

The background of the cover features a photograph of the Townsville cityscape, including a prominent multi-story building and a hillside in the background. A large, semi-transparent blue graphic element, consisting of several overlapping curved shapes, is positioned on the right side of the page, partially obscuring the city view.

Townsville and Surrounds Water Safety Strategy 2023-2026



ROYAL LIFE SAVING
AUSTRALIA

The Townville Water Safety Group and Royal Life Saving acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters in the Townsville and Surrounds region, the Wulgurukaba and Bindal people.

We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful place and acknowledge that they never ceded sovereignty.

We respect all Wulgurukaba and Bindal people and Ancestors.

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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The drowning prevention research of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia is proudly supported by the Australian Government.



Australian Government

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On behalf of the Townsville and Surrounds Local Water Safety Group, we are pleased to present the Townsville and Surrounds Local Water Safety Strategy 2023-2026.

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 and the water safety sector, they enable visitors and residents to participate in recreation, leisure, attract tourism to regions and in some cases facilitate the development important aquatic survival skills.

Sadly, the Townsville and Surrounds region is home to 5 percent of the total drowning deaths in Queensland with 33 fatal drowning deaths in the area over the last 10 years. 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.

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.

Government and community support for this strategy is vitally important. That is why it was so important to ensure representation on the Local Water Safety Group from all three layers of government and a range of community organisations.

We believe this initiative will provide the Townsville and Surrounds 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 community who ultimately must see through its implementation and ongoing relevance.

**Townsville and Surrounds
Local Water Safety Group –
August 2022**



The following groups were consulted and actively engaged in the delivery of this plan:

Organisation Name

Aquatic Response
 City Venue Management
 College of Public Health, Medical and Veterinary Science, James Cook University
 Department of Environment and Science - Northern Parks & Forest
 Farmsafe Queensland
 Kidsafe Queensland
 Kylie's Swim School
 Public Health Unit -Townsville
 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
 Queensland Police - Child Protection Unit
 Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
 Royal Life Saving Queensland
 SCTA Swim Coaches and Teachers Australia
 School of Population Health, UNSW Sydney
 Surf Life Saving Queensland
 Townsville City Council
 Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland
 Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

The following groups were consulted and interested to contribute to this strategy but were unable to actively engage due to unforeseen circumstances or prior engagements.

Organisation Name

Bureau of Meteorology
 Coroners Court North Queensland Region
 Maritime Safety Queensland
 Port of Townsville

The following groups were invited to contribute to the delivery of this strategy, however, did not attend either workshop, nor provide any feedback.

Organisation Name

Australian Defense Force - HQ 3rd Brigade
 Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB)
 Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
 Department of Education
 Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water - Dam Safety Unit
 Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water - Water Resource Management
 Member for Townsville (State)
 Regional Tourism Organisation Service
 Royal Australian Air Force
 Retrieval Services Queensland
 Townsville Hospital and Health Service
 The Gudjuda Reference Group Aboriginal Corporation
 The North Queensland Land Council
 Wulgurukaba Aboriginal Corporation

Developed: August 2022

Endorsed: October 2022

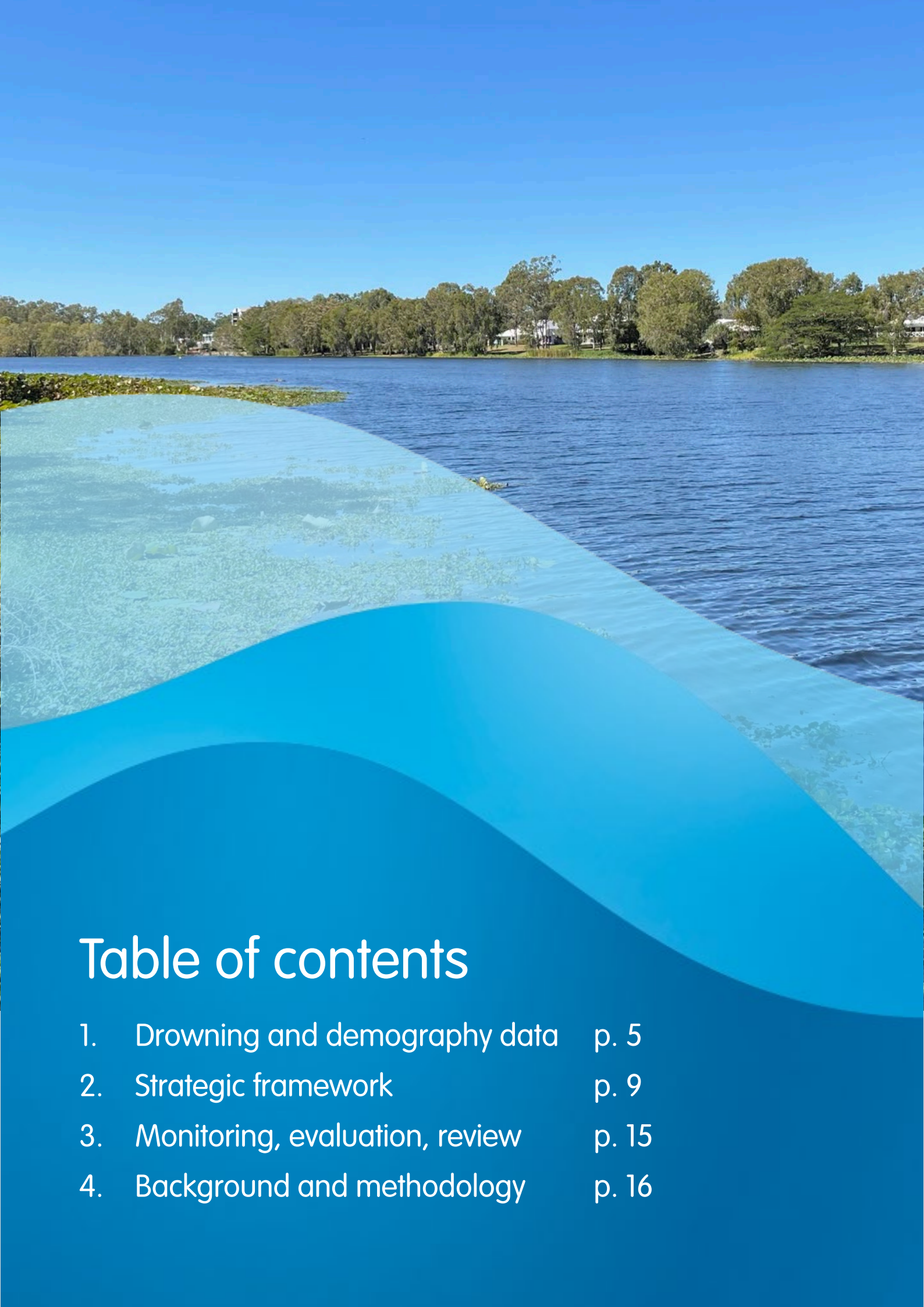


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Drowning and Demography Data

QUEENSLAND & TOWNSVILLE DROWNING PROFILE

> 10 year analysis 2010/11 to 2020/21

QUEENSLAND

655

PEOPLE
DROWNED IN
QUEENSLAND

79% WERE MALES



TOWNSVILLE

33

PEOPLE
DROWNED IN
TOWNSVILLE

74% WERE MALES



AGE BREAKDOWN

16%

25-34 years

13%

35-44 years

13%

65-74 years

22%

45-54 years

17%

18-24 years

TOP THREE LOCATIONS FOR DROWNING



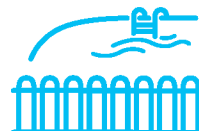
30%
RIVER/CREEK



52%
RIVER/CREEK



19%
BEACH



22%
SWIMMING POOL*



19%
OCEAN/HARBOUR



13%
OCEAN/HARBOUR

*All fatal drownings occurred in private pools during the recording period. There was one fatal drowning in a public pool immediately following the reporting period.

LEADING ACTIVITY PRIOR TO DROWNING



30%
WHEN SWIMMING
AND RECREATING



39%
UNINTENTIONAL FALL
INTO WATER



18%
UNINTENTIONAL FALL
INTO WATER



26%
WHEN SWIMMING
AND RECREATING

LEADING RISK FACTOR

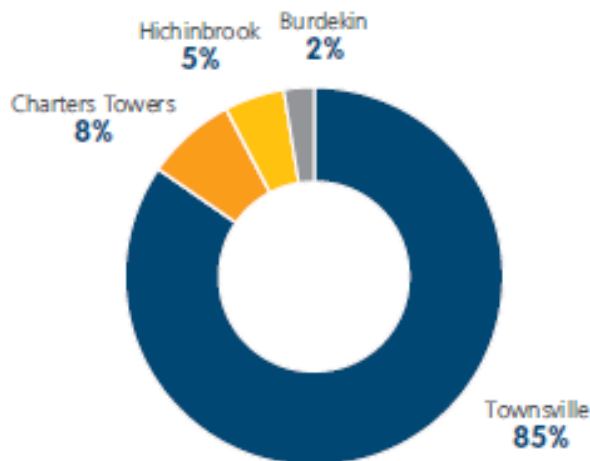


33%
HAD A PRE-EXISTING
MEDICAL CONDITION



26%
HAD ALCOHOL PRESENT

DROWNING IN NORTH QUEENSLAND COUNCILS



TOWNSVILLE DEMOGRAPHY

- Population:** 197,992 (growing)
- Median age:** 34 (Qld 37; Aust 38)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population:** 7% (Qld 4%; Aust 2.8%)
- 14% Born overseas** (Qld 22%; Aust 26%)
- 7% Language other than English at home** (Qld 12%; Aust 21%)
- 8.9% Unemployment** (Qld 7.6%; Aust 6.9%)
- 33% Mortgage** (Qld 31%; Aust 32%)
- 36% Renting** (Qld 32%; Aust 29%)

Source: <https://profile.id.com.au/townsville/highlights-2016>

Data from this analysis was collated from the Royal Life Saving National Fatal Drowning Database for the 10-year period from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2021 (2010/11 to 2020/21) which is sourced from the National Coronial Information System (NCIS), State and Territory Coronial offices and year-round media monitoring. Information contained within the NCIS is made available by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety.



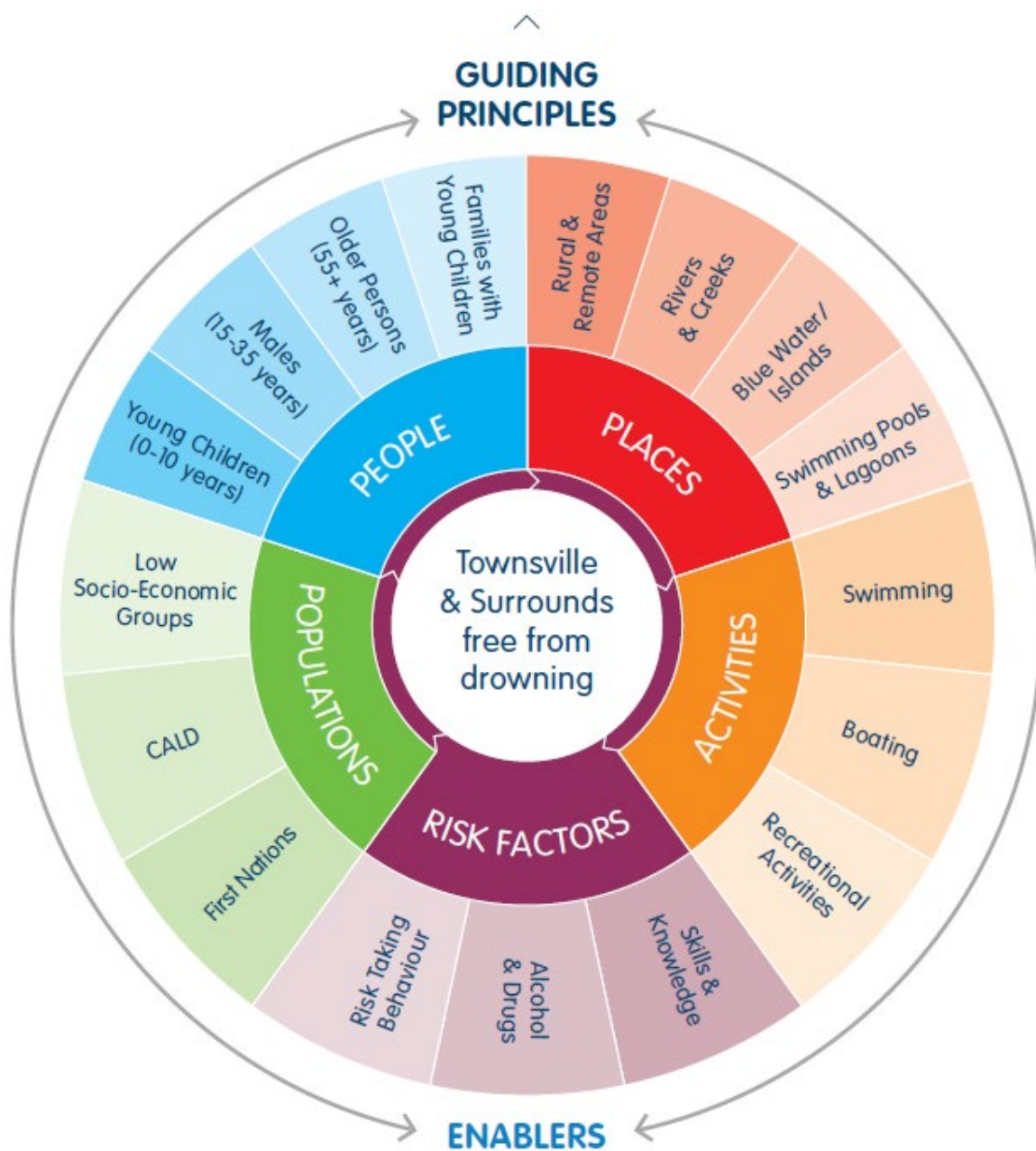
Strategic Framework

A Strategic Framework for Townsville

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 Townsville and were developed by the Local Water Safety Group following a review of available drowning data, media reports, the lived-experiences of the individuals, groups and agencies represented at the Roundtables 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.

Townsville Water Safety Strategic Framework

Local knowledge Data & research Build consensus Learn from failures



Prioritisation Collaboration Engagement Action Alignment with other sectors

PRIORITY AREA: PEOPLE



FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2026
Families with Young Children	Swimming lessons for young children may not be accessible to all families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for funded swimming lessons for young children Advocate for schools-based swimming and water safety programs to include practical in-water component and ensure more children achieve national swimming and water safety benchmarks
	Parents may not know hazards and ways of managing risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen policy around barrier certification and inspection regimes Expand availability of child drowning prevention content in parental education and maternal health programs Expand availability of affordable and accessible CPR training for parents and carers
Children (0-10 years)	Opportunities exist to strengthen supports which encourage appropriate parent / guardian supervision of children around water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update parental supervision campaigns and provide training to aquatic workforce on suitable procedures Raise awareness of water-related hazards on rural properties and agricultural land, with a focus on promoting safe play areas for children Separate playground areas from waterways (e.g. fencing, vegetation, etc.) Develop and promote education messages to parents of children about the important of parent / guardian supervision around water, including at venues like the lagoons Explore feasible ways of retaining unsupervised children safely within facility at Riverway Lagoons
Males (15-35 years)	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 18-35 years to explore responsible risk taking Improve enforcement of alcohol prohibitions Leverage technology to increase access to key water safety messages Partner with community groups such as sports clubs to build capacity and coordination of message delivery Identify peer influencers and work to engage them in water safety sector as lifeguards, swim teachers, community champions Deliver peer-led education with a focus on alcohol and risk taking, how to avoid harmful situations and the consequences of negative behaviours Ensure a water safety presence at community events and festivals where young men congregate Explore incentives which encourage responsible water safety behaviours
Older Persons (55+ years)	Older people seem to be less likely to be wearing lifejackets when boating or fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve enforcement activities for lifejacket use for boaters and rock fishing Investigate incentives to encourage lifejacket use Provide watercraft and rock fishing lessons / activities tailored to the 55+ demographic which include safety information Partner with organisations and agencies working with older peoples to promote water safety awareness



TARGETS:

- All families have access to subsidised swimming and water safety programs
- Rate of drowning among men decreases by 10%
- Male-designed and led water safety campaign in place

PRIORITY AREA: PLACES

FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2026
Swimming Pools & Lagoons	Public swimming pools and lagoons do not have consistent visible signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct audits of safety signage at all publicly-accessible swimming and recreational locations
	Lagoons are not protected by barriers and are open to the public even when unsupervised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install appropriate access control to lagoons
	Unclear which design and operations standards apply to Townsville's lagoons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk management at lagoons to meet and/or exceed both Coastal Safety Guidelines and Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations Conduct routine nationally-endorsed safety assessments with Surf Life Saving and Royal Life Saving of mixed-application venues
	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 Conduct mystery guest visits to assess lifeguard delivery of aquatic supervision across all venues
Rivers & Creeks	Rivers & creeks are the leading location for drowning in the region at 52% of all drowning deaths over the last 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify swimming and recreation locations in the Ross River, Crystal Creek and Alligator Creek Implement and/or introduce barriers such as vegetation in areas where water entry is unsafe Conduct risk assessments at key locations on the Ross River, Alligator Creek and Crystal Creek and implement recommendations
	Changing conditions, especially after rainfall and hidden dangers can lead to people getting into difficulty quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide publicly accessible rescue aids at key locations on the rivers & creeks Install Australian Standard signage along rivers & creeks at key locations
	Unlike other aquatic locations, rivers and creeks are not supervised by professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of extending lifeguard services to key inland swimming and aquatic recreation locations during peak periods such as school holidays
Rural & Remote Areas	Rural and remote locations lack resources, localised messages and communication around water safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve education and understanding of parental supervision at aquatic locations through consistent safety messages Collaborate with local businesses, community groups and industry to provide dissemination of key messages to communities
Blue Water / Islands	Different standards exist between commercial and recreational boating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardise licensing and training for the boating industry (commercial and recreational) Survey boating bodies and license holders to identify the level of boat safety knowledge Advocate for closer alignment between recreation and commercial licensing standards



2026 TARGETS:

1. Reduce drowning deaths in rivers and creeks by 50%
2. All swimming and aquatic recreation locations complete regular endorsed safety assessments
3. All swimming and aquatic recreation locations install Australian Standard safety signage

PRIORITY AREA: ACTIVITIES



FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2026
Boating	Boating-related incidents remain high despite regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct research into the key issues around boating safety Expand the delivery of safe boating community education
	Boaters are not required to keep qualifications updated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen boating driver training capability Advocate the strengthening of existing standards
	Boaters are not wearing lifejackets, or adhering to regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase enforcement of existing regulations including drug and alcohol testing of boaters on Townsville 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
Swimming	Lack of swimming and water safety skills may contribute to drowning across all ages, locations, activities and populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance research and data collection of swimming and water safety competency in the region Develop and deliver programs targeting populations considered vulnerable to drowning Increase the availability of programs for children, families and communities Conduct an audit of water safety program delivery by schools to establish baselines Ensure school-based programs include practical in-water components
	Participation in swimming and water safety education tends to drop off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and enhance programs which engage older children and teenagers in swimming and water safety Create pathway programs from basic swimming and water safety into higher skill development such as competitive swimming or lifesaving
	Despite the availability of safe aquatic venues, many drowning deaths occur from swimming in inland open water environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate 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
	No population-level holiday programs exist in Queensland, like they do in other state / territories, meaning some groups miss out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen government commitments to school, holiday-based and other programs, particularly those in open water environments
	There are few examples of targeted programs particularly for vulnerable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for increased investments in targeted swimming programs
Recreational Activities	Gaps exist in data relating to visitation, participation and risk factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement systems to gather data on recreational use of waterways Deliver targeted education messages to key recreational groups



2026 TARGETS:

1. All waters, all boaters, all the time - wearing lifejackets
2. Boating-related incidents and drowning deaths reduce 50%
3. All children participate in swimming and water safety – no child should miss out

PRIORITY AREA: RISK FACTORS



FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2026
Skills & Knowledge	Some waterway users are not aware of the risks in open waterways, particularly associated with moving water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen schools-based approaches to education programs Strengthen partnerships between aquatic facilities, recreation, sport and lifesaving groups and education bodies to ensure bridging programs between pool-based learn to swim and open water environments Strengthen support and delivery of lifesaving programs in both beach and inland open water locations
	Swimming and water safety skills and knowledge gaps exist for open water environments, particularly inland waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver targeted programs for inland waterways Increase formal open water program availability Support and fund programs which promote open water safety and survival skills, particularly in rivers and creeks where the burden of drowning is highest
	No population level holiday programs exist in Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver population level holiday programs for swimming and water safety
Alcohol & Drugs	Drinking alcohol is a common practice in on or around the water and contributes to a number of drowning-related incidents	<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 'Don't Let Your Mates Drink and Drown' and 'Respect the River' Explore incentives which promote and encourage responsible consumption and water safety Develop and expand water safety education presence at community events
	Alcohol legislation is not sufficiently enforced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate and strengthen both prohibition and enforcement of alcohol-free zones in waterways Increase enforcement activities in and around waterways, including at boat launch areas and marinas Advocate for alignment of road rules and boating rules and commensurate powers for enforcement agencies
Risk Taking Behaviour	Driving through flood waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore improvements to road closure infrastructure and warning systems Develop and deliver targeted campaigns about dangers of driving through floodwaters Strengthen education on safe alternative routes
	Young males (13-29 years) engage in risk taking behaviour to show off, demonstrating a lack of awareness and respect for the risks associated with waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide persuasive education messages at schools and community locations targeting adolescents Conduct further research into risk perception and effective interventions for young males Work with appropriate champions and peer influencers to better engage with target audiences
	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 Partner with community programs and events and use upskilling of hobby skills as a platform for the delivery of safety key messaging



2026 TARGETS:

1. Percentage of drowning deaths with alcohol as a risk factor halved to 13%
2. Funded holiday swimming and water safety program in place
3. 50% of children by the age of 17 have participated in an open-water program

PRIORITY AREA: POPULATIONS



FOCUS AREAS	KEY ISSUES	KEY ACTIVITIES 2023-2026
Low Socio-Economic Groups	Low socio-economic groups face additional barriers to participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce barriers to entry to swimming, water safety, lifesaving and first aid programs Ensure equitable access to programs and venues through the use of concessions, funded programs Provide aquatic workforce with strengthened professional development opportunities and supports which recognise varying nature of community and the increasing emphasis on soft skills of frontline workers Advocate for development and funding of holiday-based swimming and water safety programs
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse	Opportunities exist to strengthen the understanding of varying groups' relationships to waterways and aquatic activities	<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 Ensure water safety strategies are informed by culturally and linguistically diverse communities
	Opportunities exist to strengthen community leadership and partnerships on water safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify local community leaders who can positively influence water safety outcomes in their community Include community leaders in the planning and development of programs and activities Increase cultural competency and diversity of aquatic workforce
	Opportunities exist to tailor swimming and water safety programs for culturally and linguistically diverse community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
First Nations	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 Nation 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 Increase accessibility to culturally safe and responsive swimming and water safety programs Advocate for funding and programs which train First Nations people to become swim teachers, lifeguards and aquatic facility operators Introduce policies which strengthen inclusion, diversity and equity within workforce



2026 TARGETS:

1. Rate of participation in swimming and water safety programs is at least proportional to population
2. Rate of participation in aquatic workforce is at least proportional to population
3. Programs are co-designed with and culturally appropriate for key populations

Implementation of the Townsville and Surrounds Local Water Safety Strategy relies on the resources and support of many. 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.

The Local Water Safety Group 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?

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 support the strategy?
 How committed are stakeholders to collaborative approaches to solving the issues?
 Does the Local Water Safety Group 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 increased 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 invested in outcomes measured against the strategy?

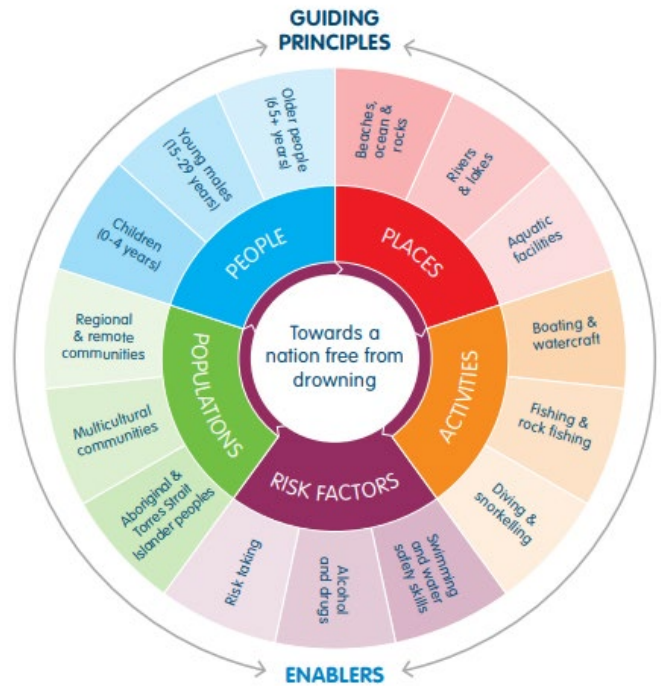


Background and Methodology

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.



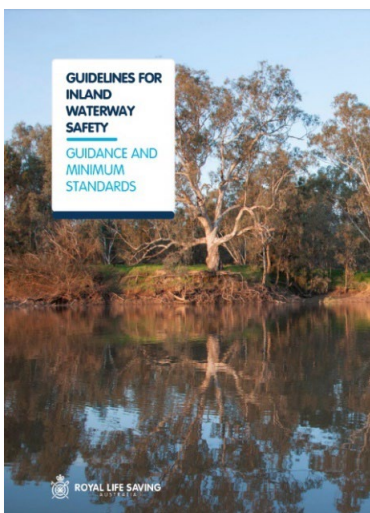
Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 and its relationship with the development of this plan

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.



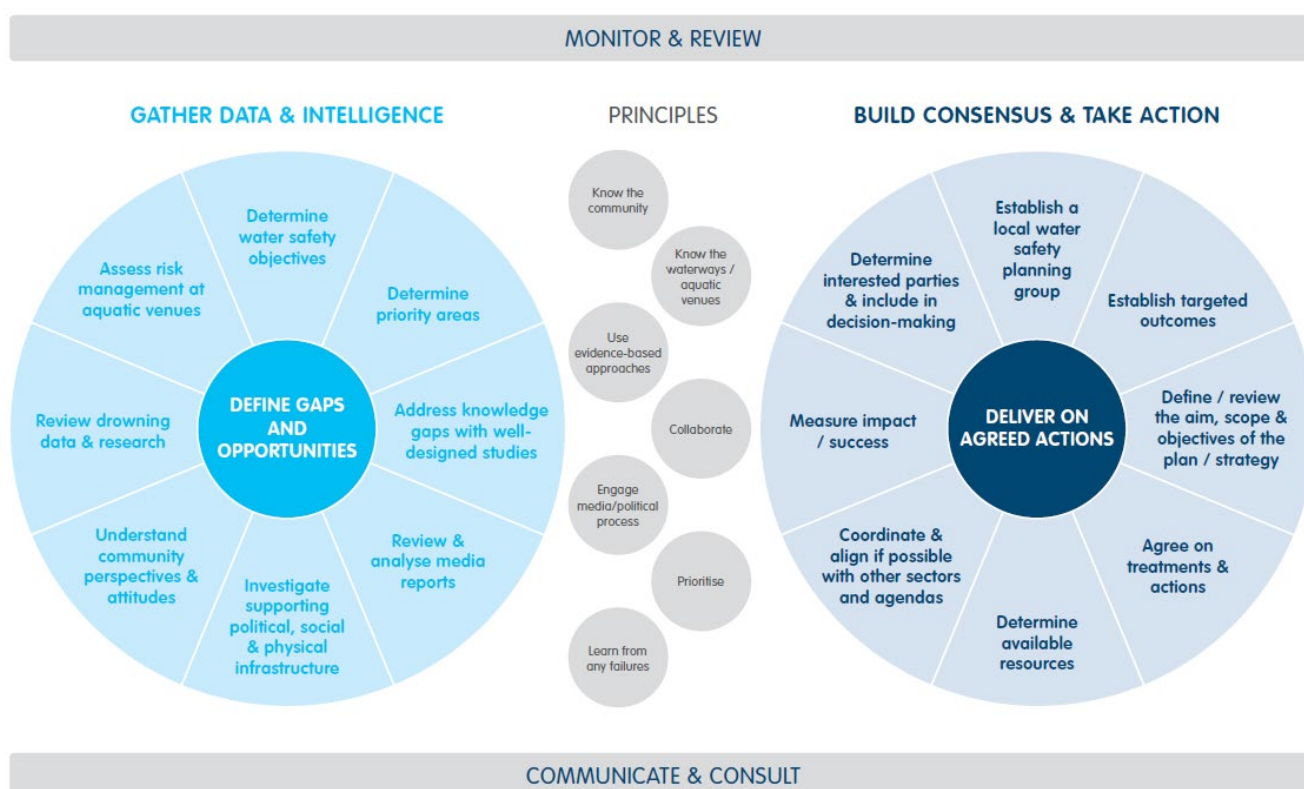
This Local Water Safety Strategy incorporates a holistic approach to community water safety, following a review of several existing methodologies from both within Australia and around the world. The structure and methodology incorporated into the development of this review has been closely aligned to 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 Local Water Safety Planning Committee workshops (x2)
- A 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 LWSP and should be approached as a ‘menu’ rather than a linear process of distinct steps.

LOCAL WATER SAFETY PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



Background

Royal Life Saving research into drowning has identified Northern Queensland as a key area of concern, with the region over-represented in drowning statistics.

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.

Townsville Local Water Safety Group & Roundtables

On May 6th and August 18th 2022, Royal Life Saving (RLS) in partnership with James Cook University (JCU) facilitated two multi-stakeholder roundtable discussions to enable the development of a local water safety plan for the Townsville and Surrounds region.

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



Townsville and Surrounds Local Water Safety Group – May 2022

Townsville drowning profile

The group was provided with local drowning data, research and information. The information included state and local drowning statistics, blackspot areas and local drowning risk factors. Participants were also provided with an analysis of media relating to drowning in the community and invited to share their own personal experiences of drowning, drowning prevention and drowning response.

These discussions informed the architecture of the local water safety plan which focuses on 17 key priority areas for the region.

Local priority areas

Through a series of workshop processes, review of water safety activities and gaps and a community survey, the group identified 17 priority areas to focus the water safety plan on. These included:

- People: Young Children (0-10), Males (15-35 years), Older Persons (55+ years), Families with Young Children
- Places: Rural & Remote Areas, Rivers & Creeks, Blue Water / Islands, Swimming Pools & Lagoons
- Activities: Swimming, Boating, Recreational Activities
- Risk Factors: Risk Taking Behaviour, Alcohol & Drugs, Skills & Knowledge
- Populations: Low Socio-Economic Groups, CALD, First Nations

The group discussed these priorities in detail along with some of the contributing factors on a systemic level.

Core and supporting activities in water safety

The group collectively identified what activities are currently occurring that are critical to drowning prevention and water safety in the region. The group also identified activities that are not currently occurring that could support drowning prevention and/or water safety in the region.

Community survey – Community Attitudes to Water Safety

The group was provided with findings from the Community Attitudes to Water Safety Survey. The survey catchment area is north to 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. Incentives to complete the survey included the chance to win a free suite of swimming lessons from Kylie's Swim School (\$231 value) or one of three \$100 visa gift cards.

Community Water Safety Assessment

The group was provided with a summary of the findings of a high level (community-wide) assessment against applicable standard and guidelines. The assessment looked at four key areas: Community Preparedness, Safe Locations, Public Awareness and Communication, and Policy and Reporting. The assessment findings served to inform the group of key opportunities to strengthen water safety and drowning prevention in the region.

Targets & action statements

Using the provided resources, information, local knowledge and lived experience of members, the group workshopped, set and agreed on targets and agreed action statements that will form the basis of the Townsville and Surrounds Water Safety Plan. The model is closely aligned to the Australian Water Safety Strategy Framework and the methodologies and practices used by the Australian Water Safety Council.

The background of the cover features a photograph of the Townsville cityscape, including a prominent multi-story building and a hillside in the background. A large, semi-transparent blue graphic element, consisting of two overlapping curved shapes, is positioned on the right side of the page, partially obscuring the city view.

Townsville and Surrounds Water Safety Strategy 2023-2026



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