

Pool result hanging on referendum

■ Josh Nyman

Denmark's chances of securing Federal funding to help establish a \$9.3 million aquatic centre in the town will hinge on the result of a referendum held in coming weeks.

On Tuesday, Denmark Shire Council resolved to issue roughly 3600 ballot papers to eligible ratepayers in the first ever referendum held in the local government's 101-year history.

A referendum was first proposed by council in December last year to ascertain whether ratepayers

would be willing to foot a quarantined rate increase to add \$534,000 per year towards the project.

The five-page ballot paper contains information such as specification details, indicative concept plans, funding requirements, likely build times and proposed rate increases to help finance the project.

Shire chief executive Dale Stewart said the referendum ballot paper was likely to be forwarded on March 15 and was one that council was "satisfied" with after spending three hours of "due

rigour" deliberating on the item.

He added that the outcome of the referendum, which will be counted on April 5, was critical in moving forward to any Regional Development Australia funding applications.

"It determines everything about the pool," he said.

"The whole project in theory is on hold and council will determine how or whether it progresses predominantly, but not solely, on the conviction and outcome of the referendum."

Council is likely to consider the

referendum result at either its April 16 or May 7 meeting.

Features of the proposed facility adjacent to the town's existing recreation centre include a heated multi-lane pool, additional program pool, raised gallery seating, enlarged creche and take on a solar passive design.

Project proponent Denmark Aquatic Centre Committee (DACCI) has been pushing for Regional Development Australia funding to aid the project's expense.

DACCI chairman Cyril Edwards said RDA assessors would need to

see a clear willingness to accept running costs once the pool became operational.

"If the referendum comes in negative that's the end of the pool for ever," he said. "If it comes in positive and it goes ahead then we'll have a magnificent building the Shire can be proud of that will attract tourists, improve community health and wellbeing, you name it we'll have it."

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