

the new south wales drowning report.

Royal Life Saving NSW

welcome

Welcome to the New South Wales 2006 Drowning Report. This report outlines information of unintentional aquatic related drowning deaths for the year 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006.

Royal Life Saving is focused on continual improvement of water safety initiatives for the prevention of drowning and near-drowning in keeping with recommendations in the National Water Safety Plan 2004-2007. Drowning and near-drowning has been recognised by State and Commonwealth governments as a priority area in injury prevention.

Continual monitoring, analysis and dissemination of drowning information will assist with identifying and prioritising future prevention strategies and programs.

overview

One hundred and two (102) people lost their lives as a result of drowning /immersion incidents in NSW during the year 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006. This figure is slightly less than last year's 104 drowning deaths, yet is higher than the 5 year average of 99.

The international standard for reporting death by drowning is as a rate per 100,000 of the total population. Based upon Australian Bureau of Statistics figures current as at 31 March 2006, the NSW population was 6,817,100. This indicates a drowning rate of 1.50 per 100,000 people compared to the 2004/2005 rate of 1.53.

methods

Information for this report has primarily been collected through the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) and supplemented with information from Coronial offices and media reports collected throughout the year. Every effort is taken to ensure that the results are as accurate as possible at the time of printing; however, the numbers may change based on ongoing coronial investigations. It should be noted that intentional drownings (homicides and suicides) were not included in the analysis.

who is drowning

Gender

This year 85 (83%) males and 17 (17%) females drowned in NSW (1 unknown). The over-representation of males is typical of national and international injury and drowning statistics.

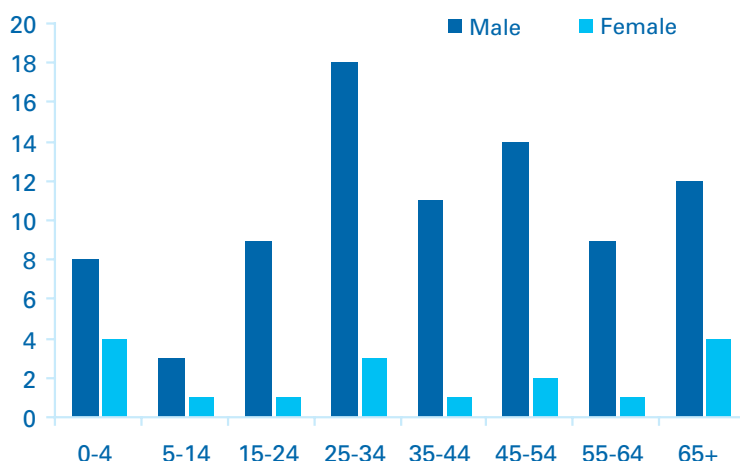
Age

Drowning deaths were fairly evenly distributed across all adult age groups with the exception of the 25-34 age group where the number of drowning deaths were significantly higher. There were increases in both the 0-4 (12) and 5-14 years age groups (4).

The greatest increase this year was found in the 25-34 year age group, with an increase of 7 from last year. The greatest decrease was in the 65+ age group, which is encouraging, as numbers appeared to be steadily increasing each year.

FIGURE 1:

NSW Drowning by Age Group and Gender 2005/2006



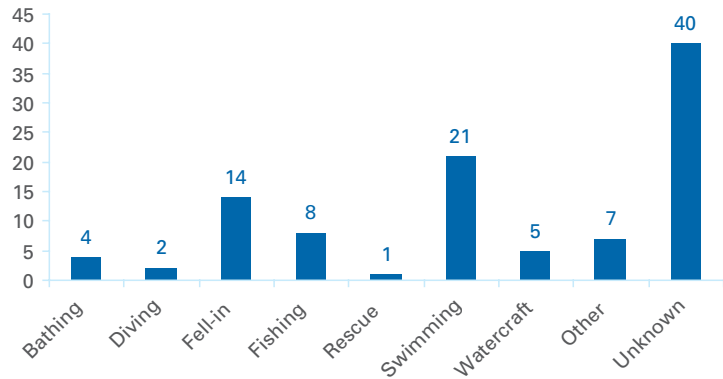
cost of drowning to nsw

There have been a number of studies in Australia examining the lifetime cost of a drowning death. The studies show a death due to drowning comes at a cost ranging between \$370,000 and \$610,467 to the broader community. With 102 drowning deaths, the cost to the NSW community is estimated between \$37.74 million and \$62.27 million.

what where they doing?

The vast majority of drowning deaths occurred whilst swimming 21 (21%) and unintentional falls into water contributed 14 (14%). Of concern are the 8 (8%) deaths that resulted from fishing, up from 4 in 2004/05 (See Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: NSW Drowning by Activity 2005/2006



when are people drowning?



While summer is typically thought of as the peak season for drowning due to the warmer weather, the 2005/2006 year provided significant spring and autumn figures. Whilst the majority of drowning deaths occurred during summer 45 (44%), autumn contributed 24 deaths (23%), and spring with 16 deaths (16%).

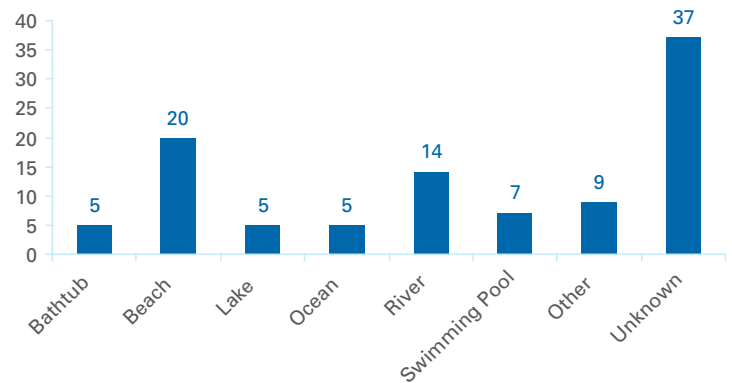
The cooler winter months still provided 17 deaths (17%) to the annual total. Care must be taken all year round, as rock fishing and bathtub drownings are more common during the winter months.

where are people drowning?

The main locations where people drown are shown in Figure 3, and include beaches, rivers and swimming pools. In 2005/2006, the majority of people drowned in beaches and inland waterways such as lakes and rivers.

Drowning deaths in rivers (14) have significantly increased from last year's figure of 6, resulting in a 133% increase. The flat still surface of an inland waterway can give a false sense of security - currents, even in seemingly tranquil waterways can prove dangerous.

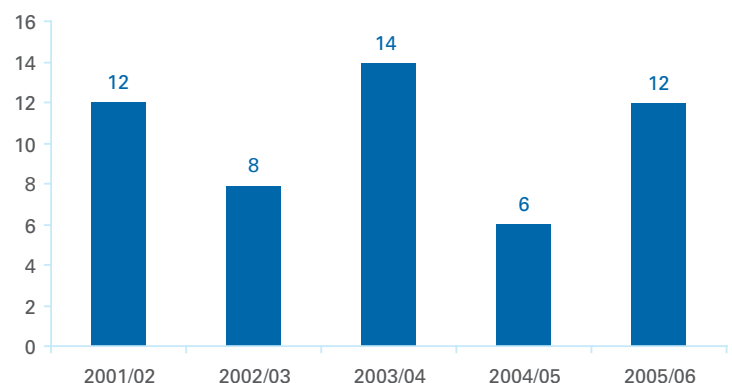
FIGURE 3: NSW Drowning by Location 2005/2006



the 0 - 4 year age group

The 0-4 year age group is identified as one of the highest 'at risk' priority groups in the National Water Safety Plan 2004-2007 and is therefore a focus for drowning prevention strategies such as Royal Life Saving's Keep Watch Program. In NSW, 12 children aged 0-4 years drowned in 2005/2006. This reveals a significant increase from last year's figures, in which 6 children drowned. Fluctuation in drowning figures is evident on a year to year basis. A five-year average provides a more tangible indication of drowning amongst children 0-4 years. The current five year average is 10.4 drowning deaths per year in NSW.

FIGURE 4: NSW 0-4 Drowning 2002-2006



Of the 12 drowning deaths in the 0-4 year age group, 6 drowned in swimming pools (all in home swimming pools), 2 in baths, 1 in a pond and 3 in an unknown location.

Of these 12 drowning deaths, 4 of these occurred in the Sydney Metropolitan area and 8 in Rural New South Wales, with the majority of these occurring during autumn (5) and spring (4) illustrating that parents and carers of toddlers need to be as vigilant in colder months, as toddlers drown all year round.



near-drowning in nsw

NSW INJURY PROFILE: A REVIEW OF INJURY HOSPITALISATIONS DURING 1989–1990 TO 2003–2004
NSW Injury Risk Management Research Centre

While drowning-related mortality represents a portion of the drowning burden in NSW, many more individuals are hospitalised in NSW following a near-drowning incident.

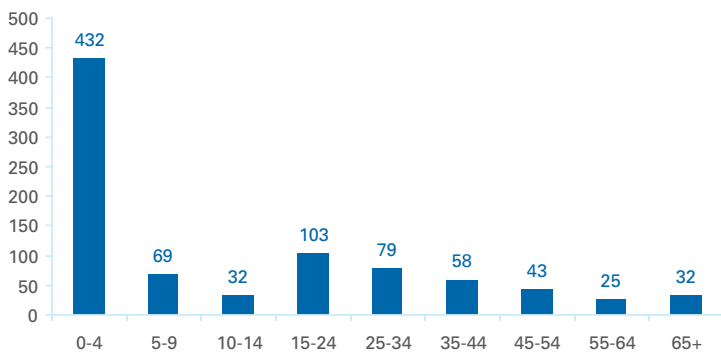
Hospitalisation data from 1999–2000 to 2003–2004 were used to describe this profile of near-drowning hospitalisation involving NSW residents.

During this period, there were 914 people hospitalised for near-drowning at a rate of 2.8 per 100,000 people, nearly twice as high as drowning deaths.

Approximately 183 people were hospitalised each year as the result of near-drowning during this time. Around 70% of near-drowning hospitalisations were of males.

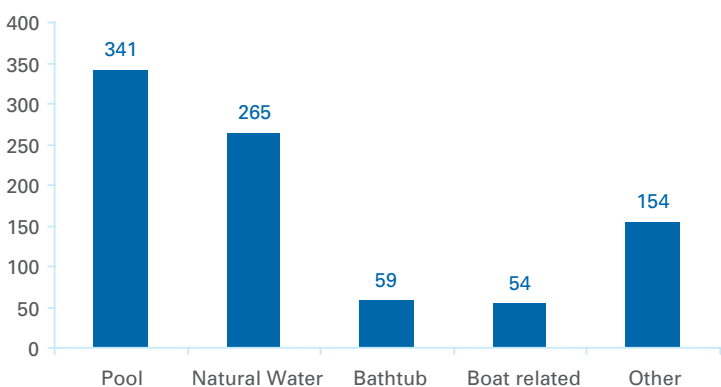
Children aged 0-4 years had the highest age-specific hospitalisation rate as a result of a near-drowning event, with males aged 0-4 years (25.8 per 100,000) having a hospitalisation rate nearly twice that of females of the same age group (14.2 per 100,000).

FIGURE 5: NSW Near-drowning Hospitalisations by Age 1999/2000 to 2003/2004



Swimming pools and natural water were the two locations that led to a near-drowning hospitalisation most frequently, and accounted for 38.1% and 29.3% of all near-drowning hospitalisations, respectively (See Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: NSW Near-drowning Hospitalisations by Location 1999/2000 to 2003/2004



metropolitan vs rural areas

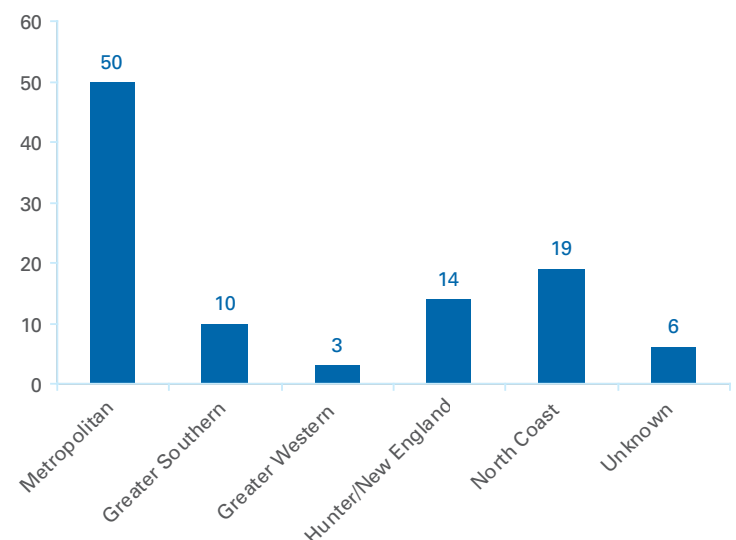
Mortality and morbidity associated with drowning and near-drowning in rural and remote Australia is a public health concern. The accessibility of rural and remote water bodies is a significant factor in the increased risk of drowning in these areas.

In 2005/2006, 49% of drowning deaths occurred in metropolitan areas within NSW compared to 45% of drowning deaths in rural areas (6% unknown). However, the drowning rate for Rural NSW (2.19 per 100,000 people) is more than two times higher than Metropolitan NSW (1.04 per 100,000). Within Rural NSW, 41% occurred in the North Coast region, 30% in the Hunter/New England region, 22% in the Greater Southern and 7% in the Greater Western region (Figure 8). The North Coast region also accounted for the most drowning deaths per capita (3.96/100,000).

FIGURE 7: NSW HEALTH State Regions



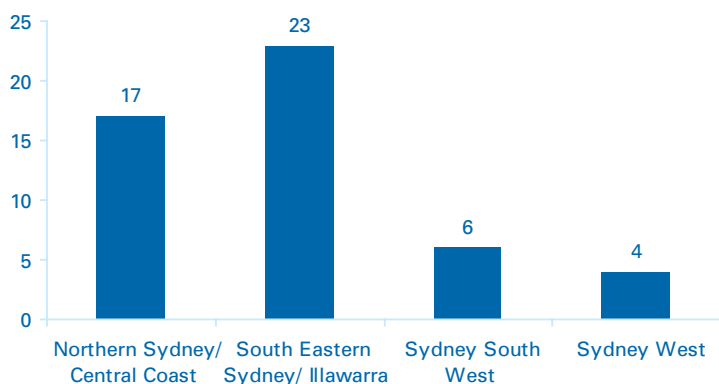
FIGURE 8: NSW Drowning by Regions 2005/2006



In metropolitan areas, 46% of drowning deaths occurred in the South Eastern Sydney/Illawarra region, followed by 34% in Northern Sydney/Central Coast, 12% in Sydney South West and 8% in Sydney West (See Figure 9).

South Eastern Sydney/Illawarra also accounted for the highest rate of drowning deaths per capita (1.92/100,000).

FIGURE 9: NSW Drowning by Metropolitan Areas 2005/2006



quick facts on nsw drowning 05/06

Children 0 – 4 years

- 12 children aged 0-4 years drowned
- 8 were male, 4 were female
- 6 (50%) occurred in swimming pools, 2 (17%) occurred in bathtubs
- 7 (58%) fell in

Children 5 – 14 years

- 4 children aged 6-14 years drowned
- 3 were male, 1 was female
- 2 (50%) occurred in rivers
- 1 (25%) was swimming and 1 (25%) was a car passenger

People 15 – 24 years

- 10 people aged 15-24 years drowned
- 9 were male, 1 was female
- 4 (40%) drowned at beaches, 3 drowned in rivers (30%)
- 5 (50%) were swimming at the time

People 25 – 34 years

- 21 people aged 25-34 years drowned
- 18 were male and 3 were female
- 5 (24%) occurred in lakes and rivers and, 6 (29%) people drowned at beaches
- 5 (24%) were swimming, 3 (14%) were fishing, 3 (14%) were boating and 1 (5%) was attempting a rescue

People 35 – 44 years

- 12 people aged 35-44 years drowned
- 11 were male, 1 was female
- 3 (25%) occurred at a beach and 2 (17%) at rocks.
- 2 (17%) were fishing, and 2 (17%) were swimming at the time

People 45 – 54 years

- 16 people aged 45-54 years drowned
- 14 were male, 2 were female
- 3 (19%) occurred in rivers, and 3 (19%) occurred at a beach
- Recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, and boating were common activities in this age group

People 55 – 64 years

- 10 people aged 55-64 years drowned
- 9 were male and 1 was female
- 3 (30%) occurred at the beach, 1 (10%) at a lake, and 1 (10%) at rocks
- 4 (40%) were swimming and 3 (30%) were fishing

People 65+ years

- 16 people aged 65 years and over drowned
- 12 were male, 4 were female
- 4 (25%) people drowned in inland waterways such as rivers and lakes, 1 (6%) occurred in a swimming pool
- 3 (19%) drowned whilst driving

the challenge continues.....

Royal Life Saving encourages safe aquatic activities, whether at home, the local aquatic centre, beach or river environments.

The Royal Life Saving Society NSW Branch is proud of its record in the area of water safety and life saving education. In 2004/2005 some 287,000 people were accredited with life saving qualifications and over 409,000 people – young and old alike – were instructed face to face in the Society's educational programs.

Royal Life Saving is dedicated to the prevention of aquatic related injury and death through our health promotion and training programs, public education, research and aquatic risk management services within the community.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- The National Coroners Information System
- State Coroners
- Rehome Media
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics
- NSW HEALTH
- Andrew Hayen and Rebecca Mitchell (NSW Injury Risk Management Research Centre, UNSW)

CITATION

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia NSW Branch (2006)
The New South Wales Drowning Report 2006 : New South Wales

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Or go to www.nsw.royallifesaving.com.au



The Royal Life Saving Society NSW Branch would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation for their valuable support.