NATIONAL SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY REPORT

PARKROYAL HOTEL, SYDNEY
19-20 APRIL 2017
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.

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Please contact:
PO Box 558 Broadway
NSW 2007 Australia
Phone: 02 8217 3111
Email: info@rlssa.org.au

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

The drowning prevention research of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia is proudly supported by the Australian Government.
Royal Life Saving, in one way or another, has been committed to swimming and water safety education since it was formed in Australia in 1894.

Over the past few years Royal Life Saving has been concerned about evidence of the declining swimming and water safety skills of Primary School children. We are particularly concerned about barriers preventing children from accessing swimming and water safety education, the level of achievement attained and what happens to those who miss out entirely.

These issues have come to light across Australia, and internationally as evidenced by:

• WHO recommending compulsory swimming and water safety education for students in its Global Report on Drowning;
• Research published by Royal Life Saving outlining gaps in achievement of basic swimming and water safety skills in Primary School children;
• State Government announcements regarding programs and program subsidies;
• Media campaigns calling for a range of actions, including compulsory funding.

As a hot topic with lack of national clarity and cohesion, Royal Life Saving convened the National Swimming and Water Safety Symposium in April 2017, in Sydney.

The Symposium brought together 50 representatives from across Government, the Education Sector, Academia and the Aquatic Industry, all keen to explore a common set of objectives:

• Support Australian Water Safety Strategy Goal 1 – Reduce Drowning deaths in Children Aged 0-14 years, specifically key objectives VI & VII relating to swimming and water safety education;
• Engage a range of key stakeholders from across Industry, Government, Private Sector and Academia to consider key issues related to policy and practice;
• Facilitate the development and publication of an Industry Statement on Swimming and Water Safety including but not limited to:
  - Reviewing, amending and confirming the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework;
  - Strategies to increase access and equity to quality programs;
  - Development of benchmarking systems to monitor achievement rates.

Two days were spent listening to engaging presentations, brainstorming issues and ideas and formulating concepts.

“Thank you to all Symposium participants for your valuable contribution, engaging in open discussion, listening to a range of opinions and sharing your expertise.”

At the close of the Symposium, all present jointly developed a set of statements with complementary actions aimed at building a national approach to increasing swimming and water safety education for all Australian children. These statements are:

• Strengthen school and vacation swimming and water safety programs in the community;
• Revise the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework;
• Set and report progress against a National Benchmark;
• Devise strategies to increase access and participation for those ‘at risk’;
• Improve availability and access to aquatic facilities;
• Increase the swimming and lifesaving skills of Secondary School students.

It is important that we don’t lose the momentum but continue to work collaboratively to focus on finding solutions to the issues, to ensure that every Australian child has access to quality swimming and water safety education, and to encourage lifelong active and safe participation in aquatic recreation.

Justin Scarr
Chief Executive Officer
Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
The first session set the scene by providing thought-provoking keynote presentations that probably asked more questions than were answered!

Professor Joan Ozanne-Smith AO asked us to consider the historical perspective of drowning in Victoria alongside significant events such as mandatory school attendance and the Melbourne Olympics. This brought about questions surrounding what impact these events had on the decreasing drowning rates? Can we attribute the downward trend to an increase in swimming pool infrastructure and coordinated swimming and water safety programs? If so, what does this mean for tackling drowning today?

Associate Professor Richard Franklin’s thought-provoking presentation identified research that indicates that 4-5 years of age may be the best time to start swimming and water safety lessons. He also highlighted that there is limited evidence of the level of protection that lessons provide against drowning or whether the skills learnt can be transferred to other aquatic environments. He posed the questions - are those taking swimming lessons at greater risk (they are not) and how much time do you need to learn the essential skills?

This session identified that there is much we don’t know about the impact and benefits of learning swimming and water safety skills. Addressing these gaps in research may provide a greater understanding of how we can best tackle drowning prevention, as well as provide opportunities for safe and enjoyable aquatic recreation.

OBJECTIVES:
• To present a historical perspective of drowning and drowning prevention in Australia.
• To challenge thinking regarding the swimming and water safety education of Australian children.

PRESENTATIONS:
1. Insights in Recently Published Research Drowning deaths between 1861 and 2000 in Victoria, Australia
   Professor Joan Ozanne-Smith, Department of Forensic Medicine, Monash University
2. Swimming and Water Safety Education - Things we know, stuff we don't and what this means for a nation of swimmers...
   Associate Professor Richard Franklin, College of Public Health, Vet and Medical Sciences, James Cook University

QUESTIONS RAISED:
• What impact do key initiatives and interventions have on an individual’s level of protection across their lifespan?

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS
Historical perspective:
• Investigated drowning rates 1861 - 2000 in Victoria.
• Provided insights into key events that may have influenced a downward trend in drowning, including:
  - Introduction of swimming clubs in the 1870s,
  - Infrastructure and urbanisation in 1890’s,
  - Mandatory school attendance from 1872,
  - Coordinated program of swimming and lifefsaving and training teachers from 1910,
  - Influence of Melbourne Olympics on the building of public Olympic sized pools,
  - Peak participation in the Herald Sun program in 1950s and 60s.
• Prior to the 20th century, there were no coordinated or sustainable drowning prevention strategies implemented.

Recent perspective:
• Proposed that there is limited evidence of protective nature of formal swimming lessons against drowning.
• Evidence suggests that 4-5 years of age is the best time to commence lessons due to motor and cognitive development and the rate of learning increases as children age.
• Proposed that exposure to participation in aquatic recreation, whether it is formal or non-formal provides benefits such as improved achievement rates.
• Argued that populations at risk of drowning CALD, low socio-economic, those with medical conditions) had not changed substantially since research in 1978.
• Questioned how skills learnt in swimming lessons are transferred into an open water environment, including coping with cold water, unintentional entry, moving water etc.
OBJECTIVES:
• To get to know each other in an interactive, thought bubbled manner
• To explore individual and group perceptions of the problem
• To explore individual and group perceptions of barriers and concerns

All participants came to the symposium with thoughts on barriers, issues and concerns. To capture this starting point, groups were given the opportunity to express what they considered to be the greatest barriers and present their main concerns and key issues currently impacting children's swimming and water safety education. Similar ideas were identified across the three themes.

KEY BARRIERS:
The main barriers identified were:
• The affordability and accessibility of swimming lessons, including who pays
• Distance to facilities
• Parental expectations
• The importance of children learning water safety skills not just learning to swim.

MAIN ISSUES:
In addition to increased accessibility, issues included:
• Needing a method that is efficient and effective in teaching children swimming and water safety skills within a restricted time period.
• The inconsistency across state programs and the lack of integration between programs to ensure that children are learning at the right skill level and to enable children who are not achieving to be identified.
• The retention of children in aquatics overall including lessons, swim clubs, sport, for recreation and leisure, or a career within the aquatics industry.

CONCERNS:
The top concerns raised included:
• Parental perceptions and their knowledge of water safety vs. swimming lessons, and parental engagement in lessons.
• The reliance and expectations on the education sector to take responsibility for providing swimming and water safety education.
• The limitations of taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach.
• Lack of features such as risk assessment, judgement and experiencing real life situations and/or environments in program content.
• Lack of information regarding the children not participating or having access.

"Educating ALL Australians about this life skill"

"Access for whole population, lessons need to be accessible and available for all"

"The expectation that schools should solve this issue. It is a community responsibility that should attract a collective accountability"

"What is the most efficient and effective method for learning swimming and survival skills - what age, time with fewer $?"
State and Territory Governments have a long history in the provision of swimming and water safety programs, predominately for primary school children.

These programs reach a large number of children (approximately half a million annually) at some point during their primary school years and their impact cannot be underestimated. Without these programs, many children simply would not have access to or participate in swimming and water safety lessons, putting them at greater risk of drowning.

This session provided an opportunity to showcase State and Territory programs, both school based and vacation.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explore the successes, potential and challenges of State and Territory School and Vacation Swimming and Water Safety Programs.

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Aqua Safe Water Safety and Awareness Program
   Jason Borton, Director Learning and Teaching, Education Directorate, ACT Government

2. DECD Water Safety Education
   Peter Roberts, Manager Sport, Swimming and Aquatics, Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia

3. School Swimming and Water Safety Program
   Lucette King, Metropolitan Manager & Peter Tomlin, School Sport Policy Advisor, NSW Department of Education

4. Overview of Australia’s oldest swimming program? Interm Swimming and VacSwim
   Fran Wood, Manager Swimming and Water Safety, Department of Education, Western Australia

5. Tasmanian Department of Education Swimming and Water Safety Program
   Wendy Cracknell, Principal Education Officer, Tasmanian Department of Education

QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How do we best communicate to parents the value of these programs?
- What is the most effective program format for a limited time delivery?
- What can be achieved in a short term program?

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS:

- There is a long history of Government provision of swimming and water safety education throughout Australia with school and vacation programs.
- Programs target a range of school years depending on funding models, with some States providing lessons for one year group and others able to provide lessons from Foundation to Secondary School.
- State and Territory Government school participation is high ranging from 85% to 100%.
- Annually, approximately half a million public school children participate in Government funded swimming and water safety programs.
- Over $30 million is provided by State and Territory Governments for swimming and water safety lessons.
- Government program curriculum generally combined water safety, survival and swimming skills and knowledge.
- Program delivery format ranges between number of lessons, duration, venue and consecutive or weekly lessons.
- A common issue is transport and pool entry costs, that in many cases is passed on to schools or parents.
- Program instructors are often qualified school teachers who have the AUSTSWIM qualification.
- Pay rates are often aligned to school teacher payrates, and not industry awards for swimming and water safety instructors.
- Collection of data on children’s achievement and participation is inconsistent and not much is known about the reasons why children or schools do not participate.

Note: the above information is drawn from Department of Education programs in ACT, NSW, SA, TAS and WA.
## EXPLORING STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>TARGET YEARS</th>
<th>PROGRAM OVERVIEW</th>
<th>INSTRUCTORS</th>
<th>PARTICIPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **ACT**         | Year 2       | 10 x 30 minute lessons  
5 x theory lessons | 70-80 instructors | 2,911 students (85.5%)  
63 schools (99%) |
| **NSW**         | Year 2  
Years 3-6 who are unable to swim 25m in deep water | 10 x 45 minute lessons | 550 instructors | 115,748 students  
1419 schools (85%) |
| **SA**          | Foundation to Year 12  
3.75 -7.5 hours  
5 x 45 minute lessons  
- 10 x 45 minute lessons  
(or 5 x 1 hour lessons) | 800 instructors | 125,000 students  
522 schools (98.9%)  
(2013 figures) |
| **TAS**         | Year 3, 4, 5 and at risk Year 6 students | 10 x 45 minute lessons | 210 instructors | 17,000 students (98%)  
159 schools (100%) |
| **WA**          | In-term  
Foundation to Year 7 | 10 x 40 minute lessons | 2172 instructors | 177,878 students  
749 schools (97%) |
|                 | VacSwim  
5–17 year olds | 5-10 x 35-45 minute lessons | 1310 instructors | 56,073 students  
396 venues |

**Note:**
The above table represents information presented at the Symposium. Other Government initiatives and programs have not been included. Percentage of student participation was not available for all States due to varying school years participating.
BENCHMARKING CHILDREN’S SWIMMING & WATER SAFETY SKILLS

AMY PEECH
ASSESSING ACHIEVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT SWS PROGRAMS & THEIR INFLUENCE ON SUCCESS

STACEY PIDGEON
IS THE BENCHMARK REALISTIC?

PENNY LARSEN
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE NSWF?

ALISON MAHONY
SOCIAL CONTEXT: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF PARENTS & CARERS

WHAT DO WE DECIDE TO TEACH?

60% ARE MEETING BENCHMARKS

SWIM & SURVIVE

DATA INCONSISTENCIES

DATA INCONSISTENCIES

SNAPSHOT, NOT LONGITUDINAL

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL COST OF A FATAL DROWNING?

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A LIFE?

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER

www.rlsnsw.com.au
For a number of years, Royal Life Saving has been conducting research on children’s swimming and water safety skills and levels of achievement against the National Benchmark as outlined in the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework. Results have shown that broader environmental, social and cultural factors impact on the achievement levels of Primary School aged children.

This session focussed on recent research of children participating in Government and private swimming programs, parental perceptions as well as understanding the purpose and potential of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

A cross-sectional study of swim school data revealed that:

- 81.3% of Primary School children are learning freestyle, yet only 6.2% are learning sidestroke.
- The average age of achieving 50 metres freestyle is 9.2 years, which is in line with current National Benchmark.
- Over 50% of 11 & 12 year olds meet the Benchmark of swimming 50 metres of freestyle and 25 metres of a survival stroke but only 30% could achieve the water safety skills.
- 61.7% of children participated in lessons for 1 to 4 years.

**OBJECTIVES:**
- To focus on benchmarking children’s water safety skills in Government and private learn to swim programs against the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.
- To consider parental viewpoints on swimming and water safety.

**PRESENTATIONS:**
1. Assessing achievement in Government swimming and water safety programs and factors that influence success
   Amy Peden, National Manager Research and Policy, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
2. Is the Benchmark realistic?
   Stacey Pidgeon, Senior Research and Policy Officer, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
3. What is the purpose and potential of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework?
   Penny Larsen, National Manager – Education, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
   Alison Mahony, Senior Research and Policy Officer, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia

**QUESTIONS RAISED:**
- How do we advocate for children who aren’t participating?
- How do we best aid the transferability of skills/competencies to open water environments?

**SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS:**
- Despite the comprehensive research, there are still gaps in knowledge of achievement, participation, reach and access.
- Lack of information on children not participating or missing out, what level of skills, who they are, why and how we engage them.
- Lack of longitudinal data measuring the progress of children in swimming lessons.
- Children who have access and swim on a regular basis can achieve the National Benchmark, however there is still a proportion that do not achieve and reasons for this is unknown.
- The National Swimming and Water Safety Framework provides a well balanced curriculum. However, research showed that many swim schools concentrate on swimming stroke development at the expense of broader water safety and survival skills.
- The National Swimming and Water Safety Framework provides an opportunity for alignment of a range of programs which enables comparison of achievement across these different programs, identifies gaps and areas for improvement.
- A review of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework should be undertaken to simplify, confirm purpose, target and engagement.
- Factors for success include regular swimming over time, having a swimming pool at home and no negative prior experience.
- Safety and survival appear to be parent’s original motivation for enrolling their children in swimming lessons but factors for stopping included age, ability level reached, cost and time.
- 50% of parents believed that the responsibility for providing swimming and water safety lessons was a combination of parents, schools, and government bodies.
EXPLORING KEY BARRIERS TO UNIVERSAL SWIMMING

JENNY BUTVINICH
INSIGHTS ON PREVENTING ADOLESCENT DROWNING

TERESA STANLEY
PERSPECTIVES FROM AUCKLAND

TRENT HITCHIN
WA INITIATIVES TO INCREASE ACCESS & EQUITY

DR. PAUL BARNES/ FAD
THE SIZE AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE AUSTRALIAN AQUATIC INDUSTRY

WE WANT A RESEARCH AGENDA

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

NEED
SKILLS
KNOWLEDGE
ATTITUDES
COMMUNITIES

SKILLS FOR LIFE

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

SUCCESSFUL PATHWAYS

COMMUNITY
EDUCATION
WORKPLACE

UNDERESTIMATE THEIR CAPACITY

FAMILIES PERCEIVED MORE RISK

WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT THE EMOTIONAL

WE NEED TO MEDITATE ON SOCIAL MEDIA, FRIENDS, GIRLS, & ADVERTISING

WE WANT A RESEARCH AGENDA

HOW DO WE CHOOSE SWIMMING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

HOW WE DECIDE INFLUENCE OF SPELLS 

WHEN WE WANT TO AFTER POOL REVIEW

MAKE A DATA MAPPING 

TRENT HITCHIN
WA INITIATIVES TO INCREASE ACCESS & EQUITY

31% OF WA POPULATION BORN ABROAD

1.3 MEXICAN COMMUNITIES

CALD COMMUNITIES

MEXICAN COMMUNITIES

CALD COMMUNITIES

AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

1.3 MEXICAN COMMUNITIES

HEART BEAT, THE TRAINING

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE TRAINING

1.3 MEXICAN COMMUNITIES

549 PROVIDERS

$10 - 2554 IS MORE LIKE IT!

1072 SWIMMING CLASSES (WEEK)

0.4% YOKE

1040 TOTAL 5 YEARS

40% OF NUTRITIOUS ARE CLASIFIED AS INACTIVE

THE AQUATIC INDUSTRY GENERATES VITAMINS COMPLEMENTARY TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH COSTS

ALWAYS HEALTHIER...

THE AQUATIC INDUSTRY GENERATES 5% DISEASE PREVENTION

INACTIVE

$2.39.

40%

INCREASE...
Research has shown that those from low socio-economic backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and those living in rural and remote locations, are most likely to miss out on a water safety education. In addition, barriers such as transport costs, entrance fees, lack of access to facilities and ageing pool infrastructure impact program delivery and reach.

This session provided an insight into the value of the aquatic industry and initiatives that aim to increase water safety education for those missing out and those beyond primary school years.

The aquatic industry creates $2.8 billion in wider economic benefits annually.

One weekly visit to a swimming pool would move 40% of Australians from being classified “inactive” to “low activity”.

An average aquatic facility creates $2.72 million in health benefits each year.

**OBJECTIVES:**
- To explore issues and approaches to coordinate responses to target those most likely to miss out

**PRESENTATIONS:**
1. Insights from preventing adolescent drowning: Understanding water safety knowledge, attitudes and swimming ability. The effect of a short water safety intervention
   Associate Professor Jenny Blitvich, School of Health Sciences and Psychology, Federation University
2. Perspectives from Auckland, New Zealand
   Teresa Stanley, WaterSafe Auckland
3. WA initiatives to increase access and equity
   Trent Hotchkin, Royal Life Saving - Western Australia
4. The size and economic contribution of the Australian aquatic industry
   Dr Paul Barnsley PhD, Senior Economist, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

**QUESTIONS RAISED:**
- How do we identify “pool deserts” - areas which are lacking aquatic facilities?
- How can we avoid duplication of data collected and reduce the gaps in information?
- How can we know more about all the great programs and work going on in the industry if people don’t share or publish their work?

**SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS:**
- Different approaches to engage ‘at risk’ populations such as CALD, young males (18-25 years) are required.
- Young males are more likely to participate in risky behaviour due to peer influences; females are more risk averse.
- It’s not too late to raise awareness, introduce new skills and make changes after the primary school years.
- Changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills were evident among university students after a 12 week course.
- ‘For the community, by the community’ provides empowerment and ownership and may encourage sustainability within the community.
- More holistic and tailored programs which may focus other issues e.g. family safety, health and wellbeing.
- In partnerships between the community, agencies and facilities it is important to grow trust and relationships.
- Culturally appropriate facilities encourage participation e.g. swimwear policies, after-hours access, community instructors.
- The economic contribution of the aquatic industry is under-represented due to gaps in data and how businesses are coded.
- Overall, the aquatics industry shows a 10.4% rate of annual growth.
- Swim school providers are made up of a combination of government (40%), private and not for profit.
- Swimming once per week could elevate a person from being inactive into the ‘low activity’ bracket.
- The aquatic industry generates more value to the public that what they are paying; approximately $26.39 per person.
- The aquatics industry in Australia contributes a great deal to the health and wellbeing of Australians.
A key outcome of the symposium was to draft a collective statement aimed at increasing children’s swimming and water safety skills and reducing barriers that prevent or limit participation. The Symposium Statements would culminate in high level calls to action in the following areas:

- The value and importance of school and vacation programs
- The National Swimming and Water Safety Framework
- Monitoring achievement against a National Benchmark
- Strategies to address those most at-risk and most likely to miss out
- Pool availability, access and long term planning
- Swimming and lifesaving beyond Primary School

Symposium participants brainstormed these focus areas, with two groups tackling one area separately to address the crucial issues, develop a draft statement and identify achievable actions.

These were presented to the larger audience for further discussion. The Symposium Statements have been drafted by combining the two brainstorming pieces, identifying the key components and using the overall discussion from the two days as a foundation.

The Symposium Statements aim to guide the next steps to ensure the issues continue to be addressed through further research, working groups, collaboration and consultation.
**STATEMENT**

Strengthen school and vacation swimming and water safety programs in the community.

**ACTIONS**

1. **Map State and Territory Government programs and promote their values.**
   Profiling government-run school and vacation programs will provide a representation of what is being offered, the reach, achievement outcomes, and government investment of these programs. This would identify gaps or opportunities for improvement. State Government programs have a long history of provision and the impact of such programs should not be underestimated. Promoting the value and contribution that these programs make and the opportunities provided will strengthen their value in the community and may provide further opportunities for investment.

2. **Align efforts to the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.**
   A National Framework will provide guidance for program development and ensure a balance of critical swimming and water safety skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Aligning to a Framework provides the opportunity to benchmark children’s swimming and water safety skills and provide consistency in reporting. Alignment will also enable easier identification of whether children are achieving national targets and the minimum standard prior to leaving Primary School.

3. **Strengthen collaboration to improve swimming and water safety programs.**
   A steering group with government participation would provide opportunities to collaborate on items such as funding models, reducing costs, communication and reporting to parents.
**STATEMENT**
Revise the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

**ACTIONS**

1. **Provide opportunities for shared ownership and collaboration.**
Collaboration and consultation will increase awareness, encourage adoption and alignment of programs to the Framework. Identifying a collective vision, the purpose and the target audience will then guide the structure, language and supporting resources.

2. **Refine the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.**
Determine current practice, awareness and adoption of the Framework and use research evidence to inform development of a revised Framework that reflects best practice. A more flexible Framework will cater for the diversity of users and programs. The elements included in the Framework must be a combination of water safety and swimming competencies required for safety in and around the water. The revision of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework will also include setting targets and a National Benchmark. Consistent structure and minimum standards must be maintained for the Framework to have value and maximum impact. Regular review of the Framework should be undertaken.

3. **Simplify language to increase accessibility and use by all key stakeholders.**
Identification of the target audience will aid in language and terminology selection for the Framework and enhance communication of the Framework to key stakeholders including industry, government, teachers and parents. Resources should be tailored to specific audiences to maximise the promotion and understanding of the Framework.
BENCHMARKING, TRACKING AND REPORTING

STATEMENT
Set and report progress against a National Benchmark.

ACTIONS
1. Conduct a scoping exercise to determine what data should be collected and how.

A scoping exercise would increase understanding of what data is currently being collected across the sector, how this is achieved, and where there are gaps or opportunities. This may clarify best practice, whether systems are already available and whether a range of mechanisms may be used to consolidate data.

2. Define the purpose of benchmarking and identify key parameters to report against.

Understanding reasons and benefits of reporting against a National Benchmark will aid in establishing the structure of a National Database. The National Swimming and Water Safety Framework would inform the minimum standards for the National Benchmark. Setting a minimum standard would guide improvement of program content and delivery. Defining the purpose and parameters would provide clarity of the skills and knowledge children should be achieving.

3. Create a governance model to manage a National Database, including the collection and use of data for the National ‘good’.

A governance model would provide information surrounding research ethics, including collecting de-identified data, what data is to be collected, how the data would be used, levels of access and who would manage the process on behalf of stakeholders. Acceptance and agreement from all stakeholders to track and share data is vital to getting a cross-section of provision from different program models, regional vs. metro locations and cross-country representation. This will provide a national insight of childrens’ achievement levels in swimming and water safety.
KIDS THAT MISS OUT

STATEMENT
Devise strategies to increase access and participation for those ‘at risk’.

ACTION
1. Strengthen community partnerships to increase engagement and participation of ‘at risk’ populations.
   Partner with key stakeholders (outside of the aquatic industry) who work directly with communities and families to aid in the identification of children who are missing out on a swimming and water safety education, reasons for non-participation and how to reduce the barriers. Partnerships should have a mutual objective to support these children and their families to access programs.

2. Develop a communication strategy for:
   a) ‘At risk’ populations
   Provide parents and communities with tailored information explaining the importance of learning swimming and water safety skills in the Australian environment, with the aim to increase their understanding of what is involved and how to access programs.

   b) Facilities and agencies
   Provide guidelines and support for how to best engage with ‘at risk’ communities, with information on implementing and tailoring strategies to increase participation e.g. family swimming, flexible clothing policy, family subsidies etc.

3. Investigate nationwide programs and initiatives specifically targeting children and communities who miss out.
   A better understanding of what programs are being delivered, who is participating and how they are being delivered will provide an insight to the scope and impact of these programs. Using this information will enable identification of best practice models to share learnings, advocate for those most in need and provide advice on optimum investment to maximise reach.
ADDRESS POOL BASED BARRIERS

STATEMENT
Improve availability and access to aquatic facilities.

ACTION
1. Conduct an audit of available aquatic facilities in Australia.
Map aquatic facilities and swim school businesses (including school pools) to identify the size of the industry, infrastructure and the geographical areas lacking in facilities. Combining this information with anticipated population growth figures will enable identification of areas requiring additional quality facilities for recreation, health and fitness. A variety of methods to audit may be required.

2. Promote the economic and health benefits of aquatic facilities to influence decision makers.
Develop innovative partnerships and encourage flexibility of business models to best use ageing facilities to meet the changing needs of the community. Advocate for the establishment of an industry consultation group for decision makers and developers to approach when planning and building new or upgrading existing facilities. Such a group would facilitate partnerships with key stakeholders to ensure community needs are met.

3. Advocate for sustainable funding of aquatic infrastructure.
Work to persuade decision makers that future aquatic infrastructure would benefit from proactive, sustainable funding. A proactive approach to funding will help to ensure that aquatic facilities are in place and ready to meet areas of growing demand in the future, rather than rushing to address unmet need once it has emerged. A sustainable funding model, whereby facility operators are granted a share of the equity in their facility or the underlying property, will provide operators with the opportunity and incentive to maximise the long term value of their facility, as well as providing a hedge against rising costs.
STATEMENT
Increase the swimming and lifesaving skills of Secondary School students.

ACTION
1. Establish a research agenda to address the swimming competency and water safety knowledge of teenagers and adults.
Little is known about the swimming skills of older children, teenagers and adults. Research is required to investigate the current skill level, water safety and drowning risk factor knowledge of these age groups. The outcomes of this investigation, along with academic and stakeholder input, would be used to develop a research agenda.

2. Develop a broad water safety program aligned to the secondary school curriculum.
Programs should address the skills, as well as knowledge, behaviour and attitudes to promote safer behaviour in all environments. Not all children participate in physical activity or school swimming, therefore a broader water safety and lifesaving program aligning to the curriculum across a range of subject areas is needed. Lifesaving education in secondary schools is essential to ensure that all children can learn water safety skills at some point during their formal education. Changing the terminology from ‘learn to swim’ or ‘swimming lessons’ to ‘lifesaving and survival’ may encourage greater participation. Consultation and expertise from the sector would be required. Developing a modified program or water safety modules that can be applied outside the education sector should also be considered.

3. Develop and promote vocational/career pathways into the aquatic industry.
Promotion of swimming and lifesaving as lifelong skills, gaining qualifications that can lead to employment and a career may aid in increasing participation among the older age groups.
## ACTION STATEMENT SUMMARY

### SCHOOL AND VACATION BASED PROGRAMS

Strengthen school and vacation swimming and water safety programs in the community.

- Map State and Territory Government programs and promote their values.
- Align efforts to the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.
- Strengthen collaboration to improve swimming and water safety programs.

### NATIONAL SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY FRAMEWORK

Revise the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

- Provide opportunities for shared ownership and collaboration.
- Refine the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.
- Simplify language to increase accessibility and use by all key stakeholders.

### BENCHMARKING, TRACKING AND REPORTING

Set and report progress against a National Benchmark.

- Conduct a scoping exercise to determine what data should be collected and how.
- Define the purpose of Benchmarking and identify key parameters to report against.
- Create a governance model to manage a National Database, including the collection and use of data for the National ‘good’.

### KIDS THAT MISS OUT

Devise strategies to increase access and participation for those ‘at risk’.

- Strengthen community partnerships to increase engagement and participation of ‘at risk’ populations.
- Develop a communication strategy for ‘At risk’ populations and facilities and agencies.
- Investigate nationwide programs and initiatives specifically targeting children and communities who miss out.

### ADDRESS POOL BASED BARRIERS

Improve availability and access to aquatic facilities.

- Conduct an audit of available aquatic facilities in Australia.
- Promote the economic and health benefits of aquatic facilities to influence decision makers.
- Advocate for sustainable funding of aquatic infrastructure.

### SWIMMING AND LIFESAVING BEYOND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Increase the swimming and lifesaving skills of Secondary School students.

- Establish a research agenda to address the swimming competency and water safety knowledge of teenagers and adults.
- Develop a broad water safety program aligned to the secondary school curriculum.
- Develop and promote vocational/career pathways into the aquatic industry.
**Symposium Wrap Up**

- **How can we build in more fun to engage kids?**
- **Can we make it cool?**
- **What's stopping them?**

**Most important issue?**
- Identifying the gaps and collaborating to solve issues
- Overcoming barriers that stop us from collaborating

**Communicate skills for life**
- Sharing info and data
- Integrate and keep thinking differently

**Personal reflection:**
- Loved all the data and diverse approaches

**Develop next steps**
- Communication
- Develop momentum and keep building connections

**Pulling it all together**
- Share work online too
- No child should miss out

**Celebrate our great work**
- Work towards positive, evidence-based solutions

**Everyone can be a lifesaver**

[www.sarahthefirth.com](http://www.sarahthefirth.com)
The Australian Water Safety Council is deeply committed to drowning prevention in Australia and is a collective voice for Australia's leading water safety organisations. The Australian Water Safety Council (AWSC) was officially formed in February 1998 as a result of strong industry consultation and Federal Government support.

The Council acts as a consultative forum comprising the major water safety and related government agencies and focuses on the presentation of key water safety issues to governments, industry and the community.

The AWSC is committed to improving water safety in Australia as demonstrated through the production and implementation of four National Water Safety Plans/Strategies. These documents have generated bipartisan support for water safety in Australia and have seen the improvement of Water Safety throughout the country. The AWSC member bodies continue to demonstrate their commitment to Water Safety by directing resources of their respective organisations towards the development and implementation of the Australian Water Safety Strategy.

Members
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia (RLSSA)
Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA)
Australasian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety (AUSTSWIM)
Australian Leisure Facilities Association (ALFA)
Australian National Sports Fishing Association (ANSFA)
Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group (ANZSBEG)
Australian Swimming Coaches & Teachers Association (ASCTA)
Divers Alert Network (DAN) Asia-Pacific
Surfing Australia
Swimming Australia Limited (SAL)
The Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia (Kidsafe)

APPENDIX

NATIONAL BENCHMARK

Since 1998, the Australian Water Safety Council has proposed the minimum benchmark level of competence prior to leaving primary school being the competencies of the year 4 standard of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

Year 4 Standard of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry and exit</th>
<th>Sculling and body orientation</th>
<th>Movement and swimming strokes</th>
<th>Survival and lifejacket skills</th>
<th>Underwater skills</th>
<th>Rescue skills</th>
<th>Water safety knowledge</th>
<th>Extension skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compact jump</td>
<td>Scull – Feet First</td>
<td>Swim</td>
<td>Survival Skills</td>
<td>Underwater Search</td>
<td>Throw Rescue</td>
<td>Answer questions about dangers in the aquatic environment.</td>
<td>Butterfly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safely perform a compact jump, a fall in entry and exit from deep water.</td>
<td>Demonstrate sculling feet first on the back.</td>
<td>Swim continuously:</td>
<td>Dressed in swimwear, shorts and T-shirt, demonstrate the following as a continuous sequence:</td>
<td>Demonstrate a surface dive, swim underwater, search for and recover an object from water of depth equivalent to the candidate’s height.</td>
<td>Throw a rescue flotation aid to a partner at 5 metres distance and instruct the partner to kick to the edge.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrate introductory butterfly arm action for a distance of 5 metres.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, Symposium Project Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison Mahony</td>
<td>Senior Project Officer Research and Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Peden</td>
<td>National Manager Research and Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Roberts</td>
<td>National Manager Aquatic Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin Scarr</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Barnsley</td>
<td>Senior Health Economist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny Larsen</td>
<td>National Manager Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey Pidgeon</td>
<td>Senior Project Officer Research and Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Government Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role and Department</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emma Taber</td>
<td>Manager Curriculum, Education Directorate, ACT Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran Wood</td>
<td>Manager Swimming and Water Safety, WA Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaylene Ryan</td>
<td>Cluster Coordinator, NSW Department of Sport and Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Borton</td>
<td>Director Learning and Teaching, Education Directorate, ACT Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonie McKenzie</td>
<td>Team Leader Swimming Programs, WA Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucette King</td>
<td>Metropolitan Manager School Swimming and Water Safety Program, NSW Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Henson</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Office of Sport, Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Roberts</td>
<td>Manager Sport, Swimming and Aquatics, SA Department for Education and Child Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Tomlin</td>
<td>School Sport Policy Advisor, NSW Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Johnson</td>
<td>Acting Director School Policy, Partnerships and Strategy, NT Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Morrison</td>
<td>Manager School Sport Unit, NSW Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Cracknell</td>
<td>Principal Education Officer, TAS Department of Education</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Aquatic Industry Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April Ryan</td>
<td>Public Safety Coordinator, Surf Life Saving Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew Hildebrandt</td>
<td>General Manager Programs, Belgravia Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Lawrence</td>
<td>Kids Alive Do the Five, Swim Australia /ASCTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Toner</td>
<td>Executive Officer, Swim Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janelle Falkingham</td>
<td>Aquatics Project Support, YMCA National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Schrembri-Portelli</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, AUSTSWIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonty Mills</td>
<td>Chief Executive, Water Safety New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Zancanaro</td>
<td>Hills Swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kym McMahon</td>
<td>National School’s Swimming Coordinator, Swimming Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Young</td>
<td>National Aquatics Manager, Belgravia Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Shaw</td>
<td>Swim Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Gage</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, Australian Swim Schools Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane Daw</td>
<td>Coastal Risk and Safety Manager, Surf Life Saving Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa Stanley</td>
<td>Research and Development Manager, WaterSafe Auckland</td>
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</table>

### Academia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof Joan</td>
<td>Department of Forensic Medicine, Monash University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozanne-Smith AO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc Prof</td>
<td>College of Public Health, Vet and Medical Sciences, James Cook University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Franklin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc Prof</td>
<td>Deputy Head, School of Health Sciences and Psychology, Federation University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Blitvich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof Dawn Penney</td>
<td>Professor of Physical Education and Sport School of Education, Edith Cowan University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith McElroy</td>
<td>Senior Research Fellow, Federation University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Royal Life Saving Society – State and Territory Member Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette</td>
<td>Principal Research Associate, Life Saving Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Bailey</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Society – ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise Power</td>
<td>Operations Manager, Royal Life Saving Society – SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floss Roberts</td>
<td>Executive Director, Royal Life Saving Society – NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Simpson</td>
<td>General Manager – Education Services, Life Saving Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Illinsky</td>
<td>Operations Manager, Royal Life Saving Society – NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Leaversuch</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Society – WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Taylor</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Society – SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trent Hotchkin</td>
<td>Senior Manager Swimming and Water Safety Education, Royal Life Saving Society – WA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Graphic Recorder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Firth</td>
<td>Sarah the Firth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 8981 5036
     E-mail nt@rlssa.org.au

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

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

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

VIC  Phone 03 9676 6900
     E-mail mail@lifesavingvictoria.com.au

WA   Phone 08 9383 8200
     E-mail info@rlsswa.com.au