
	<p>I did not think swimming lessons were important for preschool-aged children  There were no learn to swim schools near where I live </p> <p>Covid-19 </p> <p>Other- {Other free text will start with Other}</p>
Apply_reasons	<p>Why are you applying for an LTS voucher I think it's important that my child develops water safety and survival skills </p> <p>I think it's important that my child gains confidence in the water </p> <p>Beucase I think swimming lessons are part of Australian Culture </p> <p>My family lives close to the water </p> <p>For my child's enjoyment and leisure </p> <p>So my child can engage in physical activitiy </p> <p>other </p> <p>Prefer not to say</p>
Enrolment with voucher	<p>Would you have enrolled in Swimming lessons this year if you didn't have a \$100 voucher</p> <p>Yes </p> <p>No </p> <p>Not sure </p>
Consent email	<p>Email address to be populated for those who have consented. Others would be blank</p>

### Provider table

Data field	Description
Provider name	The name of the provider when the voucher was redeemed
Total number of redeemed	Total number of redeemed vouchers (rolled up number)

### Redemption table

Data field	Description
Redeemed date	Date the redemption process of the voucher was completed
Unique identifier	Provided to link it back to the registration data, to identify by demographics who redeemed the vouchers

### Provider location table

Data field	Description
Provider name	The name of the provider who have registered for the First Lap voucher program
Activity location _Post code	Location of the activity by postcode. A provider can add multiple locations to their application.
Activity location _LGA	Location of the activity by LGA (determined by NSW point)

## Appendix 4: Parent/carer Survey 2

### First Lap Voucher Program Evaluation 2022-2023

This survey is part of an independent evaluation of the First Lap voucher program undertaken by the University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney).

The evaluation aims to provide an understanding of how the program has impacted participation rates of preschool aged children in learn to swim programs and parent/carer water safety knowledge and awareness.

You have been invited because you have registered your child for a First Lap voucher during the July 2022 - June 2023 financial year and have indicated that you consent to be invited to take part in research.

The survey will ask about your experiences of using the First Lap voucher during the July 2022 - June 2023 financial year and will take about 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will help inform the future of the First Lap voucher program.

Please click [here](#) to read the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form.

By submitting the survey you are consenting to participate in the evaluation.

### These questions ask about your use of the First Lap voucher in the July 2022 - June 2023 financial year

What is the current age of your **eldest** child registered for the First Lap voucher in the July 2022 - June 2023 financial year?

- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years

What is the gender of your **eldest** child registered for the First Lap voucher in the July 2022 - June 2023 financial year?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Some other term :Please specify\_\_\_\_\_



Please identify why you applied for a First Lap voucher (select all that apply)

- I think it's important that my child develops water safety and survival skills
- I think it's important that my child gains confidence in the water
- Because I think swimming lessons are part of Australian culture
- My family lives close to water
- For my child's enjoyment and leisure
- So my child can engage in a physical activity
- Prefer not to say
- Other :Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Have you redeemed the First Lap voucher during the July 2022 - June 2023 financial year?

- Yes
- No

Did you redeem the First Lap voucher for the registering child for

- Swimming lessons for the first time?
- To continue swimming lessons (ongoing enrolment)?
- To re-start swimming lessons after a break e.g. due to Covid-19 (re-enrolment)?
- Other :Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

How many swimming lessons did the First Lap voucher **cover the cost of?**

E.g. child does one term of lessons at \$200 for 10 lessons (\$100 First Lap voucher covered 5 of these 10 lessons) OR child does five private lessons at \$50 per lesson (\$100 First Lap voucher covered 2 of these 5 lessons)

- 1-2 lessons
- 3-4 lessons
- 5-6 lessons
- 7-8 lessons
- 9 or more lessons

How many swimming lessons did your child **sign up for** in the time period (e.g. school term) in which you redeemed the First Lap voucher?

E.g. child does one term of lessons at \$200 for 10 lessons (\$100 First Lap voucher covered 5 of these 10 lessons)

- 1-2 lessons
- 3-4 lessons
- 5-6 lessons
- 7-8 lessons
- 9 or more lessons

How many lessons in this time period (e.g. school term) in which you redeemed the First Lap voucher did your child **attend**?

- 1-2 lessons
- 3-4 lessons
- 5-6 lessons
- 7-8 lessons
- 9 or more lessons

How likely are you to continue with swimming lessons after using the First Lap voucher?

- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely

If unsure or unlikely why? Select all that apply

- Cost of lessons
- Couldn't find available lessons
- No time for lessons
- Child unwilling to do lessons
- Distance to travel to lessons
- Something else (please specify) :Please specify\_\_\_\_\_
- Not applicable

What were your reasons for not redeeming the voucher (select all that apply)

- Cost of lessons
- Couldn't find suitable lessons
- Couldn't find suitable pool
- No time for lessons
- Child unwilling to do lessons
- Distance to travel to lessons
- Something else :Please specify\_\_\_\_\_

How much would you be willing to pay for one term or holiday intensive period of swimming lessons if you **didn't have** a \$100 voucher?

- \$0
- up to \$100
- up to \$150
- up to \$200
- up to \$250
- over \$250
- over \$300

Thinking back to the **July 2021 – June 2022** financial year, how much did you pay for one term or holiday intensive period of swimming lessons (excluding the \$100 First Lap voucher)?

- \$0
- up to \$100
- up to \$150
- up to \$200
- up to \$250
- over \$250
- over \$300

**These questions ask about your knowledge, awareness, motivation for learn to swim programs and water safety**

Which of the following do you think are strategies to help keep children safe around water? (select all that apply)

- Supervision
- Restricting access to water
- Pool fencing
- Learning to swim
- Resuscitation

How important is it for your child to learn to swim?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience with the First Lap voucher program?

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## Appendix 5: Provider Survey

### First Lap provider 2022 survey

This survey forms part of an evaluation of the First Lap voucher program, administered by the NSW Office of Sport. The evaluation aims to assess the impact of the program on participation rates of preschool aged children in learn to swim programs and parent/carer water safety knowledge and awareness. You have been invited because you are a registered First Lap provider. Please pass this email survey invitation to the appropriate person in your organisation to complete.

The survey will ask about your experience in using the First Lap program and will help inform the future of the First Lap voucher program. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If your swim school is subsidiary of a larger group of swim schools, please answer on behalf of your local swim school only.

Please click [here](#) to read the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form.

By submitting the survey you are consenting to participate in the evaluation.

What is your role at the organisation (select all that apply)

Facility manager  
General manager  
Business owner/operator  
Swim school manager  
Administration/finance  
Swim teacher  
Other :Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately what proportion (%) of children aged 3-6 years enrolled in learn to swim lessons at your swim school have redeemed a voucher since the First Lap program began in December 2021?

Less than 10%  
10-24%  
25-49%  
More than 50%

Has the First Lap voucher scheme increased enrolment in learn to swim lessons for children 3-6 years at your swim school?

Yes  
No  
Unsure

Has the First Lap voucher program resulted in any of the following changes in learn to swim lesson operation at your venue?

a) More classes taking place

Yes :Approximately how many more? \_\_\_\_\_  
No

b) More pool space being used

Yes  
No

Approximately what proportion (%) more?

(Score 0 - 100)

\_\_\_\_\_

c) Increased child enrolment

Yes :Approximately how many new enrolments \_\_\_\_\_  
No

d) Increased number of teachers employed

Yes :How many new teachers \_\_\_\_\_  
No

e) Increased hours for existing staff (swim teachers)

Yes :Approximately how many hours per week \_\_\_\_\_  
No

f) Increased hours for existing staff (non-swim teachers)

Yes :Approximately how many hours per week \_\_\_\_\_  
No

g) Increased swim school income

Yes :Approximately by how much % increase \_\_\_\_\_

No

Has the First Lap voucher program resulted in any *other* changes in learn to swim lesson operation at your venue?

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## Appendix 6

### **Parent/carer experiences and challenges of redeeming the NSW First Lap swimming lesson voucher in 2021-2022**

Natalie Windle<sup>a</sup>, Amy Peden<sup>ab</sup>, Blake Angell<sup>c</sup>, Rona Macniven<sup>a</sup>

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Natalie Windle

Natalie's experience spans research, communications, public affairs and policy. She volunteers in patient support and advocacy for a rare and chronic autoimmune disease. She also worked in a NSW MP's office during COVID-19 in 2020-21, responding to community concerns and requests for assistance and drafting e-newsletters regarding public health announcements and communications. The combination of these experiences inspired her to continue her learning through postgraduate study and she completed a Master of Public Health/Master of Health Leadership and Management at the University of New South Wales in 2023. Natalie is a political/social science student by background and holds a Bachelor of Arts (International Relations) with First Class Honours. Her interest and studies in international politics, history, and languages led her to work in Brussels with a leading political information and communications company focused on European Union public affairs.

Dr Rona Macniven

Dr Macniven's expertise is in physical activity, sport, falls prevention, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and public health research. She is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Population Health at UNSW Sydney and commenced a Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship in July 2021. Her research examines physical health and social and emotional wellbeing and the impact of physical activity and sport across the lifespan, particularly among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Her vision is to generate, in partnership with



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and stakeholders, high quality evidence from a series of observational and intervention studies of how physical activity can improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians across the life-course. She leads epidemiological and community evaluation research studies in collaboration with multiple academic institutions and community groups, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. She has undertaken government consultancy work and secondment placements within large Australian NGOs to translate research into practice.

Dr Amy Peden

As an injury prevention researcher and advocate, Dr Peden specialises in adolescent injury and specifically drowning prevention - epidemiology, risk factor identification and evaluation of drowning prevention interventions. She is an NHMRC Emerging Leadership Research Fellow with the School of Population Health and convene PHCM9792 - Injury Epidemiology, Prevention and Control. She has a specific interest on regional communities, alcohol, and social determinants of health. She regularly appears in the media and holds adjunct appointments with Royal Life Saving Society - Australia, James Cook University, the George Institute for Global Health and the Health and Psychology Innovations (HaPI) lab at Griffith University. Dr Peden is a co-founder of the UNSW Beach Safety Research Group and am interested in supervising Masters, PhD and ILP students on injury prevention and drowning prevention topics.

Dr Blake Angell

Dr Blake Angell is a Research Fellow (Health Economics) in the Health Systems Science group and a Conjoint Lecturer at UNSW, Sydney. His research focuses on health system issues facing low and middle-income nations pursuing universal health coverage and the better use of evidence in health policy. Blake completed his PhD with TGI in 2017 examining the role and potential of health economic techniques in Indigenous health policy in Australia and internationally and he has expertise using a number of methodologies including discrete choice experiments, economic evaluations, contingent valuation studies and systematic reviews. He has a background in public policy having previously worked as a Senior Economist at the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation and, prior to that, NSW Treasury.

## **Parent/carer experiences and challenges of redeeming the NSW First Lap swimming lesson voucher in 2021-2022**

The First Lap program is a New South Wales (NSW) government swimming lesson subsidy voucher program for preschool-aged children. This study aimed to examine parent/carer views and experiences of the program, specifically reasons for voucher non-redemption in 2021-2022. A thematic analysis examined 1,031 parent/carer qualitative responses concerning reasons for voucher non-redemption and corresponding open-ended responses on overall views and experiences of the program in an online parent/carer survey. Four main reasons for non-redemption were: i) external circumstances; ii) program parameters; iii) parent/carer (user) side; and iv) swim school (provider) side. However, additional parent/carer views included a) positive feedback about the program; b) evidence of parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of water safety and learning to swim; and c) parent/carer concerns about lesson cost and affordability. Clear engagement and communication with both the user and provider sides may overcome barriers to redemption that exist within a complex socio-ecological context.

Keywords: swimming; drowning; education; preschool.

### **Introduction**

Swimming skills play a vital role in drowning prevention (Rahman et al. 2021; AWSC 2021) and learning to swim is one component of a strategy to reduce drowning that is promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO 2014). Age is one of the main risk factors for drowning globally and drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury death in children aged 1-3 years in Australia (WHO 2021). Preventing drowning in children aged 0-4 years and promoting swimming and water safety skills feature in two of the five priority areas of the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 (AWSC 2021). There is progress in reducing drowning deaths in children aged 0-4 years (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2022) and this demonstrates the importance of continual investment in various approaches to drowning prevention (Peden, Franklin, and

Clemens 2021). However, this population group, which includes preschool-aged children, remains a priority in Australia as high rates of drowning deaths continue compared to other age groups (AWSC 2021).

Australia uses national benchmarks to measure key swimming and water safety skill milestones and there is concern regarding a decline in these skills for children in Australia (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2019). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic may have disrupted children’s development in swimming and water safety skills (AWSC 2021; Royal Life Saving Society - Australia 2022) and some children have missed two years’ worth of swimming education (PwC Australia 2022). The impact of the pandemic on families and the swimming education industry is one of the main reasons the NSW First Lap learn to swim voucher program was created. The program aims to increase participation of preschool-aged children (who did not participate in the previous 12 months) in learn to swim programs and to build parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of (this age group) learning to swim (Macniven et al. 2022). Program challenges for a health promotion include reaching the target population as well as ensuring equitable reach to priority populations, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living with a disability and children who live in regional or remote areas (Macniven et al. 2022; Foley et al. 2020). This is in addition to the challenges represented by using physical activity vouchers such as overall activity cost, ongoing participation outside the voucher program, and reducing inequities in physical activity levels (Reece et al. 2020; Virgona et al. 2022; Foley et al. 2021). An analysis of barriers of parent/carers who created a voucher and whose preschool-aged child had not participated in in learn to swim programs the previous 12 months identified seven overarching reasons (Ananthapavan

et al. 2023). These were: (1) child's disability or health needs; (2) swimming lesson affordability; (3) family or personal circumstances; (4) lack of or poor availability of swimming lessons; (5) parent/carer availability, including to fulfil participation requirements; (6) COVID-19 and (7) low prioritisation of formal swimming lessons due to parent/carer perceptions of its importance (Ananthapavan et al. 2023).

The NSW Government's First Lap voucher program provides two \$100 vouchers for parents/carers of preschool-aged children to contribute to swimming lesson costs (Macniven et al. 2022). The process for voucher redemption involves logging in to the government ServiceNSW app, selecting the First Lap voucher, and present(ing) the voucher QR code for the participating swim school business to scan at payment (or parents/carers without a mobile device) can provide the printed voucher or voucher code instead" (NSW Government 2023).

This qualitative study aims to examine reasons for First Lap voucher non-redemption, parent/carer views and experiences of the First Lap program, and potential actions to help remove barriers to both redeeming the voucher and swimming lesson participation. Exploring barriers to voucher use links to two of the three objectives of the program evaluation: ascertaining whether participation of preschool-aged children in learn to swim programs increased and whether parent/carer knowledge and awareness of water safety improved (Macniven et al. 2022). Qualitative research seeks to understand the perspectives or experiences of people (O'Brien et al. 2014). Analysing reasons for voucher non-redemption with additional qualitative responses about overall program experience provides insight into the reasons for preschool-aged children missing out on learn to swim education. This study will inform decision-making about the continuation of the First Lap program and changes to improve the program delivery and experience (Macniven et al. 2022).

## **Methods**

This study follows the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) (O'Brien et al. 2014).

### ***Study Design***

The study design encompasses qualitative thematic analysis. The value of conducting qualitative research is that it explores the meaning (the 'why') and people's experiences (Ritchie 2001). Thematic analysis allows for flexibility when analysing qualitative data and can provide a comprehensive description of data while also capturing its complexities and nuances (Braun and Clarke 2006).

### ***Data Collection***

Data collection occurred through the parent/carer online survey for the financial year (FY) 2021-22. This survey was conducted in July 2022 and focused on voucher use in FY 2021-22 as well as parent/carer knowledge and awareness of learn to swim programs and water safety. In total 221,218 First Lap vouchers were created (registered) during FY2021-22, and, of the 121,609 (55.0%) parents/carers who consented to being contacted for the evaluation, there were 21,292 (9.6%) responses to the survey. There was a two-pronged approach to address non-redemption information, focused on qualitative responses to two questions of the July 2022 parent/carer online survey: 'What were your reasons for not redeeming the voucher', specifically those who provided an open-ended response to "Something else", and 'Is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience with the First Lap voucher program?'.

### ***Participants***

Participants of this study include parents or carers of preschool-aged children in NSW who registered for the voucher program through Service NSW and then consented to

participate in the evaluation and responded to the invitation to complete the survey (Macniven et al. 2022). There were 2,707 responses to the question asking why the voucher was not redeemed and parents/carers could choose more than one option. Six of these options included cost of lessons, unable to find suitable lessons, unable to find a suitable pool, no time for lessons, child unwilling to do lessons, and distance to travel to lessons. Of the 1,031 parents/carers who provided an open-ended response under the seventh option “something else”, 938 responses were analysed for this study. 93 responses were excluded for three main reasons: the voucher had been redeemed (9), it was an unclear or incomplete response (7), or the response only mentioned “COVID” with no further clarification or elaboration or “COVID lockdown / restrictions” which were already easing throughout the voucher timeframe (77). In addition, 550 of the 938 analysed responses provided an open-ended response to the final question asking if there is anything else they would like to say about their experience with the program. The study participants are outlined in Figure 1.

### ***Data Analysis***

Analysis commenced with a review and systematic organisation of the qualitative data (Ritchie 2001) using Microsoft Excel. Detailed coding of the responses was then used to develop common themes and was based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. The first step focused on data familiarisation, followed by generating initial codes. The qualitative responses to the question about reasons for non-redemption were analysed and then connected with responses to the final question about parent/carer wider views and experiences. The first author familiarised themselves with the 1,031 responses and, alongside the last author, independently generated codes for a sample of 100 responses. These codes were compared and aligned with some minor

changes to the language or terms used. The first author then coded the remaining 931 responses as well as the 550 responses to the final survey question.

The coding steps remained flexible and iterative throughout the next three phases focused on theme development: searching for themes, reviewing themes, and then defining and naming themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Unclear responses were discussed and addressed by the two authors together and codes were adjusted to ensure consistency of language and terms used. Codes were categorised into candidate themes and a thematic map was created to visually represent the themes and sub-themes and how they related to each other. The secondary phase of analysis adds to these findings. The final survey question responses were thematically coded under the same themes and the analysis demonstrated three additional codes as well as three additional points that did not relate to the study aim. Braun and Clarke's (2006) sixth and final phase of thematic analysis involved producing a report to present the findings and analysis. The results were presented with verbatim quotes from the survey responses to illustrate the themes and sub-themes, and are represented by age of child, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) quartile, and remoteness classification.

### ***Ethics***

The First Lap evaluation and this study obtained ethics approval from the University of New South Wales Human Research Ethics Advisory Panel (ID: HC220282). All participants provided informed consent to take part in research during the registration process by ticking a box to opt into participation in follow-up surveys. A recruitment email invitation to the survey included a summary of the project, a link to the survey and a participant information statement and consent form at the start of the survey where implied consent was sought through submitting a survey.

## **Results**

Four overarching themes were identified: external circumstances, program parameters, parent/carer ‘user’ side; and swim school ‘provider’ side. Each of these themes included sub-themes (Figure 2; Table 1) to capture the specifics of the parent/carer experience and perspective. Table 1 summarise the codes identified within the themes and the number of times they were mentioned in responses, noting that they are inter-related, and some respondents mentioned more than one reason for non-redemption. The secondary phase of analysis identified three broader related points beyond the specific redemption challenge themes: a) positive feedback about the program and its objectives, b) evidence of parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of water safety and learning to swim, and c) parent/carer concerns about the cost and affordability of lessons.

### ***External Circumstances***

External circumstances were commonly mentioned as reasons for non-redemption, either in isolation or with other reasons, raised 254 times (27.1%). The most referenced reason was seasonal including the timeframe being winter or it being too cold for swimming lessons ( $n=89$  or 9.5%). Weather was also identified separate to seasonal reasons ( $n=29$  or 3.1%), primarily wet weather ( $n=10$ , 1.1%) and floods ( $n=9$ , 1.0%). Together parents or carers who referenced seasonal and weather barriers accounted for 118 responses (12.6%).

*“Winter and didn’t want to sign them up. Will be signing them up after winter.”*

*(Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)*

*“Winter, I didn't want my child in the water at this time of year.”* *(Parent/carer*

*of child aged 3 ½ years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*



Other external circumstances identified as reasons for not redeeming the voucher included illness, injury, or health issues ( $n=69$  or 7.4%). Of these responses, 36 (3.8%) were not specified and 15 (1.6%) mentioned viruses including COVID-19, cold, flu, or respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). A further sub-theme was COVID-19 concerns where respondents expressed a concern or fear of the risk of COVID-19 ( $n=67$  or 7.1%). Together, illness, injury, or health issues and COVID-19 concerns were raised 136 times (14.5%). Seasonal or weather-related reasons were sometimes combined with illness and viruses including COVID-19 ( $n=30$ , 3.2%).

*“Concern of covid and the surge of winter viruses in public swimming pool[s].”*  
(Parent/carer of child aged almost 4 years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged),  
Metropolitan NSW)

*“Didn’t know about voucher until late in program. Continual wet weather and COVID disrupted availability of lessons in my local outdoor pool.”* (Parent/carer of child aged 6 ½ years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)

### ***Program Parameters***

More than one-quarter of the responses ( $n=262$ , 27.9%) mentioned a program parameter as a reason for not redeeming the voucher. Two sub-themes were evident under this theme: voucher expiry and age criteria. Firstly, the expiry and timeframe to use or redeem the voucher was cited 209 times, or in 22.3% of responses. These responses included voucher expired ( $n=86$ , 9.2%), parent or carer forgot ( $n=51$ , 5.4%), a late attempt to redeem, where the voucher could not be used or accepted very close to or on the expiry date ( $n=21$ , 2.2%), a hope or belief to use the voucher later or in spring/summer after FY2021-22 ended ( $n=37$ , 3.9%), a lack of awareness or misunderstanding about voucher expiry ( $n=7$ , 0.7%), and being late in applying for the voucher, leaving limited time for redemption ( $n=7$ , 0.7%). The descriptions of voucher

expiry included “ran out (of time)”, “didn’t get a chance to use (the voucher)”, “not able to/did not use in time”, the voucher expired “too quickly” or “too soon”, there was limited or “not enough time” to use the voucher or “not long to use (the voucher)”, and the voucher was “not early enough” to enrol in a lesson near home or was applied for “too late” to organise lessons.

Secondly, age criteria eligibility was mentioned 53 times (5.7%). The most common reference was to the child being “too old” ( $n=29$ , 3.1%), while the child being “too young” was mentioned less frequently ( $n=5$ , 0.5%). Another reason was that the child reached the eligible age close to the voucher expiry date ( $n=12$ , 1.3%). Some parents/carers demonstrated a misunderstanding about the age criteria ( $n=6$ , 0.6%). It was unclear if there was confusion or misunderstanding of the age criteria or why age was perceived as a reason for non-redemption.

*“Didn’t think he was eligible at 6yrs of age.” (Parent/carer of child aged 7 years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)*

*“My child turned 3 not long before the expiry so it was useless.” (Parent/carer of child aged 3 years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)*

### ***Parent/carer (user) side***

Reasons relating to the parent/carer or user side of the program were mentioned 159 times, or in 17% of the responses. One sub-theme was parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the voucher or redemption process ( $n=43$ , 4.6%), including a lack of knowledge or awareness of the voucher ( $n=26$ , 2.8%) and delayed awareness of the voucher ( $n=11$ , 1.2%).

*“Didn’t know about voucher until late in program.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 ½ years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)*

*“Only found out about voucher during winter and would rather start swimming lessons in the warmer months.” (Parent/carer of child aged 5 years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

The second sub-theme was parent/carer experiencing technical issues or difficulties with the process ( $n=39$ , 4.2%). This included difficulty in using or redeeming the voucher ( $n=8$ , 0.9%), but most expressed a reason related to technical issues: experiencing issues with the code ( $n=16$ , 1.7%) or experiencing an unknown technical issue ( $n=11$ , 1.2%). In some cases, there was a combination of parent/carer delayed awareness with technical or lesson availability issues.

*“When I tried to redeem the voucher it didn’t have a code and it was the last day to redeem and therefore could not use it.” (Parent/carer of child aged 3 ½ years, Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged), Regional NSW)*

*“Was not aware of the scheme. By the time I found out it was late May and most classes were full [and] could not enrol my child.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

A final sub-theme under the parent/carer theme was their availability and/or family circumstances ( $n=77$ , 8.2%). Parent/carer availability around commitments with work or other children was cited 23 times (2.4%), while travel or relocation was mentioned 20 times (2.1%). Other reasons each mentioned in smaller numbers included difficulty in finding time for swimming lessons, being busy or the child doing other activities ( $n=12$ , 1.3%), having already used another voucher for the swimming lesson ( $n=5$ , 0.5%), and other more unique family circumstances such as living with a disability or health condition ( $n=17$ , 1.8%).

*“Too difficult to attend lessons as I also care for 3 other children who would need to come with me.” (Parent/carer of child aged 7 ½ years, Quartile 2, Regional NSW)*

*“Limited available options for swimming lessons that had times for full time working parents.” (Parent/carer of child aged 7 years, Quartile 2, Metropolitan NSW)*

### ***Swim school (provider) side***

Half of the reasons for non-redemption concerned the swim school provider side of the program ( $n=469$ , 50%) and this included three sub-themes: swim school availability and accessibility ( $n=210$ , 22.4%), swim school program use and uptake ( $n=160$ , 17.1%), and swim school processes ( $n=99$ , 10.6%).

The most common reason expressed for non-redemption concerning the swim school provider side was availability and accessibility of swim schools ( $n=210$ , 22.4%). A lack of lesson availability was the most significant reason for non-redemption ( $n=143$ , 15.2%) with parents/carers unable to find or book lessons, especially due to full capacity ( $n=106$ , 11.3%). In addition to not finding lessons, some parents/carers were unable to find suitable lessons ( $n=22$ , 2.3%), where ‘suitability’ was perceived as a balance between available lesson times and parent/carer availability.

*“I could not find the spots for the swimming lesson near my area. I tried to book in 3 cent(res) 4 months prior to expiry date.” (Parent/carer of child aged 4 years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

*“No swimming centres had available times to suit my work schedule.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 ½ years, Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged), Regional NSW)*

Two other reasons related to swim school availability and accessibility included pool closure ( $n=29$ , 3.1%) primarily due to floods ( $n=6$ , 0.6%), renovations ( $n=7$ ,

0.7%), and winter ( $n=6$ , 0.6%), and the accessibility of the pool or swim school ( $n=7$ , 0.7%) including distance and transport. Some parents/carers experienced a combination of the provider sub-themes, such as lesson availability and communication difficulties or swim school registration, or swim school processes and seasonal pool closure.

*“All centres I approached were full or too overwhelmed to even reply.”*

*(Parent/carer of child aged 3 years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

*“Local providers only offer lessons over summer season and would not open bookings early so we could book in before vouchers expired.” (Parent/carer of child aged 7 years, Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged), Regional NSW)*

The sub-theme of swim school program use and uptake included swim schools not accepting the voucher ( $n=75$ , 8.0% of all responses). Another similar reason for non-redemption was a swim school not being registered as a program provider ( $n=38$ , 4.1%), including not being eligible or able to register or having difficulty or delay in registering. Linked to these two codes, parent/carer difficulty in finding local swim schools accepting the voucher was also raised as a reason ( $n=19$ , 2.0%).

*“There were no first lap providers within my local area.” (Parent/carer of child aged 5 ½ years, Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged), Regional NSW)*

*“My provider didn't accept vouchers / found that it was too onerous to apply as a small, sole trader.” (Parent/carer of child aged 4 years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

The type of lessons, pool or swim school not being eligible for the voucher was a barrier to redemption for some parents/carers ( $n=19$ , 2.0%), who primarily referenced intensive lessons and swim schools attached to an educational school.

*“The provider would only allow use of the voucher for weekly swimming lessons. Would not allow it to be used for intensive swimming lessons over one week in the school holidays.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 2, Regional NSW)*

*“The pool that my child does his swimming lessons is attached to [a] School and the business is not eligible.” (Parent/carer of child aged 4 years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

The third sub-theme, swim school processes for voucher redemption, was mentioned 99 times (10.6%). This included a swim school having difficulty processing the voucher ( $n=42$ , 4.5%) and issues were highlighted between printed and digital vouchers.

*“The swim school was unable to administer the vouchers - it was too complicated a process. They expressed a lot of frustration.” (Parent/carer of child aged 7 years, Quartile 2, Metropolitan NSW)*

*“Facility would not accept a screenshot and would only accept paper printed vouchers. I did not have access to a printer.” (Parent/carer of child aged 5 years, Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

Other reasons for non-redemption associated with swim school processes included the payment for lessons being required or already completed before the voucher was available ( $n=31$ , 3.3%) and communication or logistical difficulties with swim schools ( $n=23$ , 2.5%).

*“My pool takes Direct Debit and couldn't accept the voucher.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)*

*“Already paid before finding out about the vouchers. Pool did NOT inform us about this.” (Parent/carer of child aged 3 ½ years, Quartile 2, Metropolitan NSW)*

Feelings of disappointment span all three of these sub-themes, especially lesson availability and swim school eligibility and uptake of vouchers. This sense of disappointment was reiterated in responses to the final open-ended survey question.

*“Absolutely NO vacancies. Really disappointing.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)*

*“I was very disappointed that my swim school would not accept the vouchers.” (Parent/carer of child aged 4 ½ years, Quartile 2, Metropolitan NSW)*

The second phase of analysis provided insight into the perspectives of parents/carers who did not redeem their voucher and their experience of the whole program. Of the 938 responses analysed above, 550 responded to the final survey question asking if they had anything else to say about the program. This additional analysis is presented in Table 2. Many responses reiterated the same reasons or concerns raised for the question about non-redemption. The key additions were three other sub-themes under program parameters, representing requests for changes to voucher expiry and age criteria, and three further findings that go beyond the above themes and aim of the study (Figure 2). Two specific population groups were identified but these were in small numbers. Child disability and special needs were mentioned 14 times (1.5%) and state border residents were mentioned 5 times (0.5%).

This second phase identified requests or suggestions for extending the timeframe ( $n=96$ , 17.5%), either stated or assumed to be linked to their reasons for non-redemption, while requests for no expiry date were mentioned 15 times (2.5%). Some parents/carers emphasised the importance of all Australian children learning to swim and there were requests for extending the age criteria for the vouchers ( $n=52$ , 9.5%), connected to the age criteria sub-theme.

*“I think it's an amazing concept, every child should know how to be safe around water. Would love to see the voucher expanded to other age ranges.” (Parent/carer of child aged 5 ½ years, Quartile 2, Remote NSW)*

*“I think this is an excellent program, but find it very frustrating that children need to be a certain age in order to redeem... I have spoken to lots of other parents about this, and they strongly agree that if the voucher were available at a younger age then they would be utilising it.” (Parent/carer of child aged 4 ½ years, Quartile 2, Regional NSW)*

Beyond these additions to the program parameters theme, the analysis of the final survey question responses established three points not covered by the themes for non-redemption but broadly relevant to the study. Firstly, there was a significant amount of positive feedback about the program and its objectives ( $n=130$ , 23.6%) with many parents/carers stating that the voucher is a “great initiative or idea” and expressing appreciation for the voucher and financial assistance. Of these, there were specific requests to continue the program and references to future vouchers ( $n=38$ , 6.9%).

*“I think it's a fantastic way to help ease the financial pressure on families and allows them to access lifesaving education for their child.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

*“Disappointed that we couldn't use ours but thought (it) was a great idea. I know many famil[ies] cut back on swimming lessons when they have to adjust their budgets.” (Parent/carer of child aged 5 ½ years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

Secondly, parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of water safety and learning to swim was more evident in responses to the final survey question ( $n=44$ , 8.0%) than in responses to the non-redemption question.



*“I think the voucher program is excellent and should be continued, all children in Australia should learn to swim.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 2, Regional NSW)*

*“We had our kids [go] to swimming lesson pre COVID as we know the importance of physical activity & especially swimming.” (Parent/carer of child aged 6 years, Quartile 3, Metropolitan NSW)*

Thirdly, the cost and affordability of lessons was raised more in the final response ( $n=52$ , 9.5%) compared to the responses explaining reasons for non-redemption. There was positive feedback and appreciation for the financial help and easing cost of living pressures, yet there were also references to lessons being expensive and the voucher only assisting to a limited extent. Some parents/carers referenced that swimming lessons remain unaffordable and therefore inaccessible given that they did not redeem the 2021-22 voucher.

*“I can't afford swimming lessons without voucher and feel we missed out on this opportunity because of lack of services in the area.” (Parent/carer of child aged 4 ½ years, Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged), Metropolitan NSW)*

*“I now have no voucher for this year at all. And as a single/sole parent cannot afford \$240 for a term of formal lessons.” (Parent/carer of child aged 3 ½ years, Quartile 2, Regional NSW)*

## **Discussion**

This analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of how parents/carers perceive and experience the First Lap voucher program, focused on the reasons for not redeeming the voucher in FY2021-22. These data were enriched by the open-ended responses of parents/carers who did not redeem their voucher concerning their overall experience of the First Lap program. When considering the evaluation of the program's impact or

potential continuation of the voucher program, the identified barriers to voucher redemption can be addressed to not only facilitate voucher use but improve the parent/carer experience of the program and contribute to incentivising parents/carers to enrol their preschool-aged children in swimming lessons.

The first two themes encompass reasons that are specific to the timeframe. The context of the launch of the First Lap program in December 2021 includes NSW moving out of public health restrictions that had been in place for the COVID-19 pandemic (NSW Government 2021). COVID-19 was identified as a major barrier to swimming lesson participation in the year immediately before this time period among parent/carers at the time of creating their First Lap voucher (Ananthapavan et al. 2023). In addition, NSW experienced a particularly wet summer and autumn, December 2021 to May 2022, with multiple and widespread flooding events (Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology 2022). Another important consideration around these perspectives is the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and floods on the mental health and wellbeing of the NSW population (Impact Economics and Policy and NCOSS 2022) and how these disruptions may have impacted parent/carer ability to redeem the voucher. These contextual factors account for many of the sub-themes under external circumstances.

The second theme of program parameters included a lack of awareness and misunderstanding on behalf of parents/carers. Consideration must be given to this being the first round of the First Lap program, where the concept and processes are new to users and providers. The voucher expiry date and age criteria were perceived as reasons for non-redemption by parent/carers, however this does not necessarily constitute a barrier to swimming lesson participation. A lesson learned is to ensure that clear

communication about the program parameters reaches parents/carers and this is explored further through the third theme.

Subsequently, this analysis has a critical role in informing future engagement with both program users and providers, acknowledging that some ‘teething problems’ of the program may have led to these findings. Firstly, on the user side, reasons for non-redemption point to the delivery and use of the vouchers. Parents/carers experienced issues related specifically to the voucher - a lack of knowledge or awareness of the voucher or technical issues with the redemption process - or related to their and their child’s availability to attend swimming lessons more generally. However, perceptions of voucher expiry and age criteria are inter-related to a lack of knowledge, awareness, or misunderstanding about learning to swim. While the optimal age for structured swimming education is debated (Taylor, Franklin, and Peden 2020), the first national benchmark for swimming and water safety is determined at 6 years old (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2019). This reflects the age eligibility for First Lap voucher and the importance of programs being accompanied by timely and clear communication to parents/carers (Bellew and Young 2017), particularly targeted to priority populations groups (Macniven et al. 2022). While these priority populations were not specifically or individually analysed in this study, children with disabilities were identified as group with reasons for voucher non-redemption associated with their specific needs or circumstances, consistent with evidence of pre-existing barriers to swimming lessons (Ananthapavan et al. 2023).

Secondly, on the provider side, a combination of swim school participation in the program and lesson availability must be addressed for future program success, consistent with a lack of availability identified as a pre-existing barrier (Ananthapavan et al. 2023). The most often cited reason for non-redemption, the lack of lesson

availability, included references to “no vacancy or spots”, “fully booked” or “booked out”, and “waitlist”. These experiences reflect the higher demand for swimming lessons following the COVID-19 pandemic (PwC Australia 2022) and the workforce and recruitment pressures in the sector (Royal Life Saving Society – Australia 2022). Parents/carers also expressed disappointment and frustration with swim school eligibility to register as a program provider. These barriers to voucher redemption and associated swimming lesson participation highlight the importance of whole-of-government approaches (de Leeuw 2022) that the First Lap program adopts. An example of such collaboration between health and education/training sectors at the state and national level to increase the swim training and coaching workforce to meet the demand for swimming lessons (NSW Government Education 2022; Commonwealth of Australia Department of Health and Aged Care 2021). Further research should explore provider perspectives of the First Lap program to better understand the (sub) themes of swim school program use and processes.

Swimming lessons affordability was also raised by nearly 10% of parents/carers who did not redeem their voucher in their responses to the final open-ended survey question, suggesting it was a barrier to program participation, in addition to a pre-existing barrier prior to program inception (Ananthapavan et al. 2023). Some parallels can be drawn with children’s participation in physical activity where cost is one of the key barriers (Reece et al. 2020) yet there can be a positive impact of financial incentives and vouchers in increasing physical activity (Reece et al. 2020). Evidence from the NSW Active Kids voucher program for organised sport and physical activity participation highlighted cost barriers of ongoing participation (Virgona et al. 2022). Similarly, this First Lap study identified parents/carers’ concerns about the ongoing cost and affordability of swimming lessons. A range of SEIFA quartiles and remoteness

categories are represented in the quotes in this study that link to these three barrier categories. Further research could determine any specific or unique barriers for children experiencing low socio-economic disadvantage. Potential solutions include targeting voucher provision on a means tested basis to address structural barriers and social determinants of health (Baum and Fisher 2014). Applying a social determinants of health lens can be effective for children who may face additional barriers to swimming lesson participation (Willcox-Pidgeon, Peden, and Scarr 2020).

The reasons for non-redemption of First Lap vouchers span four spheres of influence from the macro to micro level of the socio-ecological model (McLeroy et al. 1998) of policy, community and social, parental and family, and individual child preferences. Policy influences include awareness of the voucher and its use and impact, community-level influences include providers and access to the activity locally, and parental/family influences include socio-economic status, family size and schedules, and cultural background (Virgona et al. 2022). This can also be conceptualised as an eco-system that encompasses access to learning to swim programs, the providers (spanning public sector, commercial, and community), and infrastructure (PwC Australia 2022). This ecosystem is pertinent to swim school availability and accessibility, the most frequently mentioned sub-theme of this study and can inform future swimming lesson voucher programs and water safety education programs.

### **Strengths and limitations**

A strength of this study is large sample size of participants from across Australia's state jurisdiction. However, participants were parents/carers who completed the process to create a First Lap program voucher and were therefore aware of the program compared to those who may not have been aware. This study addresses barriers to voucher redemption from the parent/carer perspective but does not explore the perspective of

swim schools, the provider side, that is recommended in future research. Finally, this study was not able to establish a link to intended or ongoing participation rates and whether parents/carers would enrol their child in swimming lessons with or without the voucher.

## **Conclusion**

While parents/carers acknowledge the importance of learning to swim and the value of the First Lap voucher program, reasons for non-redemption represent barriers to preschool-aged children fully participating in both the voucher program and swimming lessons. This analysis of qualitative responses is presented across four overarching themes of external circumstances, program parameters, parent/carer (user) side, and swim school (provider) side. Additional findings include parent/carer positive feedback about the program, evidence of parent/carer knowledge and awareness of the importance of children learning to swim, and parent/carer concerns about the cost and affordability of swimming lessons. This study therefore outlines considerations for voucher programs concerning engagement and communication with both the user and provider side. These aspects of a voucher program can address the reasons for non-redemption and barriers related to program parameters and user knowledge and awareness outlined in this study. Enhanced communication and cooperation can address availability, accessibility, and uptake of voucher programs, as well as considering ecological and ecosystem factors influencing participation.

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Figure 1. Participant flowchart.

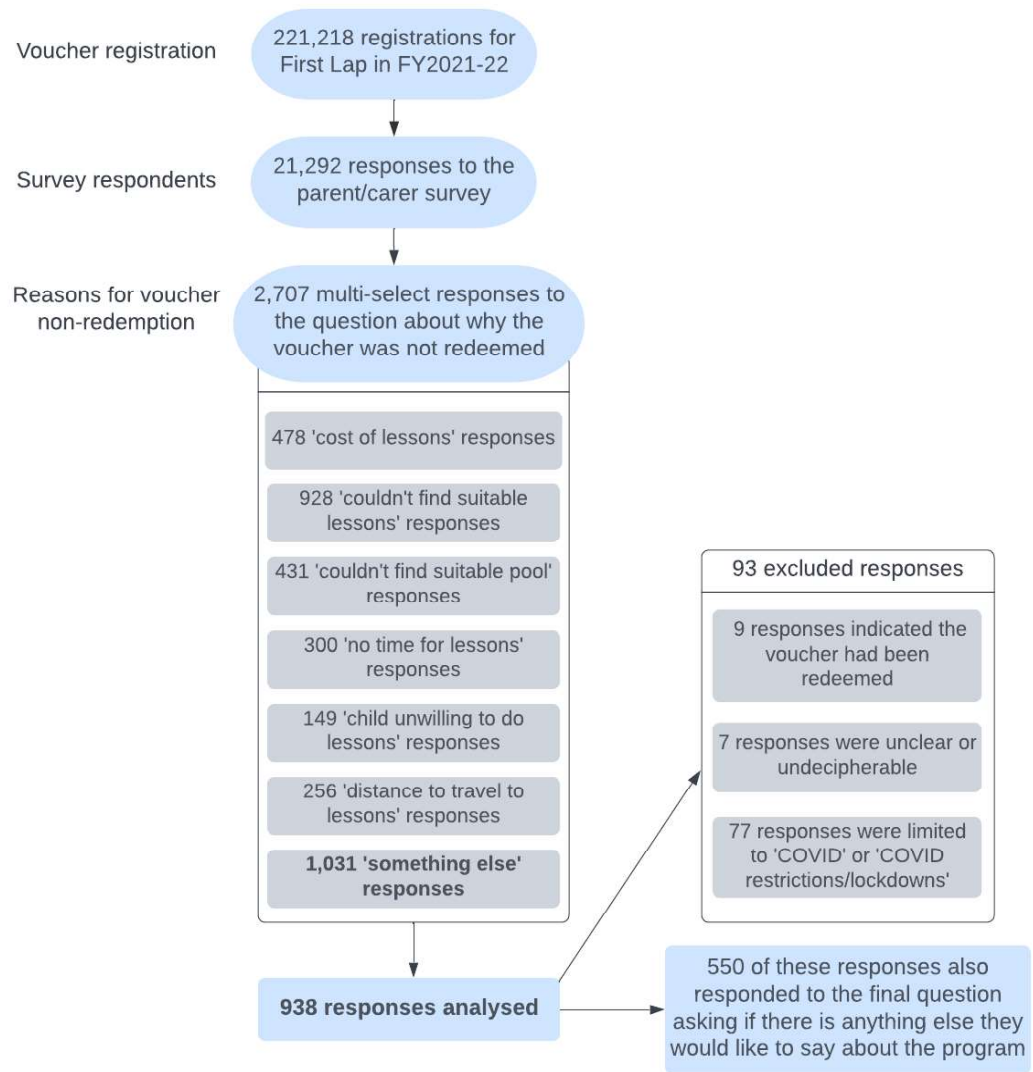


Figure 2. Thematic map of reasons for not redeeming the First Lap voucher

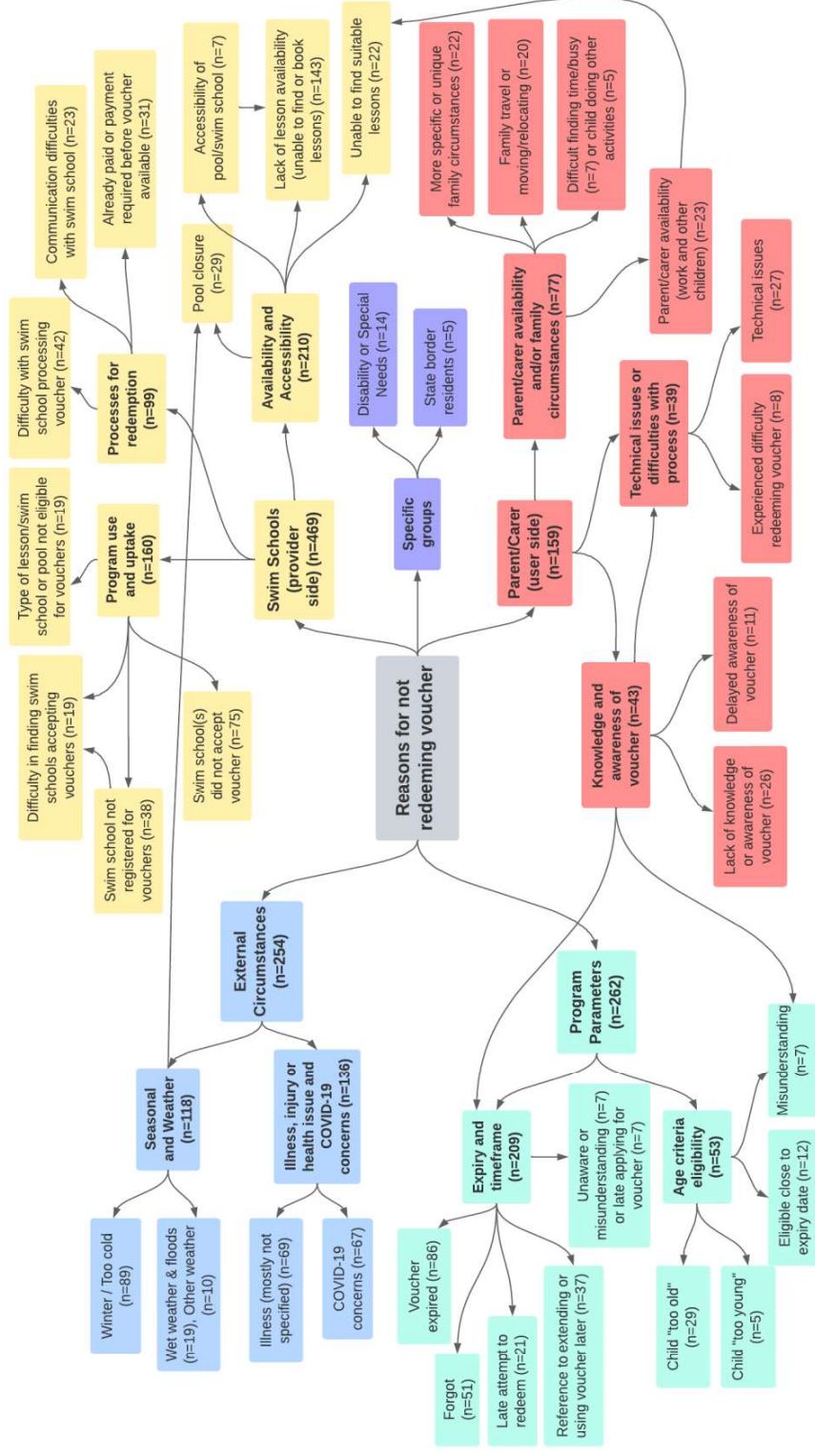


Table 1. First Lap voucher redemption challenges: Theme and sub-themes codes

<b>Codes by theme and sub-theme</b>	<b>Number (n)</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Theme 1: <i>External Circumstances</i></b>	<b>254</b>	<b>27.1</b>
<b>Sub-theme 1.1: Seasonal</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>9.5</b>
Winter	31	3.3
Too cold	31	3.3
Preference <i>not to do</i> lessons in winter/cold or <i>to do</i> lessons in warmer months or spring/summer	18	2.0
Other*	9	1.0
<b>Sub-theme 1.2: Weather</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>3.1</b>
(No further reason/detail provided)	6	0.6
Wet	10	1.1
Floods	9	1.0
Other*	4	0.4
<b>Sub-theme 1.3: Illness, injury, or health issue</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>7.4</b>
Child – Virus(es) including cold/flu/RSV	6	0.6
Child – Ear, nose and throat (ENT)	6	0.6
Child – Not specified	17	1.8
Not specified	19	2.0
Other*	21	2.2
<b>Sub-theme 1.4: COVID-19 concerns</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>7.1</b>
(No further reason/detail provided)	46	4.9
COVID and/or flu/virus/sickness/illness concerns	11	1.2
Indoor or crowded pool	5	0.5
Other*	5	0.5
<b>Theme 2: <i>Program Parameters</i></b>	<b>262</b>	<b>27.9</b>
<b>Sub-theme 2.1: Voucher expiry and timeframe</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>22.3</b>
Voucher expired	86	9.2
Forgot	51	5.4
Late attempt to redeem	21	2.2
Reference to using voucher later	37	3.9
Unaware or misunderstanding of voucher expiry	7	0.7
Too late to obtain or applying for voucher	7	0.7
<b>Sub-theme 2.2: Age criteria eligibility</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Too old (6 years old and over or at school)	29	3.1
Too young (under 3 years old)	5	0.5
Eligible close to expiry date	12	1.3
Misunderstanding	7	0.7
<b>Theme 3: <i>Parent/Carer (User) Side</i></b>	<b>159</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Sub-theme 3.1: Knowledge and awareness of voucher and redemption process</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Lack of knowledge or awareness of voucher	26	2.8
Delayed awareness of voucher	11	1.2
Other**	6	0.6
<b>Sub-theme 3.2: Experienced technical issues or difficulties with process</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Difficulty in using or redeeming voucher	8	0.9

Technical issue with code (no code/unable to scan)	16	1.7
Experienced unknown technical issue(s)	11	1.2
Other**	4	0.4
<b>Sub-theme 3.3: Availability/family circumstances</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>8.2</b>
Parent/carer availability – work commitments	7	0.7
Parent/carer availability – other children/baby	16	1.7
Family travel, moving or relocation	20	2.1
Difficult finding time, not organised or busy	7	0.7
Child doing other activities/sport	5	0.5
Used other voucher for lesson	5	0.5
Other (specific to family/child e.g. disability, health)	17	1.8
<b>Theme 4: Swim Schools (Provider) Side</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Sub-theme 4.1: Availability and accessibility</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>22.4</b>
Unable to find or book lessons (lack of availability)	143	15.2
Unable to find suitable lessons (including swim school, teacher and time of lessons)	22	2.3
Pool closure	29	3.1
Pool accessibility (including distance or transport)	7	0.7
Other***	9	1.0
<b>Sub-theme 4.2: Program use or uptake</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>17.1</b>
Swim school(s) did not accept voucher	75	8.0
Swim school not registered as provider	38	4.1
Hard to find local swim schools accepting voucher	19	2.0
Type of lessons/pool/swim school not eligible	19	2.0
Other***	9	1.0
<b>Sub-theme 4.3: Swim school process/es</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>10.6</b>
Swim school did not process voucher	42	4.5
Payment required before voucher available	31	3.3
Communication difficulties with swim school(s)	23	2.5
Other***	3	0.3

*\*Other codes that were mentioned less than 5 times each relating to Theme 1 included: child cannot do swimming lessons in winter, no swimming lessons available or only offered outdoors in winter, or 'unsuitable' or 'poor' season/weather (sub-themes 1.1; 1.2); child – broken arm or leg, child – asthma, child – hospitalised, family or parent – virus(es), family or parent – not specified, virus(es) (sub-theme 1.3); COVID-19 isolation, and other COVID-related issues or impact (sub-theme 1.4).*

*\*\*Other codes mentioned less than 5 times each relating to Theme 3 included: did not know/unsure of eligibility and lack of awareness or misunderstanding about redemption process (sub-theme 3.1); experiencing difficulty in applying for the voucher or other technical issues like unable to validate due to website traffic or name not recognised by system (sub-theme 3.2).*

*\*\*\*Other codes that were mentioned less than 5 times each relating to Theme 4 included being a border resident that limited eligible pool options (sub-theme 4.1); short time period when swim school was registered provider (sub-theme 4.2); pool brought expiry period forward (sub-theme 4.3).*

Table 2. Themes and sub-themes from responses to the final survey open ended question (do you have anything else to say?)

<b>Themes, sub-themes and codes</b>	<b>Number (n)</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Theme 1: <i>External Circumstances</i></b>	<b>48</b>	<b>8.7</b>
Sub-theme 1.1: Seasonal	11	2.0
Sub-theme 1.2: Weather	10	1.8
Sub-theme 1.3: Illness, injury, or health issue	10	1.8
Sub-theme 1.4: COVID-19 concerns	17	3.1
<b>Theme 2: <i>Program Parameters</i></b>	<b>187</b>	<b>34</b>
Sub-theme 2.1: Voucher expiry and timeframe	20	3.6
<i>Additional Code:</i> Request for extended or longer voucher expiry or to use FY21-22 voucher again	<b>96</b>	<b>17.5</b>
<i>Additional Code:</i> Request for no expiry date	<b>15</b>	<b>2.7</b>
Sub-theme 2.2: Age criteria eligibility (see below)	4	0.7
<i>Additional Code:</i> Request to extend age criteria	<b>52</b>	<b>9.5</b>
<b>Theme 3: <i>Parent/Carer (User Side)</i></b>	<b>32</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Sub-theme 3.1: Knowledge and awareness of voucher and redemption process	1	0.2
Sub-theme 3.2: Experienced technical issues or difficulties with process	22	4
Sub-theme 3.3: Availability/family circumstances	9	1.6
<b>Theme 4: <i>Swim Schools (Provider Side)</i></b>	<b>171</b>	<b>31.9</b>
Sub-theme 4.1: Availability and accessibility	55	10
Sub-theme 4.2: Program use or uptake	71	12.9
Sub-theme 4.3: Swim school process/es	45	8.1
<b>ADDITIONAL POINT A: Positive feedback</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>23.6</b>
Positive feedback about the program	92	16.7
Requests to continue the program	38	6.9
<b>ADDITIONAL POINT B: Parent/carer knowledge and awareness (importance of water safety and children learning to swim)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>8.0</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL POINT C: Cost and affordability of swimming lessons</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>9.5</b>
Other: Disability or Special Needs	9	1.6
Other: State border resident	4	0.7
Other (not relevant)	28	5.1





# Understanding barriers to redeeming a swimming lesson voucher for preschool children using multivariable modelling

## Abstract

**Objectives:** To describe the characteristics of preschool children whose parent/carer indicated they experienced barriers to participating in swimming lessons, and how those barriers affected utilisation of a swimming lesson voucher program.

**Methods:** Data were collected from voucher creation surveys when parent/carers registered for the First Lap voucher program between 1 December 2021 and 20 June 2022. Predictors included the child's age, sex, living with a disability, Indigenous status, area-level socioeconomic status, remoteness, previous participation in swimming lessons, and selected barriers to participation. Outcomes were selection of each of the barriers from a predefined list; and voucher redemption. Binary logistic models were built to describe the relationships between predictors and outcomes.

**Results:** In total, 221,218 vouchers were created, reaching approximately 56% of 3–6-year-old children in NSW. Of these, 79,553 parent/carers indicated that their child had not participated in swimming lessons in the last 12 months, and responded to the question about barriers to participation. Cost was indicated as a barrier by parent/carers of Indigenous children (OR 2.8; 95% CI 2.3-3.4), children with disabilities (OR 1.2; 95% CI 1.1-1.3), and families residing in low socioeconomic areas (OR 1.72; 95% CI 1.63-1.8). Parent/carers were less likely to redeem the voucher when cost was a barrier (OR 0.9; 95% CI 0.8-0.9) or when they considered swimming lessons were not important (OR 0.8; 95% CI 0.7-1.0), but no effect was found for the other barriers after adjustment for sociodemographic variables. Regional and remote families were much more likely than metropolitan families to indicate difficulty finding an available swim school (OR 3.9; 95% CI 2.6-5.8). When families spoke a non-English language at home, they were less likely to indicate that cost was a barrier (OR 0.5; 95% CI 0.5-0.6), but they had higher odds of considering their child too young for swimming lessons (OR 2.3; 95% CI 2.1-2.5), considering swimming lessons unimportant (OR 1.7; 95% CI 1.4-2.1), having difficulty finding an available swim school (OR 1.4; 95% CI 1.2-1.6), or COVID-19 as barriers (OR 1.51; 95% CI 1.4-1.6).

**Conclusion:** The first eligibility period of the First Lap program had wide reach, but was not proportionally utilised by priority groups. Findings from the analysis support previous evidence that priority groups face significant barriers to participation in swimming lessons.

**Implications:** Efforts to improve supply-side availability of appropriate swimming lessons should continue, particularly those targeting Indigenous children, multicultural communities, rural/remote dwelling families and children with disabilities. Targeted financial support for families most likely to indicate that cost was a barrier, including Indigenous families, families of children with disabilities, and

those residing in low socioeconomic areas, may be required to increase these group's participation rates.

## Introduction

Unintentional drowning is the second leading cause of injury deaths in children in Australia,<sup>1</sup> with children 0-4 years of age overrepresented in drowning statistics.<sup>2</sup> Children have the highest proportion of hospitalisations for drowning,<sup>1</sup> with under 5s most at risk, accounting for 58% of non-fatal drowning-related hospitalisations and 24% of drowning deaths.<sup>2</sup> Indigenous children, children with disabilities, children of culturally and linguistically diverse families, and children living in rural/remote or low socioeconomic areas all have higher rates of drowning than the overall population.<sup>3-6</sup>

Water familiarisation and swimming lessons provide children with vital water safety and survival skills.<sup>7-9</sup> Swimming lessons are considered one of the World Health Organization's six key interventions for drowning prevention,<sup>10</sup> however up to 40% of Australia's children do not achieve the Australian Water Safety Council's minimum competencies outlined in the National Benchmark before graduating from primary school.<sup>8</sup> Preschool age (3-6 years) is an important time to learn foundational skills for swimming when sufficient motor skills are present,<sup>9</sup> and Royal Life Saving Australia recommends commencing swimming lessons at 4 years of age.<sup>11</sup>

There are a range of barriers impacting participation in private swimming lessons, including cost, access, and awareness. Such barriers have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Child swimming lesson participation in Australia was severely affected by restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19, with an estimate of 10 million swimming lessons cancelled.<sup>12</sup> Re-engagement with lessons is impeded by cost-of-living prices and instructor shortages,<sup>12,13</sup> which may leave a cohort of children at higher risk of drowning across their lifetime.<sup>14</sup>

To encourage re-engagement in swimming lessons, the New South Wales (NSW) government is providing parents of preschool aged children with vouchers to contribute to swimming lesson costs through a program named First Lap.<sup>15-17</sup> State governments have previously provided vouchers to contribute to the costs of participating in organised physical activities.<sup>18</sup> Voucher programs had variation in reach in populations according to sociodemographic characteristics, however the NSW Active Kids program was able to increase physical activity levels among all groups.<sup>19</sup> The aims of the First Lap program are to increase the number of preschool aged children participating in learn to swim programs, particularly those in priority populations and those who did not participate in the last 12 months; and to strengthen parent/carer knowledge and awareness that it is important for preschool aged children to learn how to swim.<sup>16</sup>

Children eligible for the program are

- aged between 3-6 years<sup>17</sup>
- not enrolled in school<sup>17</sup>
- may have started kindergarten in 2021 or 2022 (2021-2022 financial year only)<sup>16</sup>
- listed on a valid Australian Medicare card<sup>17</sup>

Vouchers must be used

- for a program of at least 5 structured and supervised swimming lessons, which are either intensive (daily) or regular weekly lessons<sup>17</sup>
- with an approved First Lap provider<sup>17</sup>
- once<sup>17</sup>
- on or before the end of the financial year they were created in<sup>17</sup>

This study is part of the evaluation of the First Lap voucher program.<sup>16</sup> It contributes towards determining how effective the program is in meeting its objectives. For the purposes of this study, priority populations are those living in regional, remote, and low socio-economic areas, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, identifying as being from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background or with a disability. This study aimed to describe the characteristics of children whose parent/carer registered and redeemed a voucher for swimming lessons during the First Lap voucher program and selected barrier factors from a predefined list, and to identify how barrier selection affected voucher redemption rates.

## Methods

Cross-sectional data analysis was used to explore parent/carer perception of barriers to swimming lesson participation, and longitudinal data analysis was used to examine two sequential time points in the data (voucher creation, followed by voucher redemption or eligible period expiry) to understand the characteristics of children and pre-existing parent/carer-reported barriers in relation to voucher redemption. The NSW Office of Sport provided anonymised voucher creation survey results and corresponding voucher redemption dates for all vouchers created in the period between 1 December 2021 and 30 June 2022.

Parent/carers completed an online survey to create a voucher. They indicated their child's birth date, gender, disability status, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, primary language spoken at home, residential postcode, and previous participation in swimming lessons. Where children had not participated in the last 12 months, they were asked to indicate the barriers to participation by selecting any of five predefined options (and/or "other"). The creation survey questions are presented in Appendix 1. Participants were included in the model if they had registered for a voucher and indicated that the child had not participated in swimming lessons in the last 12 months.

Outcomes were the selection of any of the pre-defined barriers to participation, and voucher redemption. The child's gender, disability status, and previous participation in swimming lessons were used as binary predictors in the model. When the response for these categories was "other" or "prefer not to say", it was treated as missing. The child's age in years was derived from their birth date and was used as a categorical input. Languages were categorised as English/non-English, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander options were categorised as either Indigenous/non-Indigenous, and both used as binary inputs. Postcode was used to derive the child's geographic classification of Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) index quartile and Remoteness Area Structure in the Australian Statistical

Geography Standard (ASGS).<sup>20,21</sup> SEIFA quartile and Remoteness (metropolitan, regional, remote) were input as categorical variables. Records with missing data were removed to perform complete-case analysis.<sup>22</sup>

Binary logistic models were created to model the relationships between

1. Sociodemographic variables and selection of each of the five barriers to participation, and
2. Selection of a barrier to participation and redemption of the voucher.

They were created using a backwards elimination approach; all sociodemographic variables, and previous participation, were included in the initial step. The SPSS collinearity diagnostic<sup>23</sup> was used to confirm that there was no collinearity, then all plausible interactions were added to the model to assess them for significance. At each step, the least significant interaction term was removed, until all included terms were significant at a level of  $p < 0.01$  to avoid false positives. No sociodemographic variables were removed as they either remained significant, were included in an interaction term, or in the case of gender, are known to affect preschool physical activity participation. For non-interaction terms, statistical significance was deemed at  $p < 0.05$ . Results were presented as Odds Ratios (ORs) with their 95% Confidence Interval (CI).

Ethics approval was obtained from the UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee (HC220282).

## Results

Of the 221,218 vouchers created between 1 December 2021 and 30 June 2022, 81,777 (37.0%) indicated that the child had not participated in swimming lessons in the last 12 months. Of these, 79,553 (97.3%) participants who responded to the question about reasons for non-participation were included in the analysis. Of these, 36876 (46.4%) had redeemed a voucher. At voucher creation, 2,846 (3.6%) indicated that their child had a disability, 5,874 (7.4%) were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 16,311 (20.5%) indicated that they spoke a language other than English at home, and 27,811 (35.0%) had participated in swimming lessons longer than 12 months ago. A quarter (20143; 25.3%) resided in the most disadvantaged postcode quartile, and 18% in regional and remote areas. The demographics of the included children, and the proportions in each demographic who redeemed their voucher, is shown in Table 1.

Figure 1: Participant flow chart

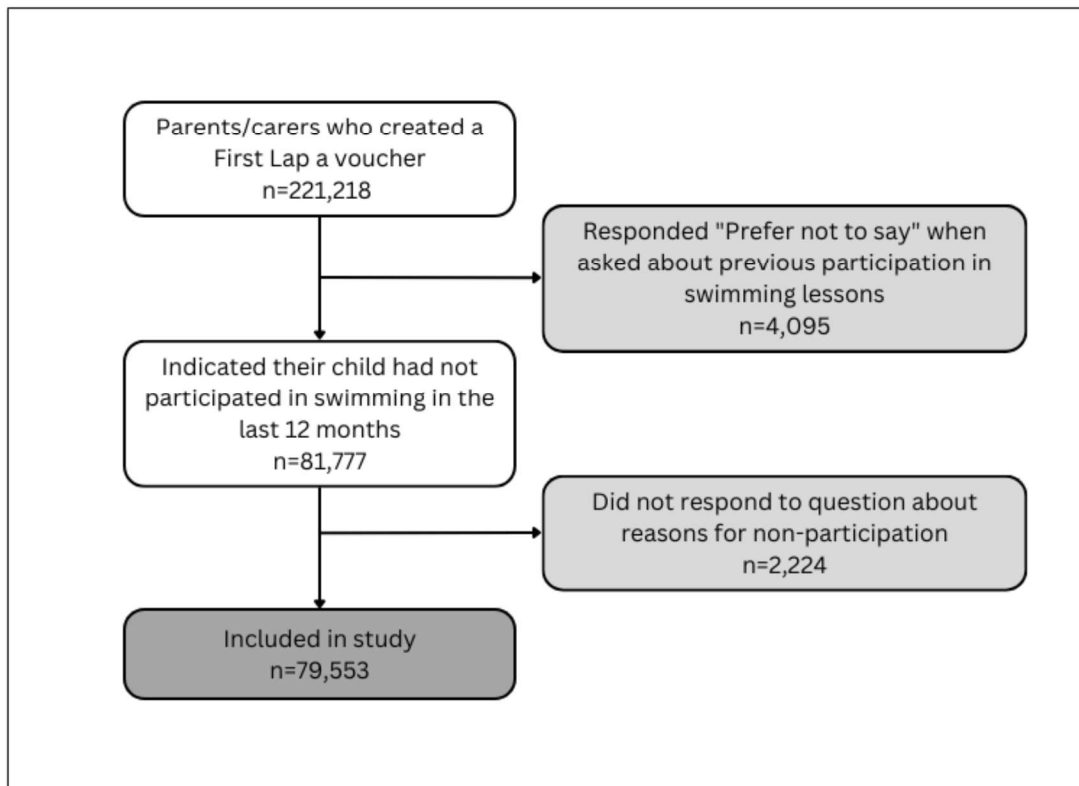


Table 1: Participant characteristics

	<b>Voucher Redeemed</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>N (% of total)</i>
<b>All participants</b>	36876 (46.4)	79553 (100.0)
<b>Child's age</b>		
3	7744 (49.8)	15557 (19.6)
4	10337 (48.6)	21284 (26.8)
5	9202 (45.9)	20035 (25.2)
6	7065 (42.6)	16591 (20.9)
7-8	2528 (41.5)	6086 (7.7)
<b>Gender</b>		

<i>female</i>	17725 (46.8)	37891 (47.6)
<i>male</i>	19067 (46.0)	41465 (52.1)
<i>Other/Prefer not to say/Missing</i>	84 (42.6)	197 (0.2)
<b>Disability</b>		
<i>no</i>	35297 (46.9)	75268 (94.6)
<i>yes</i>	1025 (36.0)	2846 (3.6)
<i>Missing/Prefer not to say</i>	554 (38.5)	1439 (1.8)
<b>Indigenous status</b>		
<i>non-Indigenous</i>	34587 (47.4)	72916 (91.7)
<i>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</i>	1953 (33.2)	5874 (7.4)
<i>Missing/Prefer not to say</i>	336 (44.0)	763 (1.0)
<b>Language spoken at home</b>		
<i>English</i>	29550 (46.7)	63242 (79.5)
<i>Other</i>	7326 (44.9)	16311 (20.5)
<b>Remoteness structure</b>		
<i>Metropolitan</i>	30112 (46.3)	65011 (81.7)
<i>Regional</i>	6706 (46.6)	14400 (18.1)
<i>Remote</i>	46 (35.9)	128 (0.2)
<i>Missing</i>	12 (85.7)	14 (0.0)
<b>Socioeconomic Index</b>		

<i>Quartile 1 (most disadvantaged)</i>	7410 (36.8)	20143 (25.3)
2	9743 (46.3)	21027 (26.4)
3	8007 (48.9)	16388 (20.6)
<i>Quartile 4 (most advantaged)</i>	11704 (53.2)	21981 (27.6)
<i>Missing</i>	12 (85.7)	14 (0.0)
<b>Previous participation in swimming lessons</b>		
<i>no</i>	22183 (43.3)	51176 (64.3)
<i>yes</i>	14455 (52.0)	27811 (35.0)
<i>missing</i>	238 (42.8)	556 (0.7)
<b>Reason for not participating in the last 12 months</b>		
<i>the cost of swimming lessons is too expensive</i>		
<i>no</i>	21704 (49.1)	44207 (55.6)
<i>yes</i>	15172 (42.9)	35346 (44.4)
<i>I thought my child was too young to participate in swimming lessons</i>		
<i>no</i>	32161 (46.3)	69438 (87.3)
<i>yes</i>	4715 (46.6)	10115 (12.7)
<i>I did not think swimming lessons were important for preschool-aged children</i>		
<i>no</i>	36688 (46.4)	79056 (99.4)
<i>yes</i>	188 (37.8)	497 (0.6)
<i>There were no learn to swim schools near where I live</i>		



<i>no</i>	36149 (46.3)	78037 (98.1)
<i>yes</i>	727 (48.0)	1516 (1.9)
<i>COVID-19</i>		
<i>no</i>	11458 (44.9)	25523 (32.1)
<i>yes</i>	25418 (47.0)	54030 (67.9)

## Barrier selection

Of the 79,553 participants, 54,030 (67.9%) indicated that COVID-19 was a barrier to participation in swimming lessons, 35,346 (44.4%) indicated cost, 10,115 (13%) thought that their child was too young to participate, 1,516 (1.9%) indicated that there was no swim school available, 497 (0.6%) thought that swimming lessons were not important. Most participants (53,863; 65.9%) selected only one pre-defined barrier; 22,199 (27.1%) selected two, and 1009 (1.2%) selected three or more. The remaining 4706 participants (5.8%) did not select any of the pre-defined barriers.

## Cost

Parent/carers of Indigenous children (Odds ratio (OR) 2.77; 95% CI 2.27-3.37), children living with a disability (OR 1.22; 95% CI 1.13-1.32), and in the lowest SEIFA quartile (OR 1.72; 95% CI 1.63-1.8) had higher odds of selecting cost, compared to parent/carers of children without these characteristics and after adjusting for other sociodemographic variables and for previous participation (Table 2). Families who spoke a non-English language at home were less likely than English-speaking families to select cost (OR 0.52; 95% CI 0.49-0.56).

## Thinking the child was too young

After adjusting for other sociodemographic variables and for previous participation, parent/carers of younger children had higher odds of considering that their child was too young: the OR for 3-year-olds was 3.7 (95% CI 3.18-4.29) compared to parent/carers of 7-8-year-olds. When the family did not speak English at home, the OR was 2.32 (95% CI 2.13-2.53) compared to those who spoke English at home. Parent/carers of Indigenous children were much less likely to think their child was too young to participate than non-Indigenous parent/carers; OR 0.32 (95% CI 0.27-0.39).

## Thinking swimming lessons are not important

After adjusting for other sociodemographic variables and for previous participation, parent/carers of Indigenous children were half as likely to indicate that they thought swimming lessons were not important than those of non-Indigenous children; OR 0.47 (95% CI 0.28-0.8). On the other hand, when the family spoke a language other than English at home, the OR for selecting this factor was 1.71 (95% CI 1.41-2.08) compared to those who spoke English at home.

### No available swim schools

Families living in regional and remote areas had a much higher OR, 3.88 (95% CI 2.59-5.8), indicating that they had more difficulty finding an available swim school compared to those living in metropolitan areas, after adjusting for other sociodemographic variables and previous participation. Likewise, those speaking a language other than English perceived more difficulty finding an available swim school than English-speaking families; OR of 1.42 (95% CI 1.23-1.64).

### COVID-19

After adjusting for sociodemographic variables, if the child had participated in swimming lessons previously, they were more likely to select COVID-19 as a barrier (OR 2.28 (95% CI 2.13-2.44) compared to those who had not participated before. Parent/carers of Indigenous children and those residing in the most disadvantaged SEIFA quartile were less likely to select COVID-19 than non-Indigenous families or those in the highest SEIFA quartile; OR 0.62 (95% CI 0.51-0.75) and 0.49 (95% CI 0.46-0.51) respectively. Those who spoke a language other than English at home were more likely to select COVID-19 as a barrier than those who spoke English at home; 1.51 (95% CI 1.4-1.63).

Table 2: Binary logistic models of the relationship between sociodemographic variables and barrier selection

	Barrier selected				
	The cost of swimming lessons is too expensive	I thought my child was too young to participate in swimming lessons	I did not think swimming lessons were important for preschool-aged children	There were no learn to swim schools near where I live	COVID-19
	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)
<b>Child participated in swimming lessons more than 12 months ago</b>					
Yes	0.57 (0.55,0.59)	0.11 (0.08,0.16)	0.32 (0.24,0.41)	0.76 (0.64,0.90)	2.28 (2.13,2.44)
No	reference	reference	reference	reference	reference

<b>Child's age</b>					
3	0.70 (0.66,0.74)	3.70 (3.18,4.29)	0.57 (0.39,0.84)	0.76 (0.61,0.95)	1.04 (0.97,1.11)
4	0.75 (0.70,0.79)	2.72 (2.34,3.15)	0.59 (0.41,0.85)	0.79 (0.64,0.97)	1.18 (1.11,1.26)
5	0.79 (0.74,0.84)	1.91 (1.64,2.22)	0.81 (0.57,1.15)	0.95 (0.77,1.16)	1.19 (1.11,1.27)
6	0.84 (0.79,0.90)	1.34 (1.14,1.57)	0.83 (0.57,1.19)	0.96 (0.78,1.18)	1.16 (1.09,1.24)
7-8	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Gender</b>					
<i>female</i>	1.01 (0.98,1.04)	0.99 (0.94,1.03)	1.03 (0.87,1.24)	1.00 (0.90,1.11)	0.99 (0.96,1.02)
<i>male</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Disability</b>					
<i>Yes</i>	1.22 (1.13,1.32)	0.83 (0.71,0.96)	0.78 (0.45,1.36)	0.82 (0.61,1.09)	0.86 (0.79,0.93)
<i>No</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</b>					
<i>Yes</i>	2.77 (2.27,3.37)	0.32 (0.27,0.39)	0.47 (0.28,0.80)	0.80 (0.67,0.96)	0.62 (0.51,0.75)
<i>Neither</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Non-English primary language at home</b>					
<i>Yes</i>	0.52 (0.49,0.56)	2.32 (2.13,2.53)	1.71 (1.41,2.08)	1.42 (1.23,1.64)	1.51 (1.40,1.63)
<i>No</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Remoteness Structure</b>					
<i>Metropolitan</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<i>Regional/ Remote</i>	1.03 (0.99,1.08)	0.75 (0.69,0.82)	0.74 (0.54,1.00)*	3.88 (2.59,5.80)	0.83 (0.69,0.99)

<b>Socioeconomic Index</b>					
<i>Quartile 1 (least advantaged)</i>	1.72 (1.63,1.80)	0.86 (0.80,0.93)	1.38 (1.09,1.76)	1.21 (1.00,1.46)	0.77 (0.72,0.82)
<i>Quartile 2</i>	1.59 (1.52,1.67)	0.75 (0.69,0.82)	1.11 (0.85,1.47)	0.93 (0.75,1.16)	0.96 (0.90,1.02)
<i>Quartile 3</i>	1.30 (1.23,1.36)	0.93 (0.86,1.01)	1.08 (0.83,1.41)	1.14 (0.94,1.39)	0.94 (0.88,1.00)
<i>Quartile 4 (most advantaged)</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>

\*0.997; p=0.047

Models were also adjusted for the interactions between factors where present. See Supplementary Table 1 for details of interaction terms in the model.

### Voucher redemption

36,876 (46%) of the 79,553 participants redeemed their voucher. Univariable models found significant associations between redemption and selecting the barriers of cost, not thinking swimming lessons are important, and COVID-19, but not between thinking the child was too young or having difficulty finding an available swim school (Table 3). The OR of a voucher being redeemed if cost was a barrier was 0.78 (95% CI 0.76-0.8). When not thinking swimming lessons are important, it was 0.70 (95% CI 0.59-0.84), and for COVID-19 it was 1.09 (95% CI 1.06-1.12).

Table 3: Univariable binary logistic models of the relationship between barrier selection and voucher redemption

	Voucher redeemed (yes)
	OR (95% CI)
<b>Barrier selected</b>	
<i>The cost of swimming lessons is too expensive</i>	0.78 (0.76-0.80)
<i>I thought my child was too young to participate in swimming lessons</i>	1.01 (0.97-1.06)
<i>I did not think swimming lessons were important for preschool-aged children</i>	0.70 (0.59-0.84)
<i>There were no learn to swim schools near where I live</i>	1.07 (0.96-1.18)
<i>COVID-19</i>	1.09 (1.06-1.12)

The fully adjusted models for the relationship between barrier selection and voucher redemption, including adjustment for previous participation in swimming lessons, and

relevant interactions between factors, is shown in Table 4. After adjusting for all sociodemographic variables, and for previous participation in swimming lessons, a statistically significant negative effect remained for voucher redemption rates when parent/carers indicated that cost was a barrier, or when they did not think swimming lessons were important (Table 4). On the other hand, the fully adjusted model found that COVID-19 no longer had a significant effect. Compared to those who did not select barriers, the OR of redeeming a voucher when cost was selected was 0.86 (95% CI 0.84-0.89), and 0.8 (95% CI 0.67-0.97) when the parent/carer did not think swimming lessons were important.

Investigation into why there was a significantly increased OR for voucher redemption rate in the univariable model, but not in the fully adjusted model, when COVID-19 was selected found that previous participation in swimming lessons was the dominant factor. As shown in Table 5, when previous participation is removed from the model, the OR was 1.05 (95% CI 1.02-1.08) when compared to those who did not select COVID-19. This is an expected result when considering that parent/carers of children who had previously participated in swimming lessons were more than 2x more likely to select COVID-19 than those who had no previous participation; and the finding in all models that previous participation was associated with increased odds of redemption.

Table 4: Binary logistic models of the relationship between barrier selection and voucher redemption, adjusted for previous participation in swimming lessons and sociodemographic variables

	Voucher redeemed (yes)		
	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)
	<b>The cost of swimming lessons is too expensive</b>	<b>I did not think swimming lessons were important for preschool-aged children</b>	<b>COVID-19</b>
<b>Barrier Selected</b>			
Yes	0.86 (0.84, 0.89)	0.80 (0.67, 0.97)	1.00 (0.97, 1.03)
No	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Child participated in swimming lessons more than 12 months ago</b>			
Yes	1.22 (1.15,1.29)	1.24 (1.17,1.31)	1.24 (1.18,1.32)
No	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>

<b>Child's age</b>			
3	1.49 (1.40,1.59)	1.51 (1.42,1.61)	1.51 (1.42,1.61)
4	1.42 (1.34,1.51)	1.43 (1.35,1.52)	1.43 (1.35,1.52)
5	1.25 (1.18,1.33)	1.26 (1.19,1.34)	1.26 (1.19,1.34)
6	1.06 (1.00,1.13)	1.07 (1.00,1.13)	1.07 (1.00,1.13)
7-8	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Gender</b>			
<i>female</i>	1.02 (0.99,1.05)	1.02 (0.99,1.05)	1.02 (0.99,1.05)
<i>male</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Disability</b>			
<i>Yes</i>	0.72 (0.66,0.78)	0.71 (0.66,0.77)	0.71 (0.66,0.77)
<i>No</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</b>			
<i>Yes</i>	0.55 (0.51,0.59)	0.54 (0.50,0.58)	0.54 (0.50,0.58)
<i>Neither</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Non-English primary language at home</b>			
<i>Yes</i>	0.92 (0.89,0.96)	0.94 (0.91,0.98)	0.94 (0.91,0.98)
<i>No</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Remoteness Structure</b>			
<i>Metropolitan</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>
<i>Regional/Remote</i>	1.00 (0.85,1.18)	1.00 (0.85,1.18)	1.00 (0.85,1.18)
<b>Socioeconomic Index</b>			

<i>Quartile 1 (most disadvantaged)</i>	0.50 (0.47,0.53)	0.49 (0.46,0.51)	0.49 (0.46,0.51)
<i>Quartile 2</i>	0.76 (0.71,0.80)	0.75 (0.71,0.79)	0.75 (0.71,0.79)
<i>Quartile 3</i>	0.82 (0.78,0.87)	0.82 (0.78,0.86)	0.82 (0.78,0.86)
<i>Quartile 4 (most advantaged)</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>	<i>reference</i>

Models were also adjusted for the interaction between Remoteness structure and Socioeconomic Index, previous participation and Indigenous status, and previous participation and SEIFA quartile. See supplementary table 2 for details.

Table 5: Partially adjusted binary logistic model of the relationship between selection of “COVID-19” as a barrier and voucher redemption

	<b>Voucher redeemed (yes)</b>
	OR (95% CI)
<b>“COVID-19” selected</b>	
Yes	1.05 (1.02, 1.08)
No	<i>reference</i>
<b>Child’s age</b>	
3	1.36 (1.27, 1.44)
4	1.30 (1.23, 1.38)
5	1.18 (1.11, 1.26)
6	1.04 (0.98, 1.10)
7-8	<i>reference</i>
<b>Gender</b>	
<i>female</i>	1.02 (0.99, 1.05)
<i>male</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Disability</b>	
Yes	0.71 (0.66, 0.77)

	<i>No</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</b>		
	<i>Yes</i>	0.57 (0.54, 0.61)
	<i>Neither</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Non-English primary language at home</b>		
	<i>Yes</i>	0.89 (0.86, 0.92)
	<i>No</i>	<i>reference</i>
<b>Remoteness Structure</b>		
	<i>Metropolitan</i>	<i>reference</i>
	<i>Regional/Remote</i>	1.02 (0.87, 1.20)
<b>Socioeconomic Index</b>		
	<i>Quartile 1 (most disadvantaged)</i>	0.49 (0.47, 0.52)
	<i>Quartile 2</i>	0.77 (0.73, 0.80)
	<i>Quartile 3</i>	0.87 (0.83, 0.91)
	<i>Quartile 4 (most advantaged)</i>	<i>reference</i>

Model was also adjusted for the interaction between remoteness structure and socioeconomic index. See supplementary table 3 for details.

## Discussion

This study that examined the relationship between sociodemographic variables and barrier selection found a range of expected and unexpected findings. As might be expected, barrier selection was associated with reduced voucher redemption for those who indicated cost or considered swimming lessons unimportant.

Interestingly, thinking the child was too young for swimming lessons was not associated with any difference in redemption rates. However, parent/carers of 3-year-olds were over three times as likely to select this barrier than parent/carers of 7-8-year-olds, with all younger ages having higher odds of selection. Additionally, in all models, families with younger children were more likely than families with older children to redeem their voucher. This suggests that providing a voucher specifically for children this age may have prompted some families who would not otherwise have enrolled to begin attending swimming lessons.

Having difficulty finding an available swim school was also not associated with any change in redemption rate. This may simply be because families who knew there was no possibility of redeeming the voucher never registered for one. Findings are now discussed in the context of priority populations.



## First Nations families

Indigenous families had over two times higher odds than non-Indigenous families indicating that the cost of swimming lessons was a barrier, even after adjusting for SEIFA quartile and other sociodemographic variables. This reflects previous findings that Indigenous people tend to experience more disadvantage than average for the SEIFA index of the area they reside in.<sup>24,25</sup> They were also less likely than non-Indigenous families to select any of the other barriers; in particular Indigenous families were 3 times less likely than non-Indigenous families to consider their child too young for swimming lessons, and half as likely think that swimming lessons were not important. This may mean that cost is overwhelmingly the primary barrier for Indigenous families. Indigenous families were just over half as likely to redeem a voucher compared to non-Indigenous families, even after adjusting for selecting any of the barriers, suggests that a \$100 voucher was not enough to overcome the cost barrier, which may be reflective of ongoing disadvantage experienced by this group.<sup>22</sup><sup>26</sup>

## Children living with a disability

Families who had a child living with a disability were 20% more likely to select cost as a barrier compared to families whose child did not have a disability, after adjusting for SEIFA quartile and other sociodemographic variables. This may reflect that parents' income may be reduced due to additional caring responsibilities,<sup>4</sup> and they may have additional disability related costs not covered by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Additionally, NDIS does not provide funding for swimming lessons in early childhood,<sup>27</sup> despite there being increased risks of drowning in this group.<sup>3-5</sup> Parent/carers of a child living with a disability were less likely to select any of the barriers compared to parent/carers of children without disabilities, which may again reflect that cost is the primary barrier for this population. Indeed, after adjusting for barrier selection and other sociodemographic variables, families of children living with disabilities had lower odds of redeeming their voucher. This may also reflect factors such as a possible increase in logistical complexity when attending swimming lessons, for example coordinating additional support people, specialist swim teachers or specialised pool equipment.

## Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families

Interestingly, families who spoke a non-English language at home were less likely to indicate that cost was a barrier to participation in swimming lessons (OR 0.5) after adjusting for SEIFA and sociodemographic variables. This is an unexpected finding that may indicate that only families who were more privileged than average within their SEIFA quartile were captured by the program; families speaking non-English languages at home were disproportionately in the highest SEIFA quartile (33% compared to 26% of English-speaking families). Indeed, non-English speaking families were significantly underrepresented in the sample (20%) compared to the proportion expected according to the 2021 census (30%).<sup>28</sup> Migrant families who reside in NSW on a temporary visa are not eligible for Medicare,<sup>29</sup> meaning they were ineligible for this voucher,<sup>17</sup> which may account for some of this discrepancy.

However, non-English speaking participants indicate that they did not consider swimming lessons important, and that they thought their child was too young for swimming lessons. This, along with qualitative comments entered in the voucher creation survey,<sup>30</sup> supports previous findings that CALD families are less likely to prioritise swimming lessons, with some considering it just another sport or extracurricular activity.<sup>6</sup> Migrants to Australia may come from places where swimming lessons are not common practice,<sup>31</sup> and parental attitudes, including fears, cultural beliefs and levels of encouragement can affect children's perceptions and participation in swimming.<sup>31</sup>

Non-English-speaking families were also more likely than English-speaking families to indicate that they had difficulty finding an available swim school (OR 1.4). This is an unexpected finding considering that participating non-English speaking families were more concentrated in metropolitan areas (97%) where there are more pools,<sup>32</sup> compared to English speaking families (78%), and the only other group with statistically significantly increased odds of reporting this difficulty were those residing in regional/remote areas. Other research suggests that swim schools and swimming venues can be very Eurocentric,<sup>31</sup> and there being few CALD-family specific swim programs available,<sup>6</sup> which may be a contributor to this finding. It is also possible that swim school marketing and promotion may be primarily English-language and not performed in areas with high concentrations of people whose first language is not English. This may have been exacerbated by the short time (5 months) between program announcement and program commencement,<sup>15,33</sup> limiting the time available for message translation and targeting.

Non-English-speaking families also had 1.5 times the odds of selecting COVID-19 as the reason they had not participated in the last 12 months. An uptick of racism, particularly directed towards migrants of Asian backgrounds, but also towards others of non-European descent during COVID-19,<sup>34</sup> combined with many people leaving Australia and/or having difficulty returning during the pandemic<sup>35</sup> could be contributing to this finding.

Non-English-speaking families were also less likely to redeem vouchers, even after adjusting for sociodemographic variables and barrier selection. The factors discussed above: increased odds of thinking their child too young to participate, not considering swimming lessons important, having difficulty finding an available swim school, and the effect of COVID-19, may also explain why non-English speaking families redeemed vouchers less often.

## Families residing in regional/remote areas

Families residing in regional/remote areas were almost four times as likely than families in metropolitan areas to indicate that they had difficulty finding an available swim school, which is consistent with previous findings that swim schools are more concentrated in metropolitan areas.<sup>32</sup> They were also less likely than families in metropolitan areas to indicate that they thought their child was too young, or that they thought swimming lessons were not important or that COVID-19 was the reason they had not participated in the last 12 months. This may indicate an awareness of the greater presence of unavoidable water safety hazards, such as dams and

irrigation channels, that are not present in metropolitan areas,<sup>32</sup> as well as decreased numbers of COVID-19 cases in regional and remote areas.<sup>5</sup>

## Families residing in the lower SEIFA quartiles

Compared to families in the fourth (most advantaged) SEIFA quartile, there was a gradient of increasing odds of indicating that cost was a barrier to participation in swimming lessons with increasing disadvantage, accompanied by a corresponding decreasing gradient in the odds of redeeming the voucher. Families in the lowest SEIFA quartile were also more likely to indicate that they did not consider swimming lessons important, which may reflect that other concerns may be higher priority in this group. These findings suggest that a \$100 voucher may not have been sufficient to overcome cost and other barriers for families residing in the lowest SEIFA areas and adds to the literature identifying income as a determinant health impacting participation in private swimming lessons.<sup>36</sup>

## Effect of having participated in swimming lessons

Compared to families whose child never participated in swimming lessons before, those whose child had previously participated were much less likely to select any of the barriers except for COVID-19, which they were more than two times more likely to select. This was an expected result, as having participated previously implies that non-COVID-19 barriers were not high enough to impede participation altogether. This is supported in that the only other group to have increased odds of selecting COVID-19 was non-English speaking families; in fact, other groups were less likely to select COVID-19, presumably because the other barriers, as discussed above, were more pressing.

Families whose child had previously participated in swimming lessons also had higher odds of redeeming their voucher than those whose child had not participated before, after adjusting for sociodemographic variables. This explains the increased odds of redeeming a voucher when COVID-19 was selected in both the univariable model, and the model adjusted for sociodemographic variables but not participation. These findings suggest that the voucher program, and/or its promotion through swim schools to these children who had previously attended, may have prompted some parent/carers to re-engage with swimming lessons.

## Implications

The cost of swimming lessons was a recurring theme across the priority population groups: in particular, Indigenous families, those residing in the lowest SEIFA areas, and parent/carers of children living with disabilities were all more likely to cite cost as a barrier and less likely to redeem vouchers. This suggests that a \$100 voucher is not enough to overcome the barriers preventing participation in these groups; an unfortunately finding given that they are at increased risk of drowning.<sup>3-6</sup> Evaluations of other universal physical activity benefit schemes, including NSW's Active Kids have found that they disproportionately benefit wealthier families, with additional intervention required to reach disadvantaged groups.<sup>19,37</sup> Targeted financial

assistance, and potentially logistical/equipment assistance for children living with a disability, would benefit Indigenous families, socioeconomically disadvantaged families, and families of children with disabilities.

The findings for families who speak a non-English at home, which is a very diverse group (at least 183 distinct languages were entered by participants), warrants further study to determine which groups are most affected. However, focus group results from a previous study found that many NSW pools did not have a good understanding of cultural needs, and barriers to water safety education, for CALD communities,<sup>6</sup> suggesting that more work needs to be done to increase the number of services that target these groups. Findings that regional/remote families had difficulty finding an available swim school also suggests that supply-side issues are a barrier to participation for many. Given that these groups are both also at additional risk of drowning,<sup>3-6</sup> boosting the swim school industry in general, especially in regional and remote areas of NSW would also increase accessibility for these groups.

## Limitations

The strength of this study is in its reach: parent/carers created vouchers for 56% of the total population of 3–6-year-olds in NSW.<sup>28</sup> However, several limitations to this analysis have been identified. The present study is unable to examine the barriers to swimming lesson participation for those who did not register for a First Lap voucher. While the overall program reached approximately 56% of 3–6-year-old children in NSW, Indigenous children and children speaking non-English languages at home were underrepresented in voucher registrations compared to the 2021 census (5.3% vs 6.2%, and 14% vs 30% respectively).<sup>28</sup> Additionally, grouping together all non-English languages masks that this is a very diverse population. Likewise, disability is grouped together despite encompassing a diverse set of physical and neuro-developmental conditions. The number of missing data for disability was also relatively high compared to other measures, at 1.8% (compared to 3.6% who disclosed the presence of a disability; families may have been wary about disclosing a disability to the government), potentially diluting the accuracy of the analysis. There were very low numbers of participants residing in remote areas, precluding a separate analysis of this group. Finally, the voucher validity period was relatively short (7 months), and concluded in winter. This may have affected registration and redemption rates as delayed awareness of the program until the colder months may have made the program less appealing, or impossible to use as outdoor pools, which are more common in low socioeconomic areas, may have been closed for the winter.<sup>38</sup> Analysis of data from the second validity period (July 2022–June 2023), which spans a whole year, would be important for identifying trends, including whether the reach of the program was improved.

## Conclusion

In its first eligibility period, the First Lap program was able to reach a large proportion (56%) of children aged 3-6 years. Analysis of survey data and voucher redemption was consistent with previous findings concerning barriers to participate in swimming lessons for Indigenous families, children with disabilities, children speaking

languages other than English at home, and families residing in areas with low socioeconomic index or in regional/remote areas. These findings from a much larger study revealed that priority groups were both more likely to report barriers and less likely to use their vouchers. To offset these disadvantages, efforts to enhance the swim school industry's provision of appropriate services should continue alongside targeted assistance for these groups.

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## Appendix

Table 6: Registration form questions

Question	Available responses
Child’s gender	Male Female

	Prefer not to say Other [ free text response ]
Does the child have a disability?	Yes No Prefer not to say
Is the child of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent?	Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander No Prefer not to say
What is the primary language the child speaks at home?	English Arabic Cantonese Greek Italian Mandarin Vietnamese Other [ free text response ]
Residential postcode	[ free text response ]
Has your child ever participated in a learn to swim program?	Yes No Prefer not to say
Has your child participated in a learn to swim program in the last 12 months?	Yes No Prefer not to say
Why have they not participated in the last 12 months?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The cost of swimming lessons is too expensive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I thought my child was too young to participate in swimming lessons <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I did not think swimming lessons were important for preschool-aged children <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> There were no learn to swim schools near where I live <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Covid-19 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other [ free text response ]
Why are you applying for a learn to swim voucher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I think it's important that my child develops water safety and survival skills <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I think it's important that my child gains confidence in the water  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Because I think swimming lessons are part of Australian Culture  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> My family lives close to the water  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For my child's enjoyment and leisure



	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> So my child can engage in physical activity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say [ free text response ]
Would you have enrolled in swimming lessons if you didn't have a \$100 voucher?	Yes No Not sure

## Supplementary tables

Supplementary Table 1: Interaction terms for models between sociodemographic variables and barrier selection.

Supplementary table 1.1: Interaction terms for model of sociodemographic variables and selection of cost.

Term	OR (95% CI)
<b>seifa_quartile Indigenusstatus_2cat</b>	
<b>seifa_quartile(1) by Indigenusstatus_2cat(1)</b>	0.51 (0.41, 0.64)
<b>seifa_quartile(2) by Indigenusstatus_2cat(1)</b>	0.63 (0.51, 0.79)
<b>seifa_quartile(3) by Indigenusstatus_2cat(1)</b>	0.86 (0.67, 1.10)
<b>seifa_quartile Language_2cat</b>	
<b>seifa_quartile(1) by Language_2cat(1)</b>	1.20 (1.08, 1.32)
<b>seifa_quartile(2) by Language_2cat(1)</b>	0.82 (0.73, 0.92)
<b>seifa_quartile(3) by Language_2cat(1)</b>	0.92 (0.83, 1.03)

Supplementary table 1.2: Interaction terms for model of sociodemographic variables and selection of “I thought my child was too young”.

Term	OR (95% CI)
<b>Everparticipated_2cat Ageinyears_5cat</b>	
<b>Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Ageinyears_5cat(1)</b>	1.95 (1.30, 2.92)
<b>Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Ageinyears_5cat(2)</b>	1.62 (1.09, 2.43)
<b>Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Ageinyears_5cat(3)</b>	1.53 (1.02, 2.30)
<b>Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Ageinyears_5cat(4)</b>	1.02 (0.66, 1.56)

Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Disability_2cat(1)	1.63 (1.08, 2.46)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Indigenousstatus_2cat(1)	0.91 (0.56, 1.49)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Language_2cat(1)	1.45 (1.24, 1.70)
ARIA_2cat(1) by Indigenousstatus_2cat(1)	2.27 (1.74, 2.94)
ARIA_2cat(1) by Language_2cat(1)	1.78 (1.42, 2.23)
seifa_quartile Language_2cat	
seifa_quartile(1) by Language_2cat(1)	0.88 (0.78, 0.99)
seifa_quartile(2) by Language_2cat(1)	1.13 (0.98, 1.30)
seifa_quartile(3) by Language_2cat(1)	0.95 (0.83, 1.08)

Supplementary table 1.3: Interaction terms for model of sociodemographic variables and selection of “There were no learn to swim schools”.

Term	OR (95% CI)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by ARIA_2cat(1)	1.82 (1.45, 2.27)
ARIA_2cat seifa_quartile	
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(1)	1.48 (0.97, 2.27)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(2)	0.88 (0.57, 1.37)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(3)	0.73 (0.45, 1.19)

Supplementary table 1.4: Interaction terms for model of sociodemographic variables and selection of “COVID-19”.

Term	OR (95% CI)
Everparticipated_2cat seifa_quartile	
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(1)	0.85 (0.77, 0.94)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(2)	0.81 (0.73, 0.88)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(3)	0.93 (0.84, 1.03)
ARIA_2cat seifa_quartile	
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(1)	0.98 (0.81, 1.19)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(2)	0.74 (0.61, 0.89)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(3)	0.90 (0.72, 1.11)

<b>seifa_quartile Indigenouststatus_2cat</b>	
<b>seifa_quartile(1) by Indigenouststatus_2cat(1)</b>	1.42 (1.14, 1.78)
<b>seifa_quartile(2) by Indigenouststatus_2cat(1)</b>	1.28 (1.03, 1.59)
<b>seifa_quartile(3) by Indigenouststatus_2cat(1)</b>	1.14 (0.89, 1.46)
<b>seifa_quartile Language_2cat</b>	
<b>seifa_quartile(1) by Language_2cat(1)</b>	0.87 (0.79, 0.97)
<b>seifa_quartile(2) by Language_2cat(1)</b>	1.07 (0.95, 1.21)
<b>seifa_quartile(3) by Language_2cat(1)</b>	1.02 (0.91, 1.15)

Supplementary Table 2: Interaction terms for binary logistic models between selected barriers and voucher redemption

	<b>Cost</b>	<b>I did not think swimming lessons were important</b>	<b>COVID-19</b>
<b>Term</b>	<b>OR (95% CI)</b>	<b>OR (95% CI)</b>	<b>OR (95% CI)</b>
ARIA_2cat * seifa_quartile			
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(1)	1.45 (1.22, 1.73)	1.46 (1.22, 1.74)	1.46 (1.22, 1.74)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(2)	1.14 (0.96, 1.35)	1.13 (0.96, 1.35)	1.13 (0.96, 1.35)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(3)	0.91 (0.75, 1.11)	0.91 (0.75, 1.10)	0.91 (0.75, 1.10)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by Indigenouststatus_2cat(1)	1.24 (1.10, 1.41)	1.24 (1.10, 1.41)	1.24 (1.10, 1.40)
Everparticipated_2cat * seifa_quartile			
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(1)	1.19 (1.09, 1.29)	1.19 (1.09, 1.30)	1.19 (1.09, 1.30)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(2)	1.11 (1.03, 1.21)	1.11 (1.03, 1.21)	1.11 (1.03, 1.21)
Everparticipated_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(3)	1.22 (1.12, 1.33)	1.22 (1.12, 1.33)	1.22 (1.12, 1.33)

Supplementary Table 3: Interaction terms for partially adjusted binary logistic model of the relationship between selection of “COVID-19” as a barrier and voucher redemption

<b>Term</b>	<b>OR (95% CI)</b>
ARIA_2cat * seifa_quartile	
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(1)	1.48 (1.25, 1.77)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(2)	1.12 (0.94, 1.33)
ARIA_2cat(1) by seifa_quartile(3)	0.93 (0.76, 1.12)

## **Appendix 8: Discussion guide for Industry – First Lap Evaluation**

### **Welcome**

- Introduce Moderator(s)
  - Name, UNSW Sydney
- Introduce topic
  - Learning to swim is an important component of keeping children safe around the water
  - Not everyone has access or can afford to access learn to swim lessons for young children
- This discussion is for a research project
  - Evaluating the First Lap Learn to Swim Voucher program
  - Funded by the NSW Government Office of Sport and independently conducted by researchers at UNSW Sydney and the George Institute for Global Health
  - Have gathered information from parents and carers via registration and redemption data and surveys, now want to speak to industry
  - Interested to hear today about your experiences in implementing the voucher scheme and the impact its had from an industry perspective

### **Guidelines**

- There are no right or wrong answers, just different points of view
  - Please feel free to share your honest perspectives
- We are audio recording this session & using the automatic transcription feature in Microsoft Teams to create a written documentation of what was said
  - We are recording because it's hard to write everything down quickly
  - We will use first names in discussions only
  - In analysing the transcripts any names or identifying information will be removed
  - Transcripts will be used to extract important quotes and themes across a range of interviewees from industry to represent the sectors views in the Final Evaluation Report back to Office of Sport
  - Our discussion should take about 30-45 minutes today
- My role as moderator
  - Help guide discussions and prompt for further information while also using questions listed on this discussion guide?
  - Are there any questions before we begin?

### **Opening questions & First Lap Provider Registration**

- So let's begin. Can we please start with your name, title and organisation you work for?
- How many facilities do you have and are they registered to redeem First Lap Vouchers?
- First we'll go back to the start of the program, how easy was it to register as a First Lap provider?

### **Voucher use**

- How easy is it to redeem vouchers?
  - Were there any teething issues at the start or any ongoing issues from the provider side with redemption?
- How do you receive the vouchers (paper based, QR code, emailed in)?
- On what types of lessons/programs can they be used on?

- Can someone just redeem a voucher for 5 lessons and do no more at your swim school or do they need to participate in a minimum of one terms' worth of lessons?
- Can the voucher be redeemed for \$100 worth of lessons?
- Did you have any issues with redemption from the parent/carer side (vouchers expiring, not working etc)?
- Who are the types of customers typically using these vouchers?
  - Are these new or existing customers? Do they tend to continue on after voucher has been fully redeemed if a new customer?

#### **Impact on business**

- Have you seen an increase in the uptake in swimming lessons among children 3-6 years of age since the scheme was introduced?
- Have you made any changes to the business side since the scheme was introduced (ie more teachers, using more pool space, more classes put on)?
- Have there been any other impacts you'd like to share (positive or negative) on your business/pool?
- Have you got any thoughts on the impact of the scheme more broadly on industry?

#### **Final thoughts**

- Do you have any final thoughts on the scheme from the parent/caregiver side?
- Do you have any final thoughts on the scheme from the industry side?
- Do you think the scheme should continue? Why/Why not?
  - If yes, should it continue in the same way?
  - Or do you have any changes you'd suggest?

Thank you for your time. Moderator to close off recording.

## Appendix 9: Economic evaluation sensitivity analyses

Table A: CBA of 25% increase in total administrative costs associated with delivering the program

Results of CBA (\$M)	2021/22		2022/23		Total	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)
Total provider benefit	6.4	17.9	6.4	17.9	<b>12.8</b>	<b>35.8</b>
Total consumer benefit	15.4	15.4	11.1	11.1	<b>26.5</b>	<b>26.5</b>
Total benefit	21.8	33.3	17.5	29	<b>39.3</b>	<b>62.3</b>
Total cost	19.8	19.8	15.3	15.3	<b>35.1</b>	<b>35.1</b>
Benefit-cost ratio	1.10	1.68	1.14	1.90	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.77</b>

Table B: CBA of 15% increase in redemption of First Lap vouchers

Results of CBA (\$M)	2021/22		2022/23		Total	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)
Total provider benefit	6.4	17.9	6.4	17.9	<b>12.8</b>	<b>35.8</b>
Total consumer benefit	15.4	15.4	11.1	11.1	<b>26.5</b>	<b>26.5</b>
Total benefit	21.8	33.3	17.5	29	<b>39.3</b>	<b>62.3</b>
Total cost	19.8	19.8	15.3	15.3	<b>35.1</b>	<b>35.1</b>
Benefit-cost ratio	1.10	1.68	1.14	1.90	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.77</b>

Table C: CBA of increased spread of provider benefits to 300 providers

<b>Results of CBA (\$M)</b>	2021/22		2022/23		<b>Total</b>	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	<b>Salary Estimate (lower bound)</b>	<b>Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)</b>
Total provider benefit	9.6	26.8	9.6	26.8	<b>19.2</b>	<b>53.6</b>
Total consumer benefit	15.4	15.4	11.1	11.1	<b>26.5</b>	<b>26.5</b>
Total benefit	25	42.2	20.7	37.9	<b>45.7</b>	<b>80.1</b>
Total cost	15.8	15.8	12.2	12.2	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
Benefit-cost ratio	1.58	2.67	1.70	3.11	<b>1.63</b>	<b>2.86</b>

Table D: CBA using the Willingness to Pay valuation of the most disadvantaged SEIFA quartile (1) respondents to estimate consumer benefits

<b>Results of CBA (\$M)</b>	2021/22		2022/23		<b>Total</b>	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	<b>Salary Estimate (lower bound)</b>	<b>Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)</b>
Total provider benefit	6.4	17.9	6.4	17.9	<b>12.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>
Total consumer benefit	15.4	15.4	11.1	11.1	<b>26.5</b>	<b>15.4</b>
Total benefit	21.8	33.3	17.5	29	<b>39.3</b>	<b>21.8</b>
Total cost	15.8	15.8	12.2	12.2	<b>28</b>	<b>15.8</b>
Benefit-cost ratio	1.38	2.11	1.43	2.38	<b>1.40</b>	<b>1.38</b>

Table E: CBA using the Willingness to Pay valuation of the second most disadvantaged SEIFA quartile (2) respondents to estimate consumer benefits

<b>Results of CBA (\$M)</b>	2021/22		2022/23		<b>Total</b>	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	<b>Salary Estimate (lower bound)</b>	<b>Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)</b>
Total provider benefit	6.4	17.9	6.4	17.9	<b>12.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>
Total consumer benefit	15.3	15.3	11	11	<b>26.3</b>	<b>15.3</b>
Total benefit	21.7	33.2	17.4	28.9	<b>39.1</b>	<b>21.7</b>
Total cost	15.8	15.8	12.2	12.2	<b>28</b>	<b>15.8</b>



Benefit-cost ratio	1.37	2.10	1.43	2.37	<b>1.40</b>	<b>1.37</b>
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Table F: CBA using the Willingness to Pay valuation of the second most advantaged SEIFA quartile (3) respondents to estimate consumer benefits

Results of CBA (\$M)	2021/22		2022/23		Total	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)
Total provider benefit	6.4	17.9	6.4	17.9	<b>12.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>
Total consumer benefit	15.8	15.8	11.3	11.3	<b>27.1</b>	<b>15.8</b>
Total benefit	22.2	33.7	17.7	29.2	<b>39.9</b>	<b>22.2</b>
Total cost	15.8	15.8	12.2	12.2	<b>28</b>	<b>15.8</b>
Benefit-cost ratio	1.41	2.13	1.45	2.39	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.41</b>

Table G: CBA using the Willingness to Pay valuation of the most advantaged SEIFA quartile (4) respondents to estimate consumer benefits

Results of CBA (\$M)	2021/22		2022/23		Total	
	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)	Salary Estimate (lower bound)	Broader Economic Estimate (upper bound)
Total provider benefit	6.4	17.9	6.4	17.9	<b>12.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>
Total consumer benefit	15.6	15.6	11.2	11.2	<b>26.8</b>	<b>15.6</b>
Total benefit	22	33.5	17.6	29.1	<b>39.6</b>	<b>22</b>
Total cost	15.8	15.8	12.2	12.2	<b>28</b>	<b>15.8</b>
Benefit-cost ratio	1.39	2.12	1.44	2.39	<b>1.41</b>	<b>1.39</b>