

South East Queensland Water Safety Strategy 2023-2027



Collaborative Partners:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We respectfully acknowledge and pay respects to the people of the Yugambeh language region of the Gold Coast and all their descendants both past and present. We also acknowledge the many Aboriginal people from other regions as well as Torres Strait and South Sea Islander people who now live in the local area and have made an important contribution to the community. We recognise their ongoing connection to land, waters and communities.

CITY OF GOLD COAST

Royal Life Saving would like to thank the City of Gold Coast and the staff at the Pimpama Sports Hub who generously hosted the Queensland Water Safety Forum and provided in-kind support for forum attendees, in particular Tim Goward. Without their generous support, the development of this strategy would not have been possible.

ABOUT ROYAL LIFE SAVING

Royal Life Saving is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable, evidence-based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships; quality programs, products and services; underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

Royal Life Saving is a public benevolent institution (PBI) dedicated to reducing drowning and turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers. We achieve this through: advocacy, education, training, health promotion, aquatic risk management, community development, research, sport, leadership and participation and international networks.

We are here to help all Australians enjoy the water safely through drowning prevention leadership, education and action. We want to bring a love of swimming and water safety education to more people in the community, especially those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to participate.

While we talk about its perils, we want all Australians to love and to enjoy the water safely. We advocate on a wide range of drowning prevention and water safety issues through targeted campaigns, educating communities about the risks of drowning and prevention strategies, reaching over 5 million people annually.

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Australian Government

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CONSULTATION & COLLABORATION

The following groups were actively engaged in the development of this strategy:

Organisation Name

APOLA
Aquatic Achievers
ASETQ Party Ltd.
Aussie Aquatics
Australian Red Cross
Australian Swim Schools Association
AUSTSWIM
Belgravia Leisure
Brisbane City Council
Bundaberg Regional Council
Bundaberg Swimming Academy
City Of Gold Coast Council
City Venue Management
Department of Education (QLD)
Department of Environment and Science - Parks and Wildlife Services (QLD)
Dept of Tourism, Innovation and Sport (QLD)
Global Water Safety & Drowning Prevention
Rotary Club
Ipswich City Council
James Cook University
KARI Foundation
Kidsafe Qld Inc
Life Saving Victoria
Logan City Council
Man Overboard Marina Alarm Systems
Neptune Royal Life Saving Club
Office of Industrial Relations – Work Health Safety (QLD)
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services – State Emergency Service
Queensland Courts – Coroner’s Unit
Queensland Health – Water Unit
Red Paddle CO – River Rescue Equipment
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
Royal Life Saving Society - Queensland
SPASA Australia
St John Ambulance Queensland
Sunshine Coast Council
Sunwater Pty. Ltd.
Surf Life Saving Queensland
Swim Coaches And Teachers Australia
Swim Fit
TAFE Qld
The Aqua English Project Ltd
University of New South Wales – Beach Safety Research Group
Yeronga & Dunlop Park Memorial Pools

The following groups were invited to contribute to the development of this strategy, however, did not attend the forum.

Organisation Name

Australian Maritime Safety Authority
Australian Transport Safety Bureau
Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association
Bureau of Meteorology
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water - Dam Safety Unit (QLD)
Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water - Water Resource Management (QLD)
Farmsafe
Maritime Safety Queensland
Queensland Police Service
Retrieval Service Queensland
Swimming Australia
Volunteer Marine Rescue Queensland
City of Ipswich

Developed: June 2023

Endorsed: August 2023

Special thanks to the Hon. Minister Mark Ryan MP, Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Police and Corrective Services who attended the forum, addressed attendees and awarded certificates of achievement to City of Gold Coast aquatic facilities who demonstrated excellence in aquatic safety management.



Pictured (left to right): Mr Paul Barry, Mr Tim Goward, Mr Tim Flood & the Hon Mark Ryan MP

FOREWORD

On behalf of the delegates at the South East Queensland Water Safety Forum 2023, we are pleased to present the South East Queensland Water Safety Strategy 2023-2027.

Waterways and aquatic facilities are key contributors to the economic, social and health outcomes of the community. Supported by a range of governments and their departments, emergency services, the water safety sector and the aquatic industry, they enable visitors and residents to participate in recreation, leisure, attract tourism to regions and in some cases facilitate the development of important aquatic survival skills.

Sadly, more than 366 people have drowned in the region in the last 10 years. 30 per cent of these drowning deaths occurred in inland waterways, 25 per cent on beaches and 18 per cent in swimming pools.

Each drowning represents the loss of a father, mother, sister, brother, child or grandparent and has a significant detrimental impact on families, friends, community groups, the health and emergency services, the economy and the social fabric of a community. While every drowning is a tragedy, they are all almost always preventable.

Additionally, there are challenges in water safety education: we are all concerned about the risks of generational impact of the pandemic, compounding already concerning gaps in children's swimming abilities. These challenges are all interconnected. Without collaboration we cannot expect to meet the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 goal of reducing drowning by 50 per cent by 2030.

We know that a range of community, industry and government partners have a role to play in reducing drowning, keeping the community safe and facilitating safe enjoyment of waterways. We also know that the community themselves have an important role to play in creating and sustaining cultural change. No single organisation, government or advocate can prevent all drowning alone. Collective action, alignment with other sectors and inspiring others to make a difference are all keys to success.

This strategy reflects the work of several individuals and organisations and carefully balances a focus on the prevention of drowning with reinforcing the benefits of recreating in and around the water.

We believe this initiative will provide the region with a guiding strategy for reducing drowning, coordinating collective action and reinforcing the importance of safe enjoyment of the water. This will be achieved through improvements to individual and community resilience and investments in infrastructure, programs, research and capacity-building of the water safety community in the region.

In closing, we would like to thank all individuals and groups who participated in the development of this strategy and the support of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, Commonwealth Government, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Queensland Government and co-hosts the City of Gold Coast, without whose support the forum and strategy would not be possible. Finally, we thank the South East Queensland community who ultimately must see through its implementation and ongoing relevance.

Paul Barry
Executive Director
Royal Life Saving Society - Queensland





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Drowning and Demography Data

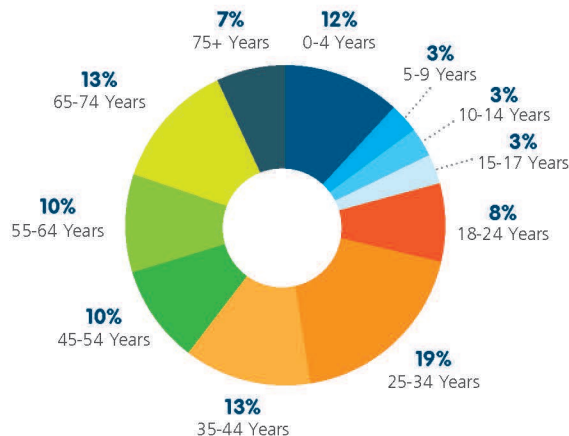
SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND DROWNING PROFILE

> 10 year analysis 2011/12 to 2021/22

366

PEOPLE DROWNED IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

AGE BREAKDOWN



77% OF DROWNING DEATHS WERE MALES



LOCATION OF DROWNING



30%
RIVER/CREEK



25%
BEACH



18%
SWIMMING POOL

ACTIVITY PRIOR TO DROWNING



33%
SWIMMING & RECREATING



19%
UNINTENTIONAL
FALL INTO WATER



11%
BOATING

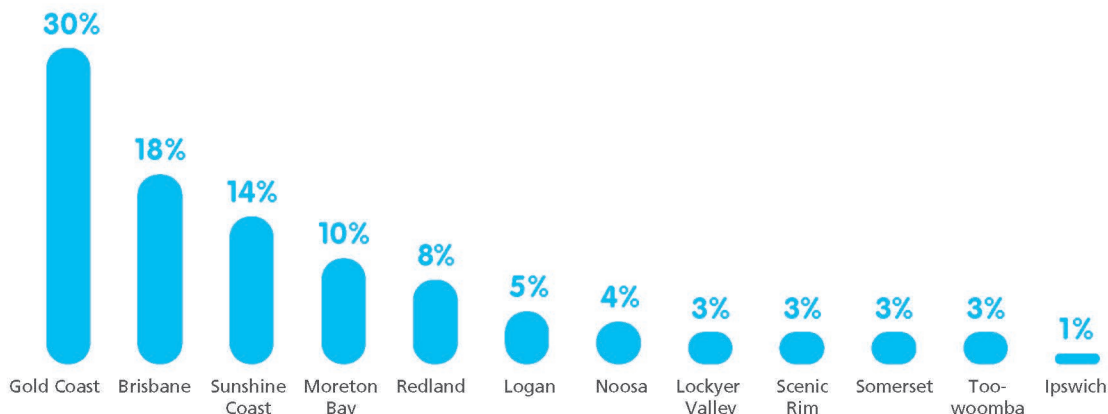
Of these:

76% were private pools (primarily single-dwelling domestic pools)

15% were communal pools (hotels, motels, resorts, holiday apartment complexes)

9% were public pools (council owned pools, school and university pools, commercial learn to swim centres)

LOCATION OF DROWNING BY LGA



WHEN DOES DROWNING OCCUR?



39% OCCURRED IN THE SUMMER MONTHS



**20% ON A SUNDAY
16% ON A SATURDAY**



44% IN THE AFTERNOON (12:01PM TO 6PM)

LEADING RISK FACTORS



18% RECORDED A BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION $\geq 0.05\%$



38% RECORDED A PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITION

COUNTRY OF BIRTH

44%

BORN IN AUSTRALIA
Of these 3% identified as being of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander background

25%

BORN OVERSEAS
Of these 78% were migrant residents & 22% were international tourists

31%

COUNTRY OF BIRTH UNKNOWN

DISTANCE BETWEEN HOME AND LOCATION OF DROWNING

24%



At home

21%



0 - 5km from home

7%



6 - 10km from home

45%

DROWNED WITHIN 5KM OF WHERE THEY LIVED

10%



11 - 20km from home

5%



21 - 30km from home

7%



31 - 50km from home

12%



51 - 100km from home

9%

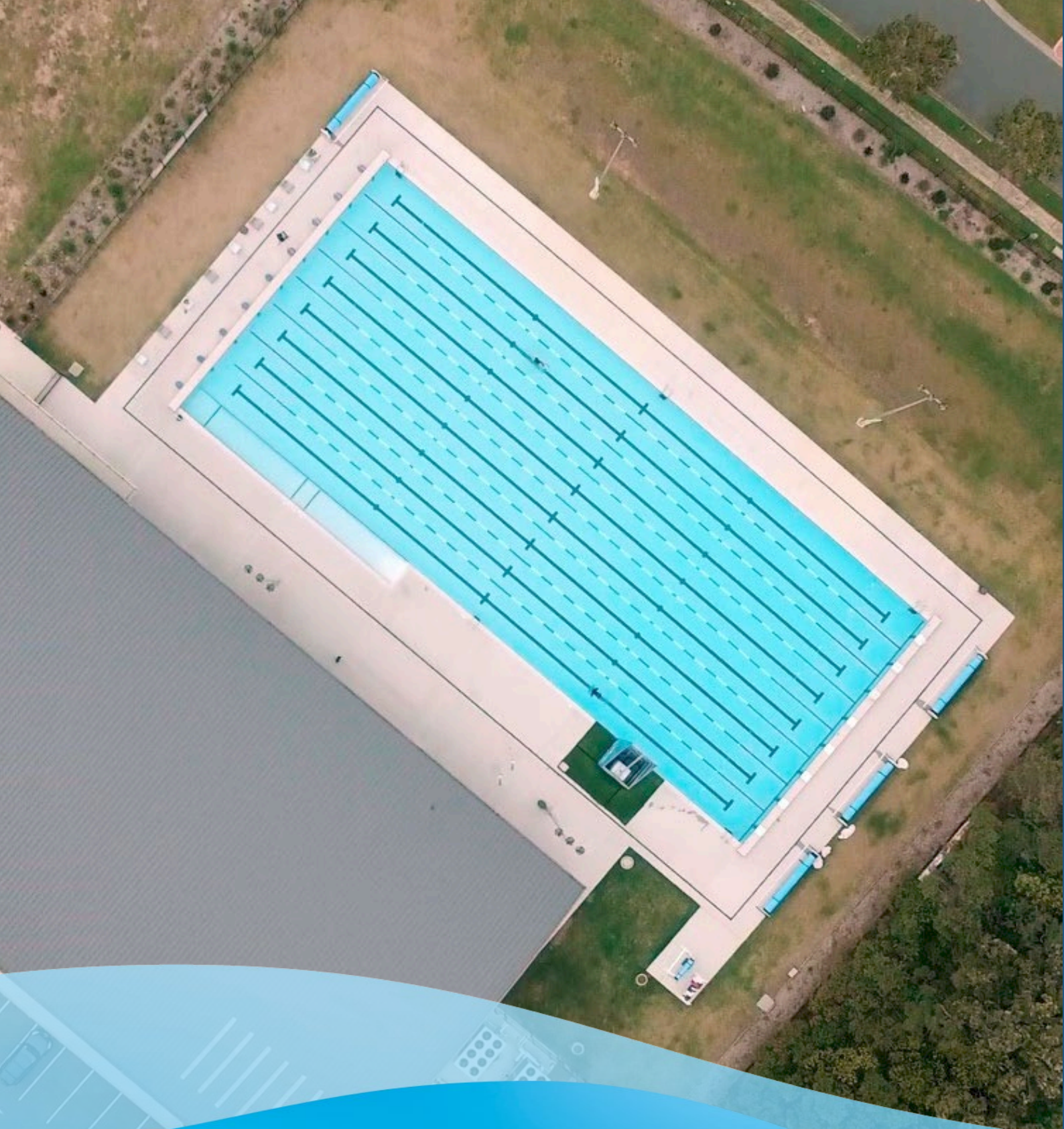


100km or further - Intrastate

5%



100km or further - Interstate



Strategic Framework

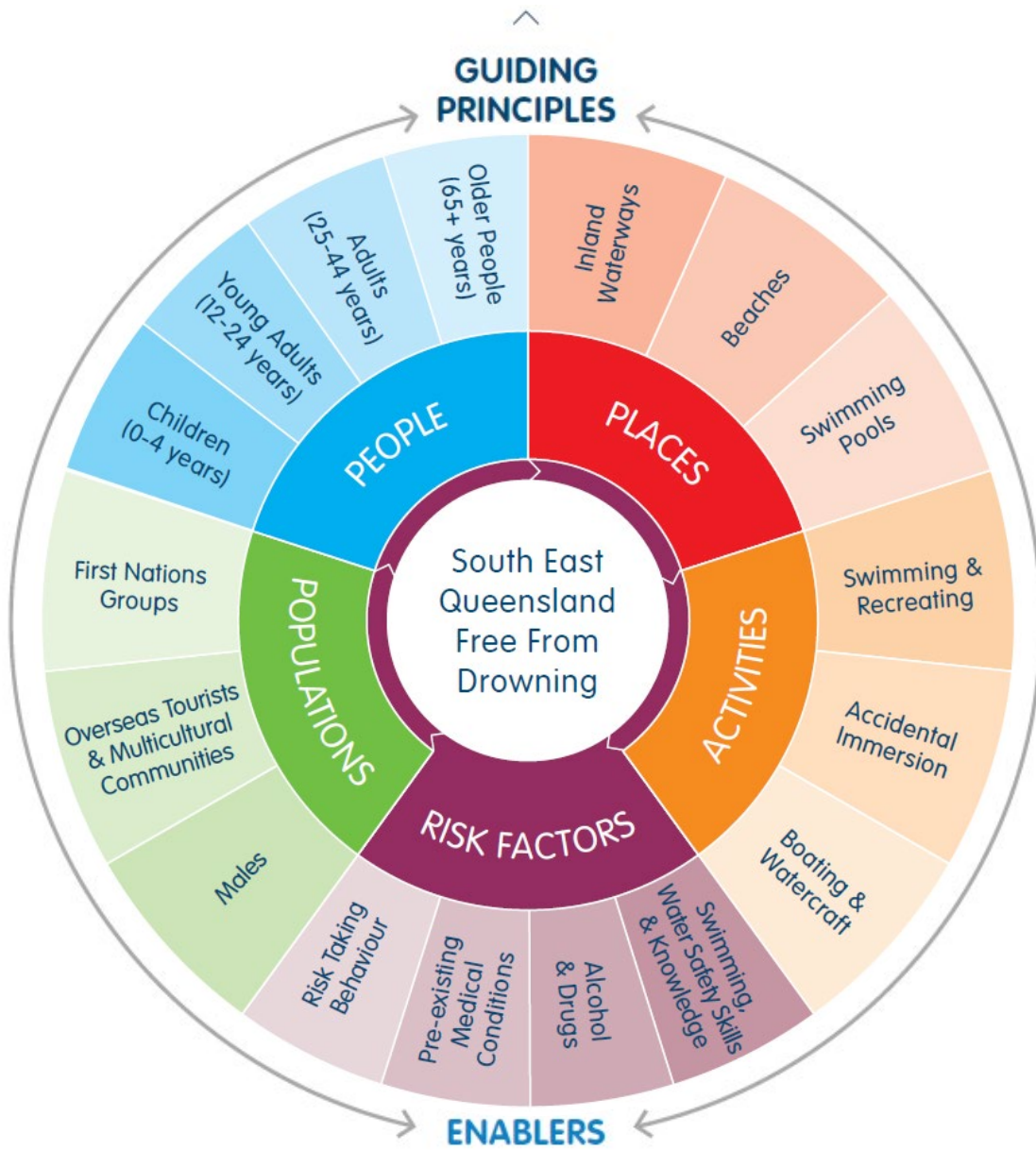
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

A Strategic Framework for South East Queensland

We propose structuring our strategy into five priority-areas to address drowning prevention in the region. While the priority areas are mapped to the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030, and are inclusive of places, activities, risk factors, populations and people. The principles, enablers and focus areas are unique to South East Queensland and were developed following a review of available drowning data, media reports, the lived-experiences of the individuals, groups and agencies represented at the engagement forum and reflect where the burden of drowning is highest, where the issues are most preventable and whether the local issues are sufficiently defined and understood so that actions can be targeted.

South East Queensland Water Safety Strategic Framework

Local knowledge Data & research Build consensus Learn from failures



Prioritisation Collaboration Engagement Action Alignment with other sectors

ALIGNING COLLECTIVE ACTION

An aligned strategic framework for South East Queensland

This strategy presents a framework aligned to the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 that:

- ✓ Reflects the contributions of the organisations involved in the development of the strategy
- ✓ Identifies key drowning prevention priorities, areas of focus and approaches
- ✓ Establishes a strategic roadmap for action that may be monitored, supported and celebrated
- ✓ Can inspire stakeholders; Governments, organisations and communities to act, without being rigid on the how and when

This framework is structured into five Priority Areas: People; Places; Activities; Populations; and Risk Factors.

By presenting a strategy which focuses on Priority Areas with key Focus Areas, drowning prevention activities can be tailored, targeted and followed through in a way which aims to focus the efforts of Governments; Emergency Services; the water safety sector and communities into moving the needle substantially on key fronts in the fight against drowning and in so doing substantially reduce the overall amount of drowning in the region.

Priority Area	Description	Focus Areas
PEOPLE	Life stages / age demographics that are over-represented in drowning statistics Drowning prevention strategies need to be tailored to specific life stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children (0-4 years) • Young Adults (12-24 years) • Adults (25-44 years) • Older Persons (65+ years)
PLACES	Aquatic environments Targeted drowning prevention strategies enable environment-specific hazards to be addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inland Waterways (Rivers, Creeks, Dams & Lakes) • Beaches • Swimming Pools
ACTIVITIES	Things people do in, on, around the water Different aquatic activities carry different risks that can often be minimised with appropriate safety equipment, education, and experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming and Recreating • Accidental Immersion • Boating & Watercraft
RISK FACTORS	Cross-cutting risk factors that can address common themes across multiple priority areas Significant barriers to lowering risk factors hamper progress in all Priority Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming, Water Safety Skills and Knowledge • Alcohol and Drugs • Pre-existing Medical Conditions • Risk Taking Behaviour
POPULATIONS	Key groups that are considered vulnerable to drowning Tailored strategies can effectively meet the needs of each population/subpopulation by addressing risk factors specific to the group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males • Overseas Tourists & Multicultural Communities • First Nations Groups

PRIORITY AREA: PEOPLE

FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2027
Children (0-4 years)	Toddlers are curious and increasingly mobile. Any access to an exposed water body is a significant hazard. Limiting access and encouraging supervision are critical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct water safety risk assessments of parks and playgrounds near waterways and ensure suitable protection (e.g. distance, fencing, vegetation, etc.) Encourage and provide incentives to strengthen water safety measures on domestic and rural properties, including restricting access to open water containers and bodies (dams, water tanks, drains, troughs, etc.)
	Parental and carer supervision is considered critical to preventing drowning. Opportunities exist to strengthen supports which encourage appropriate parent / guardian supervision of children around water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the availability of child drowning prevention content in parental education and maternal health programs Expand the availability of affordable and accessible CPR training for guardians Expand and support media campaigns targeting guardians which raise awareness of hazards and promote prevention strategies such as supervision and appropriate guardian to toddler ratios
Young Adults (12-24 years)	Peer pressure and risk-taking behaviour with over confidence that does not reflect actual ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support more youth to complete higher-order lifesaving programs (such as Bronze Medallions) Deliver targeted campaigns that challenge thought-risk processes and risk-taking behaviour among teenage males
	Inexperience in recognising hazards and safe participation in aquatic activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage emerging technologies such as AR and VR to develop and deliver co-designed water safety programs with outdoor agencies and youth that empower young people to access open water environments safely Ensure safety advice and signage outline consequences in addition to the hazards (e.g. jumping from bridge may be fatal)
Adults (25-44 years)	34% of people who drowned were aged between 25 and 44 years. Underestimation of risk as well as failing to take adequate precautions are common issues for drowning in this age group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design education campaigns and interventions for water safety with males 25-44 years to explore responsible recreation (including checking the conditions and maintaining fitness) Improve enforcement of alcohol and drug prohibitions on waterways Partner with community groups such as sports clubs to build capacity and coordination of message delivery on new channels
	Swimming and recreating and rivers, creeks and beaches were the most common activities and locations for drownings among this age group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen supports and incentives for lifesaving programs for open waterway safety for youth and adults which encourage lifesaving skill development (such as funding for Bronze Medallions) Expand and support widescale delivery of water safety and campaign messaging on social media platforms
Older People (65+ years)	Research shows that 89% of drowning in older people involves a pre-existing medical condition, and that impaired mobility and a history of falls are additional factors for this group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review opportunities to incorporate aquatic activity into physical activity guidelines for older people, highlighting the low impact nature of water-based exercise and demonstrated benefit of exercise in reducing falls risk Encourage older people who swim and recreate in water to attend regular medical checkups with their doctor, take any prescribed medication as directed and notify aquatic facilities and instructors of any pre-existing conditions Expand and support widescale delivery of campaign messaging targeted older people and pre-existing medical conditions Encourage older people to engage with programs which test and redevelop their skills in controlled environments
	The leading activity prior to drowning for older persons was swimming and recreating within 0-5km of home, and the leading location was in rivers and creeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with organisations and agencies working with older people to promote water safety awareness, such as healthy ageing and fall prevention sectors Raise awareness of drowning risk among older people, particularly the risk of recreating alone in, on or around water and unexpectedly falling into water rather than deliberate entry for recreational purposes

2027 TARGETS:

Reduce drowning by 50% among Children (0-4 years), Youth Adults (12-24 years), Adults (25-44 years) and Older People (65+ years).

PRIORITY AREA: PLACES

FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2027
Inland Waterways (Rivers, Creeks, Dams & Lakes)	Inland waterways are popular aquatic recreation destinations, however unlike other aquatic locations, they are seldom patrolled by a lifesaving or maritime service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish safe swimming zones at popular swimming and recreation areas and provide safety signage and public-access rescue equipment Investigate the feasibility of extending lifeguard services to key inland aquatic recreation locations during peak periods such as school holidays Work with telecommunication and social media companies to use mobile technology to provide water safety messaging (e.g. pop-up notifications with water safety messaging on mobile phone when entering a location)
	Changing conditions, especially after rainfall and hidden dangers can lead to people getting into difficulty quickly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and/or introduce barriers such as vegetation in areas where water entry is unsafe Implement site-specific education measures such as warning systems and water safety signage at recreational areas and at entry to parks
	Inland swimming locations can be remote, or difficult for emergency services to access quickly, which can increase the consequence of water injury and/or drowning incidents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote shared responsibility and cross-jurisdictional decision-making to address safety for waterways with complex management and/or multiple stakeholders Promote and amplify existing campaigns which educate users on risk and safety measures Conduct risk assessments of recreational areas and implement actions Ensure safety signage aligns to Australian and Royal Life Saving Standards including emergency marker warnings and safety information Require tourist operators and advertisers to include safety messaging in campaigns that encourage visitation of inland waterways
Beaches	Emerging research suggests overseas tourists most commonly drown at beaches, with Chinese, UK and US visitors being most represented. Almost half of all international visitor drowning deaths in Australia occur in Queensland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand programs and strategies which target water safety education for overseas arrivals, including working with tourism bodies and governments to provide tourists with basic water safety information on arrival Conduct focus groups with those “most at risk”/“lived experience” to identify protective factors relevant to cultural groups
	Too often, people visiting the coast do not recognise or underestimate the associated risks and hazards, exposing themselves and others to dangers unnecessarily.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and expand professional lifesaving and rescue services Maintain and expand existing lifesaving education campaigns Install public rescue equipment in high-risk locations Ensure signage aligns to Australian, Surf Life Saving, marine and coastal signage standards including emergency markers, warnings and safety equipment
Swimming Pools	76% of pool drownings were in private domestic pools. Barriers being faulty or propped open are common issues leading to drowning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen compliance, inspection and enforcement regimes and policy relating to pool fencing. Consider a national standard. Strengthen standards for interchangeability of pool fence infrastructure (e.g. hinges, locks, latches, etc.)
	15% of pools drownings were in communal pools not patrolled by qualified lifesavers such as hotel, resorts and apartment pools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the tourism, accommodation and body corporate sectors to develop a code of practice and safety guidelines for communal pools (hotels, motels & body corporates), ensuring universal life saving standards are established and implemented in these settings
	9% of pool drownings were in public pools, reinforcing the need for consistency and quality application of industry best practice in safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a state-based steering committee for aquatic safety implementation in aquatic facilities to address challenges such as at-risk users’ campaigns and programs, consistency of standards implementation across industry Conduct routine nationally-consistent safety assessments in all publicly accessible aquatic facilities
	Supervision standards are not consistent across all aquatic venues, nor assessed independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the standard of supervision through improved training and professional development of lifeguards and the implementation of supervision plans Conduct mystery guest visits to assess lifeguard delivery of aquatic supervision across all venues

2027 Targets:

- Number of patrolled open water locations increased by 10%
- Rate of drowning in public pools reduced by 50%
- Code of practice for communal pools developed

PRIORITY AREA: ACTIVITIES

FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2027
Swimming & Recreating	Participation in swimming and water safety education tends to drop off after age 8. 40% of children leave primary school unable to swim a single lap of a 50m pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and enhance programs and incentives which engage older children and teenagers in swimming and water safety Create pathway programs from basic swimming and water safety into higher aquatic skill development (e.g. lifesaving, competitive swimming, paddling, surfing, etc.) Develop, strengthen and expand swimming and water safety education programs targeting secondary school students
	Despite the availability of safe aquatic venues, many drowning deaths occur from swimming in open water environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate, educate and encourage community participation and use of supervised aquatic locations for swimming and recreation Develop and deliver pathway programs from pools to open water environments Increase the availability of and lower barriers to access safe swimming locations such as public aquatic facilities Ensure swimming and water safety education includes age-appropriate practical experience in open water environments
Accidental Immersion	19% of drowning deaths involved accidental immersion into water. Common issues include a lack of appropriate barriers, lack of lifejacket use for fishers and lack of egress for exit from waterways once in the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen policy and standards relating to access / egress from waterways into built structures such as walkways, jetties and built riverbanks Strengthen policy and enforcement regarding lifejacket use Provide place-based education on hazards around inland waterways and risks associated with accidental immersion Develop and expand programs and campaigns which encourage older adults to get involved in structured aquatic recreation activities, such as water aerobics, which can increase strength, fitness and mobility in older age groups Provide publicly accessible rescue aids at hazardous and/or highly visited locations on inland waterways
Boating & Watercraft	19% of drowning deaths involved boating and watercraft use. Common issues include not wearing lifejackets, alcohol consumption and drug consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the delivery of safe boating community education Increase enforcement of existing regulations including drug and alcohol testing of boaters on waterways Establish systems that measure and report lifejacket wear rates, boating participation and economic impact of the sector Deliver boating safety campaigns with maritime safety partners that address safe trip planning, vessel standards, safety equipment, overloading and risk-taking behavior Advocate for standardised boating licensing and regulation across state borders to include mandates for always wearing lifejackets with PLB capabilities Implement an hourly requirement to obtain a boat license to include weather and location conditions (e.g. 100 hours to get drivers license) Introduce re-testing and education for renewal of boat license every 5 years

2027 Targets:

- Increase the rate of participation of 8–12-year-olds in swimming and water safety programs by 10%
- Reduce drowning following accidental immersion by 50%
- Reduce boating-related incidents and drowning by 50%

*Workshop participants identified rock fishing as an additional area of focus, however, there was a very small amount of drowning relating to rock fishing in the region. It is proposed that further consideration may be given to rock fishing risk management at the venues or locations where this is an issue, rather at a broad regional level.

PRIORITY AREA: RISK FACTORS

FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2027
Swimming and Water Safety Skills	97% of people who drowned in the region were not competent swimmers. Lack of swimming and water safety skills contributes to drowning across all ages, locations, activities and populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the availability and sustainability of aquatic facilities (through infrastructure funding & commercial development), particularly in regional areas • Strengthen and expand programs targeting populations considered vulnerable to drowning • Enhance research and data collection of swimming and water safety competency in the region and state
	Many families struggle to afford commercial swimming lessons and vulnerable groups miss out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen relationships between the aquatic industry and the Department of Education with the purpose of strengthening schools-based education programs - ensuring all programs include practical in-water components • Lower barriers to access swimming and water safety education for vulnerable groups, such as through targeted vouchers • Explore the feasibility of a population level subsidised school holiday swimming and water safety program across Queensland • Advocate for swimming and lifesaving skill development in high school curriculum and as part of post-secondary orientation weeks
	Swimming and water safety skills and knowledge gaps exist for open water environments, particularly inland waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen education surrounding changing conditions in inland waterways (i.e. weather, bottom, shoreline, debris, etc.) • Develop and strengthen support and delivery of lifesaving and targeted programs in both beach and inland open waterway locations • Strengthen partnerships between aquatic facilities, industry groups and government to ensure bridging programs between pool-based learn to swim and open water environments
	Only 26 per cent of swimming and water safety providers have mapped their program to the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework and the Benchmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate industry on the value of the framework and adjust all swimming and water safety programs to align with the framework • Create/strengthen incentives which support alignment to the framework • Gather data and report on benchmark achievement through state and national advocacy networks
Alcohol & Drugs	Drinking alcohol is a common practice in on or around the water and contributes to a number of drowning incidents with 26% of drownings in the region recording a BAC >0.05; and 34% of drownings involved drugs in the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research into effective interventions to reduce impact of alcohol-culture when it comes to water safety and promote effective interventions • Expand the delivery and promotion of targeted campaigns such as 'Make the Right Call' and 'Respect the River' • Explore incentives which promote and encourage responsible consumption in, on and around the water • Coordinate and strengthen both prohibition and enforcement of alcohol-free zones in waterways and increase enforcement activities in and around waterways, including at boat launch areas and marinas
Pre-existing Medical Conditions	38% of people who drowned had a pre-existing medical condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore incentives which encourage older adults to conduct regular medical check-ups, as well as ongoing physical activity • Expand and coordinate the delivery of targeted campaigns focused on the role of pre-existing medical conditions and medications in drowning, and ways to reduce risk
Risk Taking Behaviour	Driving through flood waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore improvements to road closure infrastructure and warning systems • Develop, deliver and strengthen education campaigns to 'most at risk' groups about the dangers of driving through flood waters and the use of safe alternative routes
	Males, especially young males engage risk-taking behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct further research into risk perception and effective interventions • Work with outdoor education providers to inform high risk groups about assessing risk and providing controlled risk-taking experiences
	Social media drives risk-taking at hazardous locations such as walking past barriers to take selfies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with appropriate champions and peer influencers to better engage target audiences with targeted messaging to promote safe behaviour • Provide persuasive education messages at schools and community locations targeting adolescents

2027 Targets:

1. Establish population level subsidised swimming and water safety holiday program
2. Swimming and water safety voucher programs maintained and/or expanded
3. System in place to report on the % of children (age 8-12) who achieve the national benchmarks
4. Reduce drowning with alcohol and drugs and known pre-existing medical conditions as a risk factor by 50%

PRIORITY AREA: POPULATIONS

FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2027
Males	Men are over-represented in drowning statistics and more likely to engage in risk taking behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design education campaigns and interventions for water safety with males to explore responsible risk-taking Strengthen and expand random testing for Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) and drug consumption prior to entering and on waterways (e.g. RBT at marinas and boat ramps) Deliver peer-led education with a focus on alcohol and risk taking, how to avoid harmful situations and the consequences of negative behaviours
	Men of all ages underestimate risk and overestimate their abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted campaigns that challenge thought-risk processes and behaviours among high-risk demographics Partner with recreational groups to raise awareness of risk profiles in middle life stages (e.g. consider using emotive messaging such as survival stories) Partner with community programs and events and use upskilling of hobby skills as a platform for the delivery of safety key messaging
Overseas Tourists & Multicultural Communities	Opportunities exist to strengthen the understanding of varying groups' relationships to waterways and aquatic activities and strengthen community leadership and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively engage and partner with community groups to understand their cultural relationship to water and identify barriers to participation (e.g. language, religious belief, etc.) Ensure water safety strategies are welcoming, culturally appropriate and informed by culturally and linguistically diverse communities Increase cultural competency and diversity of aquatic workforce Proactively partner with tourism operators and advertisers to include safety messaging in campaigns that encourage visitation to inland waterways and coastal locations. Implement a beach swim safety program for tourists to educate about hazards such as dumpers, shallow diving, rips, etc.
	Opportunities exist to tailor swimming and water safety programs for culturally and linguistically diverse community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design, provide, promote and support swimming skills for adults through culturally accessible programs Advocate for sustainable funding and delivery models for targeted programs which may not have standalone sustainable funding Ensure water safety education programs and signage are include visual cues and translated resources where possible
First Nations Groups	Opportunities exist to strengthen partnerships and collaboration towards improved water safety outcomes for First Nations communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support First Nations'-led programs and activities Increase accessibility and availability of culturally appropriate water safety, swimming and lifesaving opportunities Co-design and co-deliver culturally safe and responsive swimming and water safety programs
	Opportunities exist to strengthen the understanding of First Nations' groups relationships to waterways and aquatic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge and recognise the deep connection First Nations' peoples have to land and water when planning and implementing strategies and programs Engage with First Nations Elders & stakeholders to understand their cultural relationship to water and how to disseminate culturally appropriate water safety messages in an effective and culturally appropriate way.
	First Nations peoples are generally under-represented in the aquatic workforce and over-represented in drowning statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design and co-deliver culturally safe and responsive swimming and water safety programs Advocate for funding and programs which train First Nations people to become surf lifesavers, swim teachers, lifeguards and aquatic facility operators Introduce policies which strengthen inclusion, diversity and equity within the aquatic workforce

2027 Targets:

1. Water safety information included in all government tourism publications
2. Rate of participation in aquatic workforce is at least proportional to population
3. Funding is in place to support greater multicultural and First Nations' participation in the aquatic workforce (including volunteers)

*Workshop participants identified three additional populations to focus on, however, no key issues or key activities were identified. The three focus areas were: females, persons with a disability and low socio-economic groups. Further consideration may be given to these population groups by key stakeholders implementing this strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Implementation of the South East Queensland Water Safety Strategy relies on the resources and support of many individuals and organisations. The existence of a broad regional strategy is intended to support decision making by a range of actors who will be considering their own organisational or local water safety planning arrangements. Governments in particular are encouraged to respond to the SE QLD Water Safety Strategy by developing and implementing plans which operationalise and implement particular action items from the strategy.

Monitoring, evaluation and review are essential components and must be resourced appropriately. This resourcing will come from a combination of coordinated activities, evaluation activities of members and other stakeholders, and commissioned evaluations where resources have been secured.

A steering group is recommended to be established and should meet at least annually to review progress. The group should encourage diversity and adapt the strategy to meet emerging challenges and opportunities.

ADOPTION

Whether local, state and federal governments and their agencies, industry, volunteer movements and community groups and individuals endorse, adopt and align activities to the strategy.

- What commitments have been made and by who?
- Has the strategy been formally adopted / endorsed and are the actions reflected in workplans, key performance indicators and position descriptions?
- What funding has been allocated to ensure delivery of the action statements?
- Have local government authorities established their own local water safety plans specific individual local contexts?

COLLABORATION

Whether stakeholder support and actions, as well as the formation of partnerships address the issues, implement the actions and strive to achieve the strategy targets.

- What are partners doing to implement and support the strategy?
- How committed are stakeholders to collaborative approaches to solving the issues?
- Do forum participants continue to meet, expand representation, work through key issues, advocate, communicate and coordinate?

SOCIAL LICENSE

Do community members, groups, and media organisations encourage policy makers, water safety organisations, governments and industry to carry through the strategy?

- How committed are media organisations to promoting water safety messages and campaigns, reporting on drowning incidents and encouraging policy makers to resource the strategy?
- Will community groups support the changes needed to reduce the burden of drowning?
- Do community sentiments and individual behaviours align with increasing water safety?

EVALUATION

What is the evidence that the strategy is having an impact?

- Have the targets been met?
- Are data sources and reporting systems available to record progress against the strategy?
- Which stakeholders are financially invested in outcomes measured against the strategy?

BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION

Drowning prevention is everyone's responsibility. In addition to governments and industry, community groups, families and individuals can help achieve the vision of a nation free from drowning. Here are a few actions you can take to help prevent drowning in your community.

HELP KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

- Always supervise children when in, on or around water
- Remain within arm's reach of toddlers in, on or around water
- Create safe play area to restrict your child's access to water
- Do not consume alcohol if you are supervising children
- Ensure any home pool fences are correctly installed, regularly maintained and gates are never left open
- Establish simple rules such as no going near water without an adult
- Never leave a young child in the care of older children
- Enrol your child in water familiarisation lessons
- Update your CPR skills annually

HELP KEEP MATES AND FAMILY MEMBERS SAFE

- Wear a lifejacket when boating or fishing
- Check weather forecast and water conditions, including tides, before and during boating. Conditions can change quickly, so don't hesitate to head back in. If in doubt, don't go out
- Avoid alcohol and drugs around water
- Avoid aquatic activity alone
- Avoid aquatic activity at night
- Avoid aquatic activity in conditions or environments that are unfamiliar to you
- Never drive through floodwaters
- Make a plan before attempting a rescue, many rescuers drown. Use a flotation aid and call for help
- Swim at lifeguarded locations like swimming pools or a patrolled beach between the red and yellow flags
- Learn to spot a rip current and how to safely exit one
- Never swim at unpatrolled beaches
- Get frequent medical checks and stay fit
- Look for and read safety signs
- Always take a form of communication (eg, a mobile phone) but be aware that some remote locations have no mobile phone reception, use a buddy system
- Ask locals for advice about the conditions and potential hazards
- Check conditions before entering the water
- Avoid risk-taking behaviour such as rock or bridge jumping
- Make sure you have a safe entry and exit location before you go in the water

HELP KEEP THE COMMUNITY SAFE

- Volunteer at a lifesaving club
- Learn CPR / First Aid / Lifesaving Skills
- Become a Pool Lifeguard or Swimming and Water Safety Teacher
- Donate Swimming and Water Safety Lessons to community members in need
- Support water safety organisations
- Vote for policy makers who make public commitments to water safety and follow through
- Volunteer for emergency service roles who help rescue people during disasters, like floods
- Engage with social and traditional media on water safety topics, let networks know that this issue matters
- Distribute water safety education materials (like Keep Watch) through community newsletters and on noticeboards



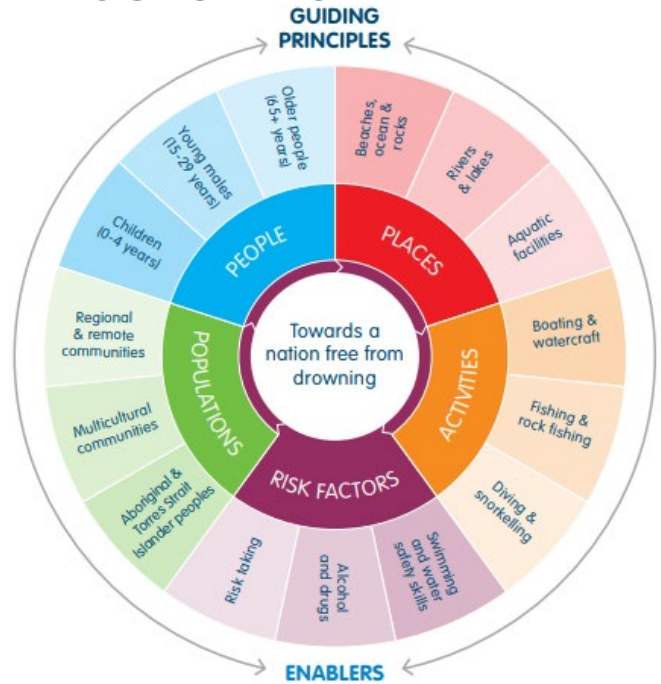
Background and Methodology

AWSS FRAMEWORK / DROWNING REDUCTION MODEL

The Australian Water Safety Strategy model is a model developed and used by the Australian Water Safety Council and advocated highlighted by the World Health Organisation. It seeks to understand and prioritise actions based on:

- Where the burden of drowning is proportionally highest
- Where there are issues emerging and/or drowning is most preventable
- Where issues are sufficiently defined and understood so that actions can be targeted
- Prioritises achievable, measurable focus areas and associated actions

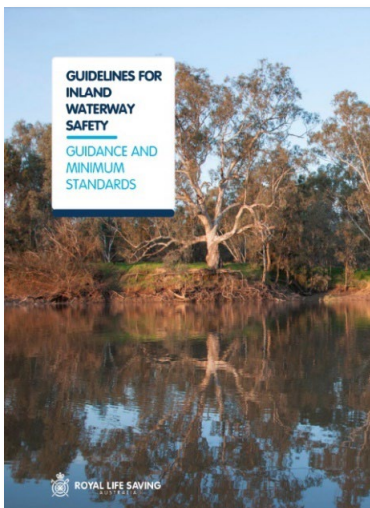
The chosen Local Water Safety Planning Process is closely aligned to the Australian Water Safety Strategy Framework and the methodologies and practices used by the Australian Water Safety Council for the development of the Australian Water Safety Strategic Framework.



Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 and its relationship with the development of this plan

The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 (AWSS 2030) is an inter-sector strategy released in 2021 which provides a framework to reduce drowning deaths in Australia by 50% by 2030. In it, inland waterways are identified as one of the three primary places requiring attention to meet this target. Key themes occurring from the AWSS 2030 encourage community-based action in the form of Local Water Safety Plans. Whether these inland waterways safety plans are part of a land and water management plan, Local Government plan, or a standalone regional waterways safety plan, the outcome remains the same – reduced fatal and non-fatal drowning by creating safer aquatic locations for all to enjoy.

In addition, the framework of the AWSS 2030 provides a valuable tool in prioritising and categorising key issues, priorities and focuses towards reducing drowning by recognising that drowning prevention occurs at both a systems' and individuals' levels.



Guidelines for Inland Waterway Safety and their relationship with the development of this plan

The Guidelines for Inland Waterway Safety (GIWS) provide practical guidance for owners and operators of inland waterways in planning for water safety. Every attempt has been made to align the structure and content of this document with the recommendations of the GIWS. Where inconsistencies between other standards and the GIWS exist, a decision has been made to align with the GIWS, considering a range of water safety knowledge, research and expertise has been incorporated into the development of the GIWS.

LOCAL WATER SAFETY PLANNING PROCESS

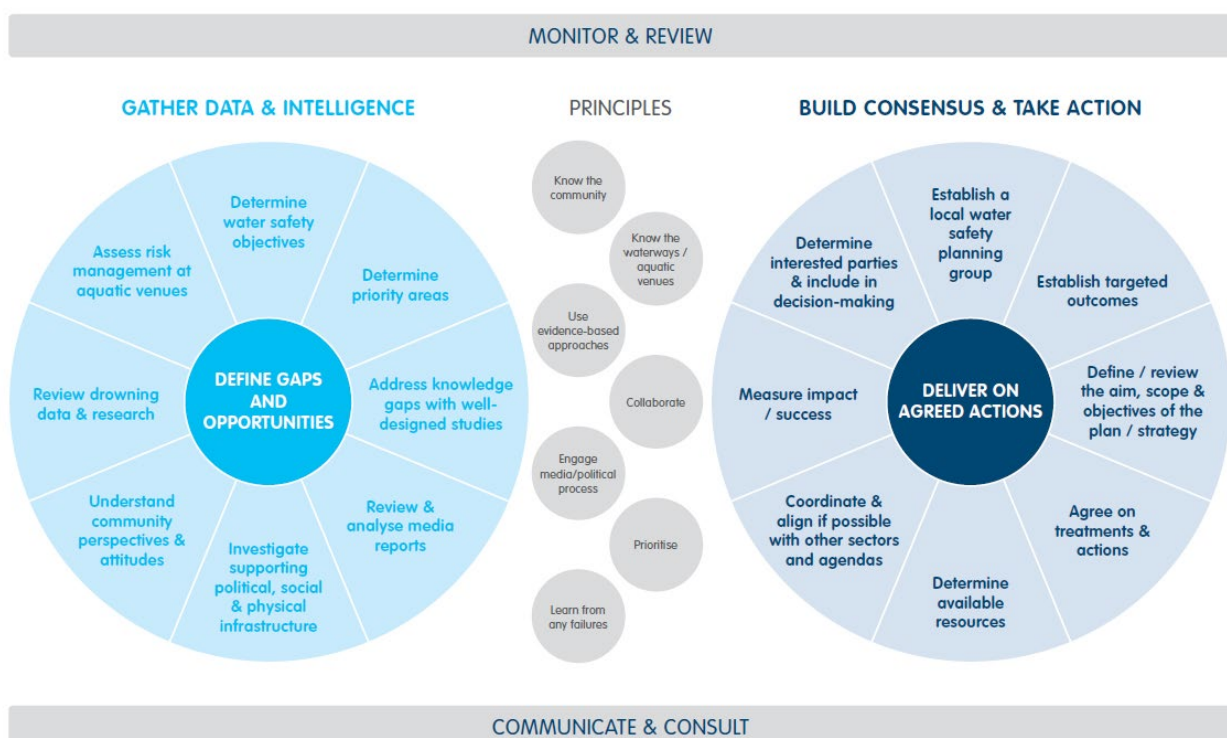
This Local Water Safety Strategy incorporates a holistic approach to community water safety, following a review of several existing methodologies from both within Australia and around the world. The structure and methodology incorporated into the development of this review has been closely aligned to the Australian Water Safety Strategy (AWSS) 2030, the Guidelines for Inland Waterway Safety (GIWS), Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience resources, International Life Saving Federation resources and the World Health Organisation’s Drowning Prevention Action Plan. In addition to the framework approach brought by the alignment to the AWSS, the development of this strategy has been informed by the following monitoring activities:

- Royal Life Saving drowning data and research
- National Coronial System data
- The perspectives of local stakeholders, agencies, and stakeholders through the Drowning Prevention Planning workshops / forum
- A household community survey co-developed and reviewed by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, James Cook University and the University of New South Wales
- Safety reviews (Venue Safety Assessments) at individual swimming and recreation locations by Royal Life Saving assessors
- A desk top review of key policies, programs, campaigns, and locations that contribute to or deter from improved water safety and drowning prevention outcomes within the community (Royal Life Saving Community Water Safety Assessment).

Incorporating a holistic approach to planning, review, monitoring activities, local intelligence, stakeholder communication and consultation and ongoing monitoring and review, the model emphasises a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach and is intended to follow a cyclical process.

The process is intended to reflect that there are many ways to arrive at a local water safety strategy and should be approached as a ‘menu’ rather than a linear process of distinct steps.

LOCAL WATER SAFETY PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



SE QLD WATER SAFETY FORUM

Background

Royal Life Saving research into drowning has identified South East Queensland as a key area of concern, with the region over-represented in drowning statistics. More than 366 people have drowned in the region in the last 10 years. The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 (AWSS) has identified the development of local water safety plans as a key initiative to reduce drowning in communities.

South East Queensland Water Safety Forum

On May 15th and 16th, 2023 Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, with the support of Royal Life Saving Society – Queensland and the City of Gold Coast, facilitated a Water Safety Forum to bring together community groups, governments, academics, emergency services and water safety experts to enable the development of a water safety strategy for the South East Queensland region.

The forum intended to facilitate a common understanding of drowning issues in the region and foster a collective strategy on ways to prevent drowning more effectively.



South East Queensland Water Safety Forum Participants – May 2023

South East Queensland Drowning Profile

Forum participants were provided with local drowning data, research and information. The information included regional and LGA-level drowning statistics, key contributing factors and local drowning risk factors. Participants were also invited to share their own personal experiences of drowning, drowning prevention and drowning response. These discussions informed the architecture of the regional water safety strategy which focuses on 17 key priority areas for the region.

Community Survey – Community Attitudes to Water Safety

Workshop participants were also provided with findings from the Community Attitudes to Water Safety Survey. The survey catchment area covered the South East Queensland region from Pallarenda, west to Alice River, south to Charters Towers and includes Magnetic Island. The 18-question survey was open for four weeks to gather as much information as possible. Hundreds of community members completed the survey, providing rich insights into community behaviours and expectations.

POST FORUM EVALUATION SURVEY & TAKEAWAYS

Post-Forum Survey

Following the SE QLD Water Safety Forum, researchers from the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia provided forum participants with a post-event survey to gather and analyse the range of stakeholders' views about how to approach next steps for the strategy formulation and implementation. These results are further discussed below.

90% of drowning prevention workshop participants who responded to the survey indicated they would support the immediate publication of a strategy based on the content workshopped during the forum. The remaining 10% were neutral.

100% of drowning prevention workshop participants who responded to the survey indicated they believed government should establish a working party to further develop an action plan which implements and responds to the strategy.

76% of drowning prevention workshop participants who responded to the survey indicated their organisation would be interested in participating in a water safety coalition to drive and action the water safety strategy. 24% were neutral.

79% of aquatic facility owners and operators who responded to the survey indicated their organisation would be interested in participating in an aquatic facility safety committee to drive and action water safety standards in the Queensland aquatic industry.

Key takeaways

When asked what the key takeaways were from the forum, participants emphasised the need for further collaboration and access to information, emphasising the need to bring stakeholders together again for future water safety forums.





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