

DONNA BARRIOS, MBA

HEALTH & FITNESS, AQUATIC & RECREATION FACILITIES (INCLUDING MULTI-SITE)
TURNAROUNDS, GROWTH & CRISIS EVASION & MANAGEMENT

*Catalyst behind the innovative solutions
that turn failing operations into flourishing
community health and leisure centres.*



INFLUENTIAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS LEADER,

with 10+ year success story in multi-site operational leadership for the Willoughby Council and YMCA Sydney. Harnesses Health and Wellness credentials and background as well as MBA to synchronously boost community health and wellbeing, centre revenues and memberships.

NIMBLE CHANGE AGENT AND COMMUNITY BUILDER,

who turned 2X, YOY million-dollar lossmaking leisure centres—into 7-digit powerhouses. Embeds a culture of "We have the power to change lives" in all aspects of operations and all levels within organisations—to maximise health and wellbeing promotion for members.

SIGNATURE STRENGTHS & COMPETENCIES

Operations Management & Turnarounds (Leisure Facilities) • Health & Wellness • Multi-Facility Oversight • Process Redesign
Aquatic & Sport & Recreation Programs, Services, Events & Facilities • Performance Improvement • Risk Management
Future-Focused Strategic Planning & Delivery • Team Leadership, Mentoring & Training • Community Engagement & Outcomes
Workplace Safety & Culture Building • Member/Customer Experience & Retention • Revenue Growth, Marketing & Promotions

LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP & GROWTH, CHANGE MANAGEMENT & STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Saved and grew 2X failing leisure centres and reversed business bleed expected to hit \$1M without strategic intervention.

Devised and implemented 1-year retention strategy that garnered 5K gym appointments over 12 months (against 1.8K in the previous year) and elevated trainer occupancy from 7% to 85%.

Increased member retention by 90% and overall satisfaction by 80%, through replacing the outdated (10-year-old) Group Fitness timetable with a new program centred on member survey requests.

Increased monthly gym appointments by 200% and annual group fitness participation by 120%.

More than doubled Group Fitness numbers from 3K to 6.8K, achieving #1 position for YMCA attendance in 2016 and 2017.

HEALTH & WELLNESS LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL | Sydney, NSW | 2018–Current

Offering both aquatic and leisure facilities focusing on the health and wellbeing of residents across Sydney's western region.


HEALTH & FITNESS UNIT MANAGER

WILLOUGHBY LEISURE CENTRE, WHITLAM LEISURE CENTRE & THE CIVIC CENTRE

Oversight: Health & Fitness Budget | Operations & Capital Works in Partnership with Centre Manager | **Reports:** ~200

Grew Group Fitness programming by 17K within the first 12 months and appointments by over X3 better.

Leveraged extensive expertise in disruptive innovation to turn around 2X failing leisure centres— Willoughby Leisure Centre (WLC) and Whitlam Leisure Centre (WLC) Health and Fitness—and reverse business bleed projected to hit \$1M without strategic intervention. Rebuilt entire operation (teams, processes, services, compliance, SLAs, and KPIs) for 2 separate facilities—powered under a single operational structure—aligned with Willoughby City Council's "Community First" focus.



Just as no two problems are alike, neither are the solutions. I looked deep within existing operations to determine what was working and what was failing. I then formed a strategy and executed it to attain record-breaking results.

Selected Highlights:

- **DISASTER MANAGEMENT:** Chosen for 2-member team to bolster CEO and 3X Head Directors in managing Willoughby City Council's COVID-19 response and recovery (4-year plan, municipal health, and wellbeing plan communications, reporting, and feedback).
- **WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY:** Created and executed all risk assessments and COVID safe work plans for the facilities. Also assisted other departments (libraries and neighbourhood houses) to develop same. Facilitate monthly centre audits.
- **CRISIS AVOIDANCE:** Combated COVID-19 triggered commercial pressure (abrupt facility closures)—while gaining competitive advantage as "first movers" in the leisure arena—and maintained staff/community engagement—after championing a series of high-ROI strategies. *Initiatives sparked interest from other leisure facilities asking for advice and feedback.*
 - **YouTube:** Fast-tracked launch of Willoughby's Leisure Centre YouTube Channel. In 12 weeks: shared 99 videos amassing 9K+ views and amassed 185 subscribers viewing 580+ hours of content (classes, workouts, COVID-19 communication, water safety tips and member challenges). Leveraged social media platforms to drive traffic to YouTube.
 - **Les Mills on Demand:** Targeted high-risk obesity, inactivity, and low socioeconomic status within the community, by extending 60-day free memberships to "Les Mills on Demand" platform. The online group fitness platform delivers 800+ workouts across 13 categories and serves all ages/abilities (2+) on multiple devices (phone, TV, laptop).
 - **Revenue Diversification and Service Stability:** Launched 5-week online coaching program to sustain community links, motivation, and accountability through multiple lockdowns. Enrolments outdid expectations (80+). The program featured individualised Health and Wellbeing programs, 2-weekly check-ins with trainers, training and nutrition support via private Facebook group and Q&A sessions hosted by Willoughby Leisure Centre's Health and Fitness experts.

Leisure Facility Management:

- **WHITLAM LEISURE CENTRE:** Brought in new equipment without compromising valuable floor space, by reconfiguring and modernising the gym floor layout and maximising functional training space. **Introduced 24-hour gym for full access members. Launched indoor CYCLE and RPM classes**—facilitated virtually and live by instructors within Willoughby's Tom Taafe room—using the latest technology and bike (IC7). Led room revamp, including a new virtual screen and audio system.
- **WILLOUGHBY LEISURE CENTRE:** Managed the construction and set-up of Willoughby Leisure Centre (SALC) pop-up gym—a first of its kind in Australia. Engineered in Germany to custom design, the 200m² pop-up gym includes multiple training zones hosting cardio gear, pin loaded weight machines, a stretching area, and a sizeable free weights area. Each piece of training equipment was exclusively selected to meet customer needs and best practices in the fitness industry.
- **MEMBER SATISFACTION:** Increased member retention by 90% and overall satisfaction 80% by replacing the outdated (10-year-old) Group Fitness timetable with a new program centred on member survey requests. Also introduced virtual fitness, EVOLT, a Body Composition Analyser and classes at local parks and community halls. Transformed a storage room into an RPM room. *Initiative garnered community support and resulted in other leisure facilities asking for help to improve their operations.*
- **CULTURE TRANSFORMATION:** Inspired a crucial shift in workplace culture from one of low morale, underperformance, and uncertainty to a high performing, highly engaged and content team. Built solid and trust-based relationships with all employees, meeting personally with each individual to first understand concerns and then address those issues via strategic change. *Results were highly praised by the Centre Manager and used by Council as a good news story.*
- **PARTICIPATION GROWTH:** Empowered team to increase participation rates for Group Fitness by a record-breaking 17K in first year of hire. Introduced "first-ever" KPIs that shifted accountability for realising targets to the entire team. Targets and progress were discussed at weekly/monthly meetings. *Active members for 18/19 were at 2.17K against 1.1K for 17/18.*
- **MEMBERSHIP UPSURGE:** Achieved 5K gym appointments over 12 months (against 1.8K in previous year) and elevated trainer occupancy from 7% to 85%. Devised and implemented 1-year retention strategy with a focus on actively engaging with members at regular touchpoints—and introduced a new appointment platform (Member Program Pathway).



The solutions to the YMCA's operational problems weren't revolutionary. My corrective strategy centred on the big picture—enhancing service delivery and team knowledge, mirroring member requests with program offerings and keeping abreast of trends, emerging technologies and resources/equipment in the health and wellness space.

YMCA SYDNEY | Sydney, VIC | 2012–2018

A charitable, not-for-profit community organisation that has served the Sydney community for more than 160 years. Together with their partners, they address community needs whilst building strong people, strong families, and strong communities.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE MANAGER | CARINGBAH SPORT & LEISURE CENTRE (2017-2018)


Direct/Indirect Reports: 30 | Reported to: Centre Manager

Boosted member participation by 12% and launched YMCA NSW's first "Caringbah Membership."

Promoted by Centre Manager to enhance leadership performance and overall member experiences within the centre. Managed and developed group fitness, health and wellness programs, training programs and childcare services. Generated new business and memberships, oversaw sales and marketing, and inspired a "club culture" among members and guests.

Selected Highlights:

- **OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP:** Supported Centre Manager in leading a team of 30+ health and fitness specialists, administrators, and child educators to deliver a high level of service to patrons maximising member experiences and retention.
 - Oversaw the enrichment of member experiences for over 1 million centre users throughout the year.
 - Maintained a competitive awareness of newcomers to the space and emerging trends in health and wellness.
 - Contributed to the development of budgets and marketing strategies, implemented the financial plan and monitored and reported budget targets and outcomes for the centre.
- **CORRECTIVE STRATEGY:** Accelerated centre performance, enhanced service delivery, increased sales and paved the way for future capability by rebuilding the talent pool from the leadership team down to frontline and sales staff. *Initiatives aligned team output with business needs, enhanced member service satisfaction, reduced membership cancellations and increased revenue through the motivated team. Senior Managers praised early results.*
 - Initiated and led strategic human capital restructure and training assignment. Identified performance gaps, sourced and blended high-potential talent with the existing team, cultivated a progressive workplace culture and introduced a comprehensive training platform and performance management process.
 - Overcame a team culture of bad habits and low productivity. Refocused and united team by providing infrastructure, accountability, and visible leadership. Increased output and service delivery via daily meetings and training. Built a team of top senior leaders to stabilise and lead the centre through a journey of much-needed change.
- **MEMBERSHIP EXPANSION:** Progressively grew membership sales and active member numbers—designed and led a robust membership expansion strategy in collaboration with the Sales Director and Centre Manager.
 - Strategy encompassed initiatives in critical areas: budgets and forecasting, member acquisitions and retention, internal referral systems and campaigns, and sales, marketing, and promotions. Also managed staff recruitment, training programs and performance management, policies and procedures analysis and redesign and customer service.
 - Launched YMCA NSW's first "Caringbah Membership" enabling members to discover and utilise the facilities across 4 centres, including Caringbah ARC, Caringbah RACE, CentrePoint Leisure Centre, and Camden Indoor Leisure Centre.
- **MEMBER RETENTION & ACQUISITION OPTIMISATION:** Amplified member retention and acquisition, streamlined internal processes and increased revenue—initiated and led the large-scale project. Early results resulted in significant increases.
 - Refocused team to drive down member cancellations, achieving a reduction of almost 2% for the 2016/17 FY.
 - Maintained strong membership growth in a highly competitive market of aquatic and recreation facilities.
 - Redesigned and executed tighter processes to ensure member engagement through strategic, systematic contact.
 - Introduced a monthly campaign with a free program offering to boost membership acquisition. Also purchased equipment to bolster monthly campaigns. Note: May 2017 alone resulted in a 12% increase in member participation.



Strategy without process is little more than a wish list. Without strategy, execution is useless. Without execution, strategy is worthless. I instilled passion within the team, embraced innovation, built on core skills and pursued growth with vigour.

HEALTH & WELLNESS DIRECTOR | CARINGBAH ARC (2014-2016)

Reported to: Centre Manager | Direct/Indirect Reports: 6

Hand-picked to oversee the management of the Health Club, Group Fitness, Health and Wellness and Personal Training programs within the Caringbah ARC. Challenged to revitalise key operational areas of the business, including team performance, member participation, programming, and customer satisfaction.

Selected Highlights:

- **TEAM ALIGNMENT & REFORM:** Built and led a high-performance team of Health and Wellness Specialists across multiple areas handling 20,000+ member visits per week, resourcefully creating positive and memorable customer experiences.
 - Reversed a history of team non-performance by designing and implementing a solid strategy for change—introduced individual performance appraisals and measures, one-on-one coaching and group training. *Initiative boosted team morale, productivity and satisfaction and subsequently increased customer service and revenue for the centre.*
- **PARTNER RELATIONS:** Bolstered relations with council partner, the City of Caringbah, influenced the addition of 200+ new, council employee memberships and enhanced Caringbah Arc's reputation within the community. Led the Council-exclusive event showcasing the facilities, service offerings and Health and Wellness programs facilitated by the centre. *Event was a success resulting in approval from the Council and 200+ new memberships.*
- **HEALTH CLUB PROGRAM REVITALISATION:** Tripled Health Club appointments from 150 to 450 per month, streamlined session programming, and enhanced member experiences.
 - Redesigned the appointment process, including the new Personal Success Plan template with clear structure around programming, terminology, and record keeping. Initiative was considered best practice by senior leaders and rolled out to other YMCAs across Sydney.
- **ATTENDANCE GROWTH:** More than doubled Group Fitness numbers from 3,000 to 6,800, achieving #1 position for YMCA attendance in 2016 and 2017—initiated and led the complex transformation of the outdated Group Fitness Timetable. Initial modifications resulted in over 20 changes to the calendar.
 - Timetabled fitness classes in line with customer survey information in collaboration with Group Fitness Team Leader.
- **PERSONAL INNOVATION:** Modernised the centre with high-tech and "YMCA NSW first" equipment comprising a Body Composition Analyser, Aqua Spin Bikes, and advanced digital screens. *Ingenuity elevated the centre's reputation and brand, increased casual visitation, and positioned the centre for future growth.*
 - Introduced a Caringbah ARC app enabling customers to receive notifications, access current class timetables and instructor changes, read general information and locate the centre. *Improvements to app included pool bookings.*
 - Reinforced the centre's online presence, exclusively managing all social media platforms and the website.
- **OPERATIONS:** Directed business performance and improvements in key areas of finance, human resources, member experience, marketing and program communication, sales and retention, business planning and customer satisfaction.

EDUCATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CERTIFICATIONS & REGISTRATIONS

Master of Business Administration, MBA, RMIT University, Sydney, NSW

Certificate 3 & 4 in Fitness, Camden TAFE, Sydney, NSW | Certificate 4 in Small Business, Caringbah TAFE, Sydney, NSW

Customer Experience & Tech Fest, Two Day Workshop | Filex, Fitness Convention 4-day Workshop

Level 2 First Aid & Anaphylaxis Accreditation | Registered with Physical Activity Australia | Working with Children Check
Human Resources | Recruitment | Financial Budgeting | Challenge Fitness Camp / Boot Camp | Boxing Basics

Lift for Life & Beat it Program - Specialising in Diabetes & Chronic Disease
Mental Health (Beyond Blue) Trainer in Youth & Trainer in Older Adults, YMCA NSW