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For more information about Keep Watch visit:

www.keepwatch.com.au
The aim of this Information Manual is to provide community workers with background information and current models and practices to prevent young children from drowning in the home and the community. It is based on injury prevention and health promotion theory and practice.

This Manual provides a collection of information about risk factors, prevention strategies and types of community actions for the prevention of drowning. It should be seen as a guide for helping the community worker communicate the importance of drowning prevention to parents and carers of children less than 5 years of age.

This manual has been designed for community health workers to use when talking to parents and carers of children under the age of 5. Therefore the language in this manual is directed towards both the parents & carers and the community health worker.

When presenting to community groups or on a one-to-one basis about drowning prevention, the following topics are important to include:

- Statistics and facts about drowning of children under the age of 5 years (Page 7)
- Risk factors associated with drowning – detailing the causes of drowning deaths which can be changed or avoided to prevent death or serious injury and include factors related to parents, children and the environment (Page 8)
- KEEP WATCH actions that parents and carers should follow to reduce the risk of drowning (Page 10-13)
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PHILOSOPHY OF KEEP WATCH

To prevent drowning deaths and aquatic related injuries from occurring, a range of community-based actions are required including education, behaviour change, legislation, engineering and technology solutions.

These solutions form the basis of the Keep Watch program, from the removal of water bodies to the education of parents and carers about how they can keep their children safe.

For effective community action, community groups and individuals need to work together to ensure the greatest effect will occur. These strategies should not be seen as individual actions but as part of an overall strategy, which when used in combination, help to provide a safer aquatic environment for young children.

OVERVIEW OF EVIDENCE BASED STRATEGIES

Education/Behaviour Change

Education and behaviour change methods are used to:

- Educate parents and carers of the development stages of children and therefore the importance of supervision
- Inform people of what action they can take, e.g. programs to learn resuscitation, particularly among parents and carers of young children and pool owners
- Educate about structural changes, e.g. current pool fencing legislation

Changes to Physical Environment

Technology and engineering reduce injuries by minimising hazards in the environment and by providing automatic protection e.g. swimming pool fencing and self-closing, self-latching gates

Changes to Legislation

Legislative measures can have significant impact on injury prevention, especially when combined with strong enforcement e.g. home swimming pool barrier inspections

Advocacy

Advocates can influence decision makers on important public health issues through accessing media and gaining public and political support, e.g. lobbying for uniform swimming pool fencing requirements and Child Safe Play Areas. Ensuring that the media has the correct information is crucial and can be influential in gaining public and political support

Effectiveness of Strategies

Royal Life Saving continues to evaluate its programs and use the latest information to ensure the effectiveness of its programs. A range of reports are available such as 'Evaluation of the Pilot Keep Watch Community Health Workers Water Safety Program' from www.safewaters.nsw.gov.au

Figure 1: Drowning Deaths of Children 0-4 Years, rate per 100,000 and number
Australians have a love of the water and this is reflected in our recreational pursuits with tens of millions of people each year visiting beaches, public swimming pools, rivers, lakes and dams to undertake a variety of aquatic activities. Unfortunately this interaction with water has a down side and every year approximately 300 people drown in Australia. Children under the age of 5 years are over-represented in these figures.

With the cost of a drowning death ranging from an estimated $370,000 to $610,000 per incident, drowning deaths are on average costing the Australian community between an estimated $98 million and $161 million each year [1-3].

Water should be seen as a fun and enjoyable environment, especially for children, as it can assist in a child’s early physical and intellectual development. The ability to safely enjoy water continues to benefit us at all stages of our lives. Positive aquatic experiences begin from birth – bath time is the ideal introduction to the aquatic environment. Parents and carers can encourage children to feel comfortable with water by playing and making bath time and other water-based activities fun.

The most important message about children and water safety is to always supervise children at all times around water.

It is important that supervision is active (that is close, constant and focused) and performed by a responsible adult. Encourage children to always explore water with an adult by saying “Let’s go together”.

Parents and carers also have a responsibility to teach children appropriate water safety messages and practices. Keep children away from dangerous sources of water and provide a safe place to play.

Community health workers also have a vital role to play in improving the water safety and drowning prevention capacity of at-risk families such as those from a low education background and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families.

Drowning is the major cause of preventable death in children under 5 years of age. It can also cause serious and permanent injury. These incidents can be significantly reduced by all of us becoming aware of the potential hazards of water in our everyday lives, and by learning the lifesaving skill of resuscitation. Water awareness is a skill for life!

The prevention of non-fatal drowning incidents is also an aim of the Keep Watch program. The National Injury Surveillance Unit (NISU) states that for every drowning death there are three hospitalisations due to non-fatal drowning. Victims of non-fatal drowning can experience serious injuries including permanent neurological impairment [4].

Non-fatal drowning and the long term disabilities that can result can have serious impacts upon families as Michael Morris experienced when his son Samuel nearly drowned in their backyard swimming pool at the age of two. Samuel survived but suffered a severe hypoxic brain injury and has been left with a range of severe disabilities.

For more information on the Samuel Morris Foundation please visit www.samuelmorrisfoundation.org.au
Did You Know?

- Drowning is one of the leading causes of preventable death in children under 5 years of age.
- A child under 5 years of age drowned on average every week in Australia over the last decade.
- For every drowning death it is estimated that approximately 3 children are admitted to hospital as a result of an immersion incident. For every 5 children admitted to hospital following immersion, 1 child is left with potentially severe or persisting consequences of drowning (i.e. neurological impairment).
- For children under 5, home swimming pools are the most common site in which drowning occurs.
- Children who drowned in home swimming pools were predominately residents or invited guests of a relative or friend.
- The majority of households, in which children under 5 years of age drowned, had fencing which was inadequate, improperly maintained or used improperly (e.g. gate left propped open).
- 2 out of 3 children who drown are boys.
- Children less than one year of age most frequently drown in bathtubs.
- 45% of all drowning deaths occur within rural and remote areas while only 25% of the population reside outside the metropolitan area.
- Aboriginal children drown at a rate two and a half times that of non-Aboriginal children (this occurs mainly in rural and natural waterways).
- Children drown all year round unlike other age groups which tend to drown more frequently in summer.
- Rivers and dams remain little known venues for drowning. For the five years ending June 2007, 295 people drowned in an Australian river and 144 in a lake/dam or lagoon.

SOME STATISTICS AND FACTS

Each year Royal Life Saving produces a National Drowning Report examining drowning deaths in Australia for the previous 12 months.

The Drowning Report also contains a more detailed examination of the drowning deaths of children under 5 years of age. Some RLS State Branches also produce their own State drowning reports. Copies of these reports are available from the website: www.royallifesaving.com.au

The Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2013

Drowning is preventable
WHY DO CHILDREN DROWN?

Children drown for a range of reasons. The risk factors may be discussion points that community workers can use to highlight drowning prevention strategies to parents and carers.

Factors related to:

PARENTS AND CARERS

• Absence or lack of supervision
• Parental busy times such as when family routine is disrupted (i.e. changeover time when other parent comes home, meal preparation, feeding of animals, parents are ill, when visitors call and/or when bathing other children)
• Underestimating young children’s capacity to gain access to areas where parental supervision is necessary
• Unrealistic expectations of young children’s behaviour and self-control
• False sense of security when each parent or carer mistakenly assumes that the other is supervising the toddler
• New environments - not knowing about and being prepared for new risks and hazards
• Parents being unprepared when bathing child or swimming with child (e.g. leave child to fetch forgotten towel)
• False belief that the presence of another child or children reduces the threat of a child drowning. Other children may not appreciate that a drowning child is in danger. They may assume the child is playing and not alert adults
• False belief that pool safety devices such as a retractable pool ladders, pool alarms, pool covers, baby bath aids or flotation devices provide adequate protection
• Lack of knowledge of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and/or apprehension to administer. Have a go, push and blow and as soon as possible call 000!
• Complacency or comfort zone around the home and therefore not being as vigilant. Children commonly drown at home

THE CHILD

• Babies have limited strength, no judgment or physical coordination to recognise dangerous situations or get themselves out of trouble
• Young children are attracted to water
• A young child is not able to understand the concept of danger and therefore may have difficulty in understanding that water could also cause harm
• Children do not understand the consequences of falling into water
• Infants and toddlers generally are not coordinated well enough to swim and breathe at the same time, so they cannot be taught to swim effectively
• Young children who have basic swimming skills are not water safe or ‘drownproof’, as they may panic or forget their swimming skills in an emergency or unfamiliar environment
• Very young children are susceptible to drowning because they are top heavy. A young child leaning forward to look into water or reach for an object easily topples over and drowns even in just a few inches of water
• Childhood drowning is a silent event as children do not usually cry out for help. A drowning child may not cough or splash. A child swallows water, sinks and loses consciousness in less than a minute. Drowning happens quickly and silently.
• Illness (e.g. epilepsy)
• Acute injury (e.g. being knocked unconscious)
• Disobeying parent or carer’s instructions
• Children seeking out water
• Children’s mobility improving and speed of movement increasing as children age and develop
• Being attracted to colourful toys left in the pool or floating on water

AQUATIC ENVIRONMENTS

• Absence of a safety barrier such as no fence around a home swimming pool and no child safe play area being used on a farm or around a home with children under 5 years of age and access to water
• Ineffective fence or gate – possibly due to a lack of maintenance
• Tempting objects in the water – toys etc
• Steep or slippery entry and exit points e.g. dam banks
• Submerged objects
• The speed at which the water is flowing
• The temperature of the water (e.g. when the temperature of water is different to what the child is used to this may upset or confuse the child)
• Children following animals into dams
• Weather – such as tidal flows and flooding associated with bad weather
• The fence as a psychological barrier – when parents reinforce to children that the barrier is there for their safety and not to be climbed upon
The Keep Watch program has 4 key actions to prevent your child from drowning. These are: Supervise, Restrict Access, Water Awareness and Resuscitate. These strategies are not to be used in isolation and should form part of a web of strategies. Therefore if one line of defence fails there are more prevention measures working together to prevent your child from drowning.

**SUPERVISE YOUR CHILD**

**Always supervise your child within arms’ reach**

- Active supervision is vital in protecting children under 5 from drowning. Many drowning deaths happen in those few seconds while you answer the phone or a knock at the door.
- Active supervision means that a child is being constantly watched by a responsible adult within arms’ reach. It is not the occasional glance while you nap, read or undertake household chores, and it is not looking at your child playing outside while you are inside.
- Active supervision has four key components:
  - **Be Prepared** – Always make sure you have everything ready for bathing your child or going swimming e.g. towels, dry clothes etc.
  - **Be Close** – Always be within arms’ reach of your child.
  - **All Of Your Attention** – Focus all of your attention on your child and watch, talk and play with them when they are in the water.
  - **All Of The Time** – You should never leave your child alone in the water, nor should they be left in the care of an older child.
- If you must leave the bathroom when bathing your child or the swimming pool area where your child is swimming, take your child with you.
- Don’t forget to supervise children near nappy buckets, bath tubs, fish ponds, dams, creeks, rivers and water features.
- Setting up rules and boundaries for children are also useful.

**Actions for Parents and Carers (✓)**

- Lids securely on nappy buckets and buckets kept out of sight when water inside.
- Bathtub drained immediately after use and taps turned off tightly. Bathroom door closed.
- Child Safe Play Area created.
- Set of rules established for your children around water.
- If having a party or function, a designated adult is responsible for each water area (wear a Keep Watch Designated Child Supervisor Hat). Children taught about meaning of Designated Child Supervisor Hat.
- If designated adult leaves the area, responsibility handed over to another capable adult.
Provide Barriers to Water Locations

- Statistics show that the most common location where drowning occurs for children under 5 years of age is the home pool or spa.
- Stop children drowning in your swimming pool or spa by installing a fence that meets Australian Standard AS 1926.
- Fencing that isolates your pool from the house is the most effective method.
- Once a fence and self-closing, self-latching gate are installed, they must be kept in good working order. Check your fence and gate now, and then on a regular basis. Download a checklist now from www.homepoolsafety.com.au.
- Remember, one of the most common areas of weakness in a pool fence is a weak or faulty gate latch. Are the latches working properly? Does it close first time, every time? Check the gate and fence now.
- Is there anything leaning against the swimming pool fence which a child could use to climb over the fence? If so, take it away now.
- Consider using a Child Safe Play Area to restrict a child’s access to water, especially when the water cannot be fenced, such as a dam on a farm.
- There have been a number of drowning deaths where children have wandered into the bathroom and drowned. To prevent this you should restrict access to the bathroom.
- Inflatable pools need to be fenced if they are able to be filled to a depth of 300mm or more.
- The fence can also act not only as a physical barrier but also as a psychological barrier when parents reprimand children for climbing the fence.
- Mesh can be used on fishponds and water features. It does not alter the look of the pond or water feature as it sits below the surface of the water and can keep children out of the water as well.

Actions for Parents and Carers (√)

- All water bodies, including inflatable pools and wading pools, over 300mm in depth fenced
- Gate installed that self-closes and self-latches
- Objects leaning against or near the pool fence that a child could use to climb over removed
- Child Safe Play Area created
- All doors and windows inside house locked
- Bathtub emptied and door closed to the bathroom
- Children reprimanded if climbing on pool fence

CHILD SAFE PLAY AREAS

Creating a Child Safe Play Area is an excellent way to restrict a child’s access to water both inside the home, outside the home, or on a farm.

For more information see Page 22 of this manual or visit www.keepwatch.com.au for a fact sheet.
Introduce your child to water

Water awareness is a broad term that encapsulates several different strategies used to reduce the risk of a child drowning. It involves educating children about the risks and hazards different water bodies pose, instilling rules such as no going near water without an adult and using bath time or an adult getting in the pool with the child to help familiarise them with water in preparation for swimming lessons when they are a little older.

Helping your child learn water familiarisation skills can be fun for adult and child alike.

- Water Awareness classes such as Royal Life Saving’s Swim and Survive Wonder Program provide a fun way to experience the water and teach safe water practices and rules
- Be aware that water awareness classes are exactly that, they do not aim to teach children how to swim and will not ‘drownproof’ them
- When at a new place, check out aquatic locations with your children and discuss different hazards that might be present
- Introduce rules to your children when around water, such as no going near the water without an adult
- When at parties or picnics near water, talk with other parents to ensure they are aware of the need to supervise and uphold rules around water. Better still, have a designated supervisor watching the water who passes the responsibility to another adult if they have to leave the area

Actions for Parents and Carers

- Child enrolled in a water awareness class such as the Swim & Survive Wonder Program
- If your house has a pool, using pool to teach basic water awareness at home
- Active adult supervision maintained when child in, on, or around water
- Bath time used as a time for water awareness
- Rules in place for children when they go near water
- New aquatic locations examined with children
- Hazards and risks at new locations discussed and rules set
- Parents at picnics and parties have a designated child supervisor near water actively supervising
- Parents at picnics and parties near water upholding rules

Swim & Survive Wonder Program

A typical Water Awareness Class includes:

- Getting wet
  Enter and exit the water safely with carer
- Breathing
  Experience the water on the head and body
- Going Underwater
  With instructor guidance and using cue words, undertake submersion preparation
- Staying Afloat
  Display comfort when cradled on back
- Keeping Balance
  Be gently rocked, turned and towed through the water
- Kick and Arm Action
  Be encouraged to splash the arms and kick the legs
- Parent Education
  Keep Watch drowning prevention strategies; Supervise, Restrict Access, Water Awareness and Resuscitate

Familiarise / Develop / Educate

Enrol your child and experience water together
Resuscitation is a skill for life

Parents with CPR skills have saved the lives of children in the past. As a parent or carer you are often the first one on the scene in an emergency and can offer vital assistance until emergency help arrives.

These few minutes of help could be the difference between life and death for someone you love.

• Resuscitation is a skill for life
• Have a go. A rapid response is the best response in an emergency
• Any action is better than no action
• Accreditation at a CPR course only takes 4 hours provided you satisfy the requirements of the course
• Skills must be updated annually for CPR certificate to remain current and for skills to be most effective

Actions for Parents and Carers (√)

☐ Knowledge and ability to rescue a child without risking your life
☐ Knowledge and ability to resuscitate a child
☐ Updated CPR skills annually
☐ Enrolled in a CPR course
☐ Checked www.royallifesaving.com.au or called 1300 7377 63 for course details

CPR – A Real Life Saver

In February 2008, knowing CPR helped one husband and wife save their two children from drowning. With their parents momentarily distracted while visiting relatives, the couple’s two sons made their way into a backyard swimming pool.

After a relative raised the alarm, the boys were found pale and unconscious. Each parent immediately began performing CPR on the boys and they each vomited up water. Gradually the boys began to gasp for air and started breathing as ambulances arrived. They have since made a full recovery and their parents credit knowing CPR with saving the lives of their boys.

Keep Watch CPR Fridge Magnet

Learn / Update / Act

Enrol and Update Annually
Have a go, ASAP, Call 000
COMMUNITY ACTION
Community workers can play a vital role in reducing the risk of toddler drowning through a range of awareness raising actions. Below are a range of actions using advocacy techniques, the media and educational activities.

ADVOCACY
Lobby to create ‘Child Safe Play Areas’ within the community at ovals, playgrounds, parks, open waterways etc.

**Action:** Contact your local Royal Life Saving branch or visit the website [www.keepwatch.com.au](http://www.keepwatch.com.au) to download the Child Safe Play Area fact sheet and information on child drowning prevention.

Lobby local councils to provide a holistic home pool inspection service – including education and support services (e.g. Royal Life Saving Society Home Pool Inspection/Education Program).

**Action:** Write to local councils regarding pool inspections and direct them to the home pool safety website [www.homepoolsafety.com.au](http://www.homepoolsafety.com.au).

MEDIA
Contact the local community newspaper to run a series of articles relating to drowning prevention.

**Action:** Download a Royal Life Saving media release template from the website [www.keepwatch.com.au](http://www.keepwatch.com.au).

EDUCATION
• Conduct education talks with parents and carers of children under 5 years of age.
• Create a drowning prevention awareness display at the local shopping centre, recreational centre or community centre.
• Provide parents and carers with the information brochure, ‘KEEP WATCH’ fact sheets, CPR fridge magnet and direct them to [www.keepwatch.com.au](http://www.keepwatch.com.au) for further information.
• Conduct education talks to preschool teachers, play groups, day care centres and family day care.
• Conduct education talks to community groups, e.g. Country Women’s Association, Rotary and Lions Clubs.

**Action:** Contact your local Royal Life Saving Branch for PowerPoint presentations, brochures and other useful resources.

• Invite the local recreation centre or swimming pool manager to talk to parents and carers about water awareness classes held in their centre.
• Encourage parents and carers to enrol/teach young children water awareness.

**Action:** Contact your local Royal Life Saving branch or download water awareness related resources from [www.keepwatch.com.au](http://www.keepwatch.com.au).

Encourage parents to enrol in a resuscitation course and to have a resuscitation booklet/poster displayed in a prominent position in their home or a CPR chart displayed near the pool.

**Action:** Contact your local Royal Life Saving branch to conduct resuscitation classes for parents and carers, e.g. CPR, first aid.

Encourage parents and carers to undertake audits/checklists (home and farm) and make appropriate changes. These checklists can be found on the relevant fact sheets.

**Action:** Visit [www.keepwatch.com.au](http://www.keepwatch.com.au) for home and farm safety information such as brochures (which include useful checklists) and fact sheets on Water Safety around the Home, Farm Water Safety and Child Safe Play Areas.

Encourage parents and carers to create a Child Safe Play Area around the home (to fence children in, not out).

**Action:** Create a demonstration ‘Water Safe House’ or ‘Child Safe Play Area’ for parents to view.

Ask large community focused companies e.g. real estate agents, sporting goods stores, supermarkets and banks, to put a Keep Watch or Home Pool Safety Weekend poster on their notice boards to remind customers of important drowning prevention messages and events.

**Action:** Contact your local Royal Life Saving branch for relevant posters or download them from [www.keepwatch.com.au](http://www.keepwatch.com.au).
PREPARING INFORMATION AND ENGAGING THE MEDIA

Getting Organised

Step 1
Determine the water safety message and action required (relevant to parents and carers of children under 5 years of age) which you intend to target with your media campaign or special event.

Keep media messages clear and simple. For example:

- At the pool: Keep Watch
- Inland waterways: Check it's OK to swim and Keep Watch over your child
- At the beach: Swim between the flags and Keep Watch over your child

Read this Information Manual and other Keep Watch resources such as the fact sheets, posters and brochures for ideas on more key messages.

Other issues which may create media interest include:

- Launches
- Grants received
- Project competitions
- A drowning in your local area

Step 2
Now that you have identified the message you are going to use, think of what the media wants from you to help get your message out. These may include:

- **Being original**: If your news item is new or unusual then the media will probably be interested. If it is not then you need to think of an innovative approach to the message
- **Being current**: Your news needs to be current for the media to be interested. Royal Life Saving regularly publishes drowning statistics and the most recent are available from www.royallifesaving.com.au to support your media release
- **Being concise**: The media does not need a lot of in-depth information upfront. If they do require this they will contact you. The ideal length of a media release is 1 page. It is OK to use bullet points
- **Providing contact details**: Do not send out a media release unless someone is ready to speak to it and provide additional information if required. Ensure the contact person is able to be contacted including after business hours
- **Providing visuals**: Often the media likes to have pictures or video available to go with the story. If you have these prepared beforehand they can enhance your message. Ensure the visuals are appropriate to your message i.e. everyone in the picture is participating in the activity safely
- **Developing a list of local media outlets**: Radio and TV stations, newspapers and magazines. The list should include the name of a contact person, their address, telephone number, fax number and an email address. It is also a good idea to know when publishing deadlines occur as some publications have a long period between receiving information and the publication coming out. Some examples are listed below:
  - **Print media**:
    - Newspapers
    - Magazines (sports, fishing)
    - Recreation brochures
    - Television guides
    - Club newsletters
    - Journals
  - **Electronic Media**:
    - Radio (call local stations for a breakdown of listeners by demographics)
    - Television
    - The Internet
    - Online social media

We have provided some examples of Royal Life Saving media releases that you can use as a template or basis for your organisation’s media releases (see page 18).
**SPEAKING TO THE MEDIA**

**Interview Tips**

Newspaper, radio or television media might ask for an interview in response to your media release. The following tips will help you:

**BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

Clarify if the interview is live or pre-recorded. Assume all interviews are going live to stay on message and use an active tone of delivery.

Identify one or two key messages that you want to get across.

Think about what the interviewer may ask and prepare your thoughts and comments.

Practice with friends or take a media relations training session.

Prepare a brief set of notes containing your key points.

Before you go ‘on-air’ review with the interviewer the types of questions that will be asked, and the direction the interview will take.

**DURING THE INTERVIEW**

Make your most significant points first.

Remember the main points you want to make and state them whenever possible.

Speak slowly but think quickly.

Be honest and accurate.

Do not get angry.

**Do not repeat negatives:**

For example if the interviewer says, “So we will never be able to prevent all child drowning deaths?” do not say, “No, we will not be able to prevent all child drowning deaths”, say “the prevention of child drowning is an ongoing challenge requiring a range of strategies”.

Be relaxed, friendly and positive. Show enthusiasm!

Give the facts clearly and succinctly, but don’t forget to be vibrant by modulating your tone.

Never provide your personal views on the events, results or issues.

Be careful about using technical jargon. Explain the meaning of technical terms you use. Avoid acronyms – unless you explain them first, such as Personal Flotation Device instead of PFD.

Use hand gestures to improve your performance.

**Paint word pictures:**

When you speak, talk in visuals, e.g. “…we can all imagine the scenario on a Sunday afternoon when we are having a BBQ, friends are over and you are in the kitchen and you do not know where your children are…” not “…in social situations often parents do not know where their children are…”.

If time permits, at the end of the interview make a brief summary of two or more key points.

Never say: “No Comment”. Instead, take the journalist down the track you want by refocusing the question.

Never speak off the record, there is no such thing!

Don’t answer hypothetical questions. As this takes you off message and some hypothetical situations may never happen.
SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASES

Use the releases below as templates. Customise the release you wish to use by adding your contact details and changing the information within them (such as using your own organisation’s logo).

Or use them as a guide to create your own media release. If you send a media release, remember to follow up with a phone call to find out if more information is required.

If you do not use the following template but will be quoting Royal Life Saving please run it by the media contact in your local State or Territory branch. See the back cover of this Information Manual for contact details.

Electronic templates are available for you to download and modify from the www.keepwatch.com.au website.
FACT SHEETS
There are a range of fact sheets available from www.keepwatch.com.au on topics such as supervision, resuscitation, water awareness and farm water safety.

Each fact sheet is designed to provide answers to commonly asked questions, a checklist to help prevent drowning in the topic area and real life examples of the issues discussed. As a community health worker, these fact sheets are a valuable resource that you can print off and give to parents or direct parents to on the website.

Keep Watch @ Public Pools aims to prevent drowning in public pools by ensuring parents actively supervise. The program aims to eliminate all drowning deaths and reduce the number of near drowning incidents that occur in aquatic leisure centres, public swimming centres and pools. It also aims to highlight the need for an increase in parental responsibility, rather than relying on pool lifeguards to babysit children.

Why is this program needed?
In the past decade, 80 people have drowned at public swimming pools.....25% of these people were under 5 years of age.

A lack of direct supervision by the parents or carer while a child was in the water have been the main factor in 70% of drowning deaths at public pools. Therefore this program is targeted at parents and carers of children to help them understand the dangers of leaving their children unattended at the pool. As a parent you have a responsibility to look after your own children and to not use lifeguards as babysitters.

Keep Watch @ Public Pools Policy
• Children (under 10 years) should not be allowed entry unless under active supervision of a person 16 years or older
• Parents and guardians should actively supervise their children at all times. As such, they should be dressed ready for action, including unexpected entry to a pool
• For 0-5 year olds and non-swimmers a parent or guardian is in the water at all times (within arms’ reach of the child). It is best if you are engaging with your child i.e. playing with them, talking to them
• For 6-10 year olds constant active supervision is required, be prepared to get wet and enter the water with this age group
• For 11-14 year olds it is recommended that a parent check up on their child by physically going to the point where they are in or around the water.

Note: These are minimum requirements and where possible pools can provide a higher standard. Please check with your local pool for their policy.

What resources are available to complement this program?
There is a wide range of Keep Watch @ Public Pools resources available.

These include:
• Banners
• Aquatic Centre entry rules signs
• Information cards
• Invitation
• Posters
• Brochures
• Car park sign
• Table Talkers

Community health workers can be advocates for this program in their local areas. If a community health worker has an aquatic facility or pool manager that would like to participate in the Keep Watch @ Public Pools program, encourage them to contact their Royal Life Saving Branch.

For more information on the Keep Watch @ Public Pools program please visit www.keepwatch.com.au
Keep Watch @ The Farm aims to prevent drowning on farms by ensuring parents create Child Safe Play Areas. It educates parents and carers on how to keep their children safe when in, on or around water at a farm. The farm environment has a range of water locations/hazards that may increase a child’s risk of drowning including dams, troughs, irrigation channels, water tanks and swimming pools. A farm may also have a creek or river that runs through that property.

Why is this program needed?
On average four children under the age of 5, drown in farm dams every year and there are approximately 3 hospitalisations as a result of a near drowning incident for each of those deaths. Easy access to water and a lack of active adult supervision by parents or carers have been the main factors in farm drowning deaths of children.

Child Safe Play Areas
A child safe play area is a fenced area in the backyard or in the home that includes toys or play equipment for children within it. It is designed to restrict a child’s access to water and is particularly useful on a farm where water bodies such as dams and troughs may not be able to be fenced due to the needs of animals.

An effective Child Safe Play Area is:
• Carefully planned
• In a designated location
• Close to the home if outside or easily supervised if inside the home
• Securely fenced – to keep young children from entering the farm workplace without adult supervision
• Placed somewhere where children can be easily watched
• Completely surrounded by a barrier (fence)
• Not have any water bodies within it
• Free of items that can be used to climb the fence
• Can be inside or outside the house
• Built with child resistant gates and latches
• A fun safe environment for children to play in
• Regularly maintained

For more information on Child Safe Play Areas visit Farmsafe Australia (www.farmsafe.org.au) or the Marshfield Clinic website at www.marshfieldclinic.org/safeplay

What resources are available to complement this program?
The Keep Watch @ The Farm program has three valuable resources:
• A Keep Watch @ The Farm brochure
• A ‘Please Close the Gate’ sign
• Farm Safety Fact Sheet
• Child Safe Play Area fact sheet

These resources can be ordered from your local Royal Life Saving Branch and also by ordering online through the Keep Watch website at www.KeepWatch.com.au.
Why is this program needed?

In Australia, on average, 5 children under the age of 5 drown and 47 are hospitalised due to bathtub drowning incidents each year. One in four hospitalisations result in permanent injuries such as brain damage. The majority of bathtub drowning deaths in Australia are of children less than 2 years old who were already in the bathtub when they drowned.

Strategies @ Bath Time

One of the most effective drowning prevention strategies at bath time is constant active adult supervision. It is important to ensure that when your child is in, on, or around water they are within arms’ reach and have your undivided attention at all times. This includes being prepared by having towels, clothes and other bathing items ready before filling the bathtub.

What resources are available to complement this program?

The Keep Watch @ Bath Time program has several useful resources to support its key messages:

• Keep Watch @ Bath Time brochure
• Keep Watch @ Bath Time Tap Hanger
• Bath Time Safety Fact Sheet

Below: The Keep Watch @ Bath Time Brochure

Keep Watch @ Bath Time aims to prevent bathtub drowning by ensuring parents never leave children alone in the bath.

It educates parents on how to keep children safe at bath time by: Ensuring parents are prepared with everything they need for bathing before entering the bathroom, actively supervising children at all times when in the bath, emptying the bath and closing the bathroom door when not in use and using bathtime as a time for water awareness.

Visit www.keepwatch.com.au for more information on the Keep Watch @ Bath Time program and to download a Bath Time Safety Fact Sheet.
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


A number of reports on a range of water safety topics can be accessed from the Australian Water Safety Council’s website www.watersafety.com.au

RESOURCES

Royal Life Saving has a large number of different resources available to help increase understanding and teach drowning prevention and water safety. A full list of resources can be found on the following order form. These can be ordered by contacting your local Royal Life Saving or by visiting the online store at www.royallifesaving.com.au.

Community Service Announcements

The Keep Watch website has a range of community service announcements that can be used for radio, newspaper and television.

Useful Websites

www.keepwatch.com.au
www.royallifesaving.com.au
www.swimandsurvive.com.au
www.greymedallion.com.au
www.homepoolsafety.com.au
www.watersafety.com.au
www.austswim.com.au

Stay Informed
The Keep Watch suite of programs have a range of resources available to support the specific water safety messages of each program.

Keep Watch Brochure

Keep Watch Poster

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Designated Child Supervisor Hat

To order please contact Royal Life Saving in your State or Territory.
CHILD DROWNING – FACT OR FICTION?

Child drowning is preventable. Unfortunately there are a number of myths about children and water. The aim of this fact or fiction is to give parents the real information about child drowning in order for them to more effectively prevent it.

Fiction: Children are easy to supervise and I do not need to modify my strategies as they age.
Fact: Children develop quickly and at different stages their abilities can change quite rapidly. As children grow they become more mobile and like to explore. This may mean they begin climbing over barriers that are designed to keep them away from water.

Fiction: Children are at a lesser risk of drowning because of their small physical build.
Fact: Young children are at risk because of their physical build. They are ‘top heavy’ and more prone to falling into water due to a lack of balance.

Fiction: Children are aware of the dangers water poses to them and will take care around water.
Fact: Children do not understand or perceive the hazards that water presents to them. They have no real sense of danger and require a high level of supervision.

Fiction: Young children can be left in the supervision of older children.
Fact: Never leave children in the care of older children. Older children may not perceive the amount of danger a young child may be in and may confuse drowning for playing or lack the attention levels needed to supervise correctly.

Fiction: Water needs to be reasonably deep for children to drown in it.
Fact: Children only need a small amount of water to drown in. Water that is deep enough to cover their nose and mouth is enough for a child to drown in.

Fiction: I can leave my child alone in the bath for a few seconds/minutes while I grab something I forgot, or to go to the toilet.
Fact: Drowning can occur in a matter of moments and you should never leave your child without active adult supervision. Ensure you have everything you need before filling the bathtub.

Fiction: A bath seat keeps a child safe in the bath.
Fact: Children have drowned while in a bath seat. Using a bath seat does also not replace the need for constant active adult supervision.

Fiction: Toddlers are naturally docile and do not like to explore around water.
Fact: Toddlers are a naturally inquisitive group and are attracted to water. Children under 5 years of age are especially at risk because of their natural curiosity about their environment.

Fiction: When children are drowning they will make a lot of noise and cry and call for help.
Fact: This is a common misconception, when children drown it is silent.

Drowning is preventable.
Keep Watch Programs

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
Phone 02 8217 3111
E-mail info@rlssa.org.au
Visit www.royallifesaving.com.au

CONTACT ROYAL LIFE SAVING IN YOUR STATE OR TERRITORY:

ACT Phone 02 6260 5800
E-mail act@rlssa.org.au

NSW Phone 02 9634 3700
E-mail nsw@royalnsw.com.au

NT Phone 08 8927 0400
E-mail nt@rlssa.org.au

QLD Phone 07 3823 2823
E-mail admin@rlssq.com.au

SA Phone 08 8210 4500
E-mail training@royallifesavingsa.com.au

TAS Phone 03 6243 7558
E-mail tas@rlssa.org.au

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www.royallifesaving.com.au

KEEP WATCH
PREVENT YOUR CHILD FROM DROWNING

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER
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Australian Government

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