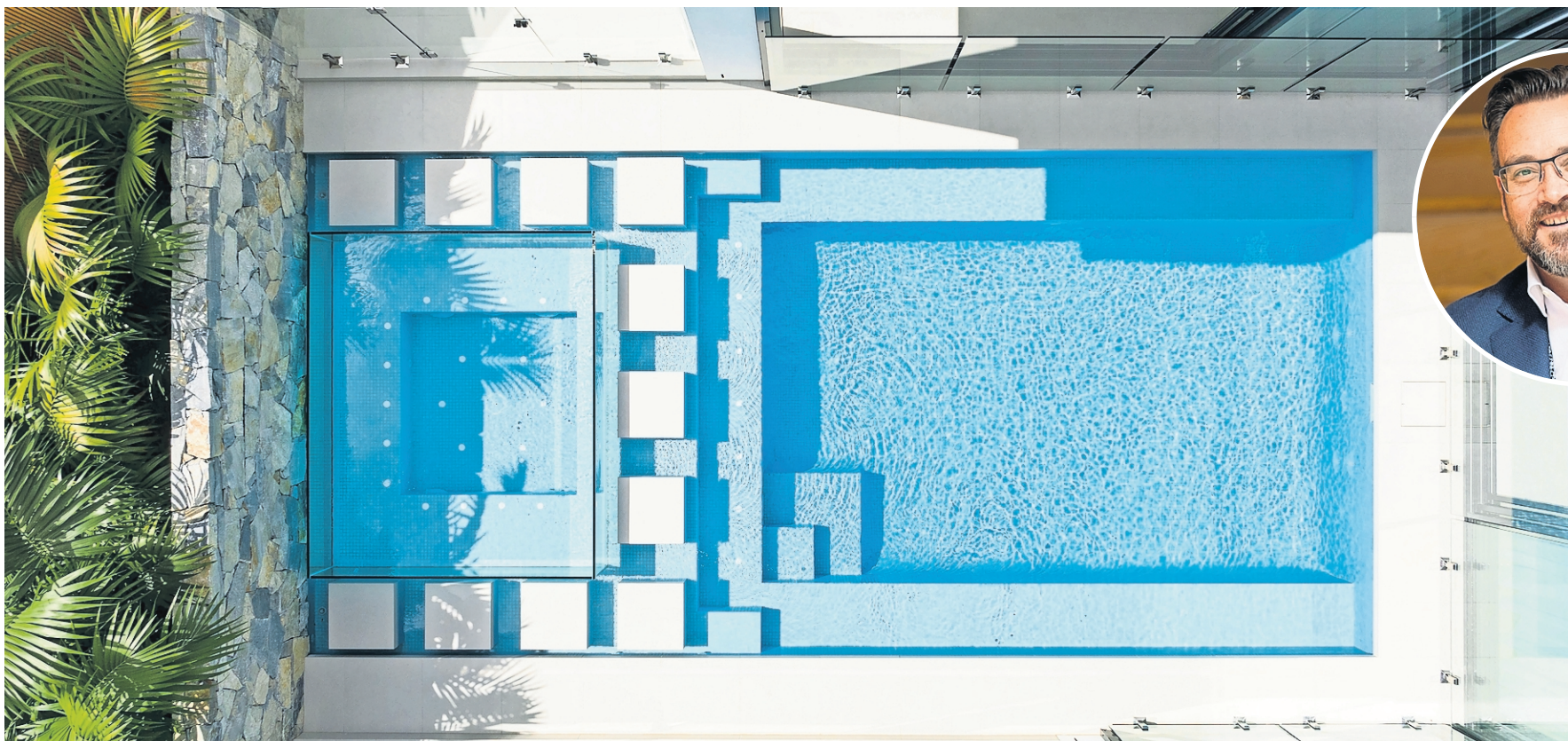


Swimming pools



Lindsay McGrath is chief executive of SPASA, the national peak body for the pool and spa industry. Left: 2024 Pool of the Year (NSW), by Transform Pools and Spas.

Serving members and the community

A not-for-profit tax status is helping organisations to build healthier, happier and greener communities. By investing every dollar that the organisation receives back into its growth, organisations can create lasting change that benefits all Australians.

The Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission (ACNC) reports a not-for-profit (NFP) organisation is one that does not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit of particular people, such as shareholders.

An NFP can make a profit, but any profit must be used for its purpose – and while all registered charities must be not-for-profit, not all not-for-profits are charities.

The Department of Social Services reports about 600,000 not-for-profit organisations operated in Australia in 2023, with about 60,000 of them registered as charities with ACNC.

Non-charitable NFPs, such as the Swimming Pool and Spa Association (SPASA), operate to serve the interests of their members as well as the community.

SPASA chief executive Lindsay McGrath says these NFPs can make a significant impact across various sectors in diverse ways.

“SPASA is a perfect example of an NFP operating in the best interests of its members while delivering benefits that impact communities nationwide,” he says.

“As the national peak body for the pool and spa industry, we are committed to promoting, protecting and growing a sector that enhances lifestyles, strengthens businesses and contributes to the wellbeing of society. Our purpose statement

is to deliver a happier and healthier community through the enjoyment of a quality pool and spa – and the happy, healthier community part of it is what keeps us all motivated.

“Although SPASA’s members build pools, service pools, certify fencing and keep people safe, fundamentally, the entire industry gets people in the backyard, gets kids away from screens, brings families together.

“A quarter of our population under the age of 12 is overweight or obese and you can’t be on screens if you swim.

“So to get people in the backyard, enjoying water, it’s not about the pool – it’s about that happy and healthy community.”

Since SPASA was founded in 2011, the organisation has evolved from a fragmented collection of state-based groups to become a unified national body. McGrath was its initial employee and it now has 25 full-time employees, serving more than 1800 members.

“Being a national body allows us to advocate more effectively, provide unmatched support and offer resources to our members,” he says.

“Our expansion reflects the increasing need for advocacy, education and industry support.

“The growth of our team has been crucial in managing the complexity of the pool and spa industry, allowing us to serve our members and drive positive change.”

Its “surplus for purpose” operating model allows for profit investment immediately and constantly, also benefiting the community.

McGrath says SPASA’s annual profit has grown from \$350,000 to \$8 million in the past six years,

“We can always do more to benefit someone to get into a pool and spend time laughing and splashing with a friend.”

Lindsay McGrath

through organic growth, mergers and acquisitions, an enviable track record marked by the group’s inclusion in this year’s *AFR* Fast 100. For the past five years, SPASA has launched a new product every 90 days.

In the past year alone, its SPLASH! Trade Expo became the largest pool and spa trade show to be held in the southern hemisphere, while the Pool Spa Life initiative for consumers was launched, including the *Pool Spa Life Australia* TV show and Pool Spa Life Expos in all mainland states.

SPASA also continues to develop nationally recognised qualifications for industry professionals, such as the Certificate III and IV in swimming pool and spa building and service, as well as free e-learning modules offered through its Institute of Research and Learning.

Along with its Master Pool Builders program, SPASA trains, mentors and upskills tradespeople to obtain modern, high-level skills while also

providing pool professionals with career growth opportunities. Meanwhile, its Climate Care Certified program sets a benchmark for sustainable pool and spa ownership, addressing environmental challenges through innovation.

“It highlights to consumers, the government and our members that the industry is being respectful of water and energy and noise, and highlights the value of the products and services that are delivered by members that are really setting best practice,” McGrath says.

“NFP is a tax status, not a strategy, so every dollar we generate is reinvested into initiatives like training, sustainability programs, communication and advocacy to continue delivering value to our members and the community.”

SPASA members also can access resources including technical support, HR tools and education sessions, and attend more than 70 national events each year.

“A massive part of Australian culture is being around water – one in six homes in Australia has a pool – and I think we’ve all got really cool memories of being in the pool at every age,” McGrath says.

“We give people a good quality of life and, in amongst that, we create great careers.

“Whether it’s the prefabricated \$6000 pool bought from one of our retailers or you’re building a \$250,000 amazing pool that’s on the front cover of one of our magazines, it’s about having that great time around the pool with your loved ones.

“Our consistent improvement business model is funded by a culture that we can always do more to benefit someone to get into a pool and spend time laughing and splashing with a friend.”

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