



21st January 2021

Swim Safe and Swim Sober this Australia Day weekend

Royal Life Saving is strongly warning men not to take risks around water this Australia Day

This summer, someone has died from drowning almost every day. Men continue to be over-represented, accounting for 75% of drowning deaths over this summer. One-third of drowning deaths have occurred at inland waterway locations.

Inland waterways are the leading location for drowning. Over the past 10 years, most drowning deaths in men have occurred at unpatrolled inland waterways such as rivers and creeks, accounting for 31% of deaths, more than any other location.

Inland waterway blackspots for drowning include: the Murray River (NSW, Victoria and South Australia), the Yarra River in Melbourne, the Swan River in Perth, the Brisbane River, the Murrumbidgee River at Wagga Wagga, Parramatta and Georges Rivers in Sydney, the Nepean River at Penrith and Emu Plains and the Ross River in Townsville.

Royal Life Saving CEO, Justin Scarr, says "Too many people have lost their lives to drowning this summer, especially at inland waterways. People underestimate the risks of swimming in rivers and lakes, where conditions can change quickly and without warning."

Royal Life Saving research shows that the risk of drowning doubles on public holidays, with alcohol being a major risk factor. People are twice as likely to drown when drunk (Blood Alcohol Concentration $\geq 0.05\%$) on a public holiday than any other day, with 37% of drowning deaths on public holidays involving alcohol.

Mr Scarr adds "Have fun but be safe this Australia Day. Alcohol increases risk-taking behaviour, impairs judgement and impacts swimming ability. Inland waterways and alcohol are a deadly combination. Make the Right Call around water by avoiding alcohol, wearing a lifejacket when boating and fishing, and going with a friend."

Notes to the editor

Royal Life Saving's Summer Drowning Toll is updated regularly over the summer (1 Dec 2020 to 28 Feb 2021). The website includes an analysis of fatal drowning, including a comparison of 'this time' last summer, as well as location and activity information. The website can be found at <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/facts-and-figures/summer-drowning-toll>.

Make the Right Call Key Messages

- Avoid alcohol around water
- Wear a lifejacket when boating, using watercraft or rock fishing
- Never go alone

Top 10 River Drowning Locations Across Australia

- Murray River
 - NSW – Albury, Corowa, Moama
 - VIC – Mildura, Echuca
 - SA – Murray Bridge
- Yarra River, Melbourne CBD
- Brisbane River, Brisbane CBD
- Hawkesbury River, Windsor & Wiseman's Ferry
- Murrumbidgee River, Wagga Wagga
- Swan River, Perth
- Parramatta River, Sydney
- Georges River, Sydney
- Nepean River, Penrith & Emu Plains
- Ross River, Townsville

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia's research, education and advocacy work in drowning prevention and water safety is supported by the Australian Government.

For more information about Royal Life Saving, visit www.royallifesaving.com.au

For media enquiries, please contact Media Key on 03 9769 6488 or 0409 420 112