



AUSTRALIAN WATER SAFETY STRATEGY 2012-15

Towards a nation free from drowning



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Acknowledgements

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Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015 Strategic Framework

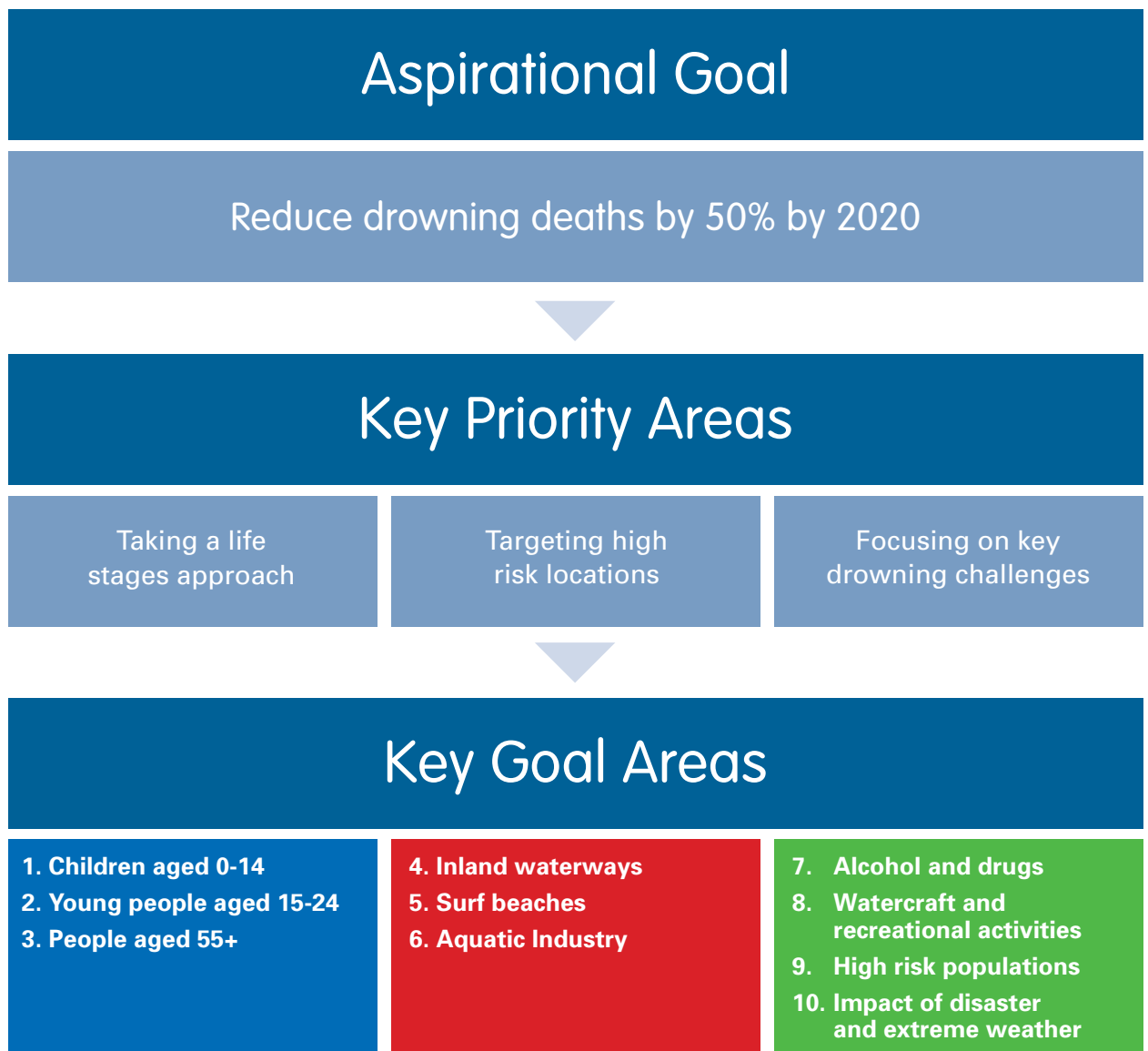
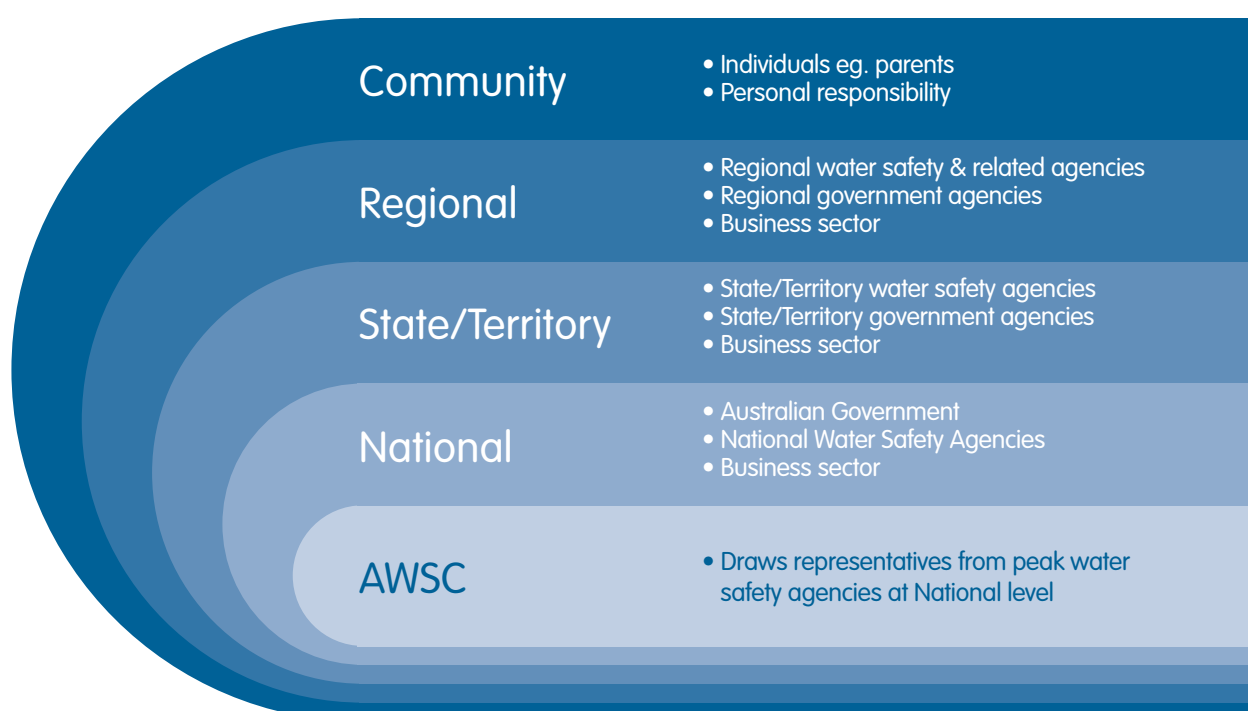


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Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015 Stakeholder Map



DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

This Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-15 (AWSS 2012-15) builds upon previous Australian Water Safety Plans and Strategies and was developed by the Australian Water Safety Council (AWSC) in collaboration with water safety agencies, government and other groups with an interest in preventing drowning.

There are 7 phases to the AWSS 2012-15 development process:

- Distribution of strategic issues survey to stakeholders – August 2011
- A workshop to establish priorities for 2012-15 Strategy, Sydney September 2011
- Circulation of consultation framework for 2012-15 Strategy and confirmation of goals and KPIs
- Working group drafts the Strategy
- Draft Strategy reviewed by Australian Water Safety Council Members, May 2012
- Consolidation and clarification of feedback
- Launch of final Strategy at the Australian Water Safety Conference, June 4 & 5 2012

The AWSS 2012-15 working group consisted of:

- Amy Peden
- Justin Scarr
- Rob Bradley
- Peter George
- Gordon Mallett

Australian Water Safety Council Membership

The Australian Water Safety Council (AWSC) is comprised of: Australian Leisure Facilities Association (ALFA); Australian National Sportfishing Association; Australian Swim Coaches and Teachers Association; Australian Local Government Association (ALGA); AUSTSWIM; Divers Alert Network (DAN); Farmsafe; Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia; National Marine Safety Council; Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (RLSSA); Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (SCORS); Surfing Australia; Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA); Swimming Australia Limited.

The development of the AWSS 2012-15 has been supported by the Australian Government.

FOREWORD BY MINISTER

Water based sport and recreation activities are an important part of Australian culture. The Australian Government wants all Australians and visitors to our shores to be able to participate in water activities safely, and enjoy the benefits that come from this participation.

The Australian Government continues to support the Australian Water Safety Council's goal to reduce drowning deaths by 50 per cent by 2020. The Government also supports the Australia Water Safety Strategy.

The 2012-15 Australia Water Safety Strategy continues to emphasise the three key priority areas:

- Taking a life stages approach
- Targeting high risk locations
- Focusing on key drowning challenges

The ongoing development of the Strategy and improvements in drowning prevention to date reflect the hard work and investment from all parties involved. This includes water safety organisations, governments, community groups and individuals.

Continued action is required from all stakeholders across all 10 Key Goal Areas identified in the Strategy to further improve safety and to reduce drownings over the period to 2015 and beyond. Working together we can build on the progress made and reduce drowning deaths and related injuries in all circumstances, as well as continue to target areas of high risk and where drownings are increasing.

Congratulations to the Australian Water Safety Council and all involved in the Strategy's development.

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KATE LUNDY
Minister for Sport; Minister for Multicultural Affairs; Minister Assisting for Industry and Innovation



FOREWORD BY AWSC CHAIR

On behalf of the Australian Water Safety Council I commend the Australian Water Safety Strategy for 2012-15 which continues our commitment to the aspirational goal set in 2008 to reduce the Australian Drowning Death Toll by 50% by 2020.

This strategy comes at a critical time for Drowning Prevention in Australia. The drowning prevention community has been deeply concerned by recent research indicating that 50,000 children will leave primary school each year with poor or non-existent swimming and water safety skills; by an escalation of drowning deaths in inland waterways and by natural disasters such as the 2011 floods in south east Queensland.

These concerns do however, need to be balanced by the positive achievements made in three of six key target issues. As we approach the mid-point of our long term horizon it is pleasing to see that we are on-track to achieve 50% reductions in drowning deaths of children under 5, drowning at surf beaches and also in home swimming pools.

If we are to ultimately reach our goal this is the time when additional resources, increased commitment and strong resolve must be provided in a collaborative and coordinated fashion. The Australian Water Safety Council is committed to providing strong leadership for water safety throughout Australia and we look forward to working with the three tiers of Government, non-government and water safety organisations to deliver the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-15.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Bradley".

ROB BRADLEY
*Convener
Australian Water Safety Council*





Goals and Priorities for Drowning Reduction for 2012-15

Reducing Drowning Deaths by 50% by 2020 – Maintaining Focus and Commitment

In 2008 the Australian Water Safety Council established an ambitious aspirational goal of achieving a 50% reduction in drowning deaths by the year 2020.

Since 2008 Australia has experienced a concerning increase in drowning deaths across the range of demographics, locations and activities. Unfortunately, in 2009 the 300 level was exceeded and again in 2011 there were 315 drowning deaths recorded.

At the Australian Water Safety Strategy Review and Planning Workshop, held on 29 September 2011 and attended by key stakeholders, it was unanimously decided to maintain our focus and commitment and to continue striving for the originally set 2020 target of a 50% reduction in drowning.

There were three clear messages from the September AWSC Review and Planning Workshop:

- Maintain the original Aspirational Goal to achieve a 50% reduction by 2020
- Maintain the existing framework used within the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008-11 with some streamlining of goals and additional focus on critical areas.
- Recapture Australia's Water Safety Culture by boosting participation at key life stages

With the revision of several key goals in the 2012-15 Strategy, the numbers have been revised in line with the updated 3 year average (2008-09 to 2010-11). The goal is to save 153 lives overall, with reductions in the key goal areas as outlined in Figure 2.

The AWSS 2012-15 sets an ambitious undertaking, but one the AWSC believes is entirely achievable through a strong, collaborative and evidence based approach.

The words of the former Minister for Sport Senator Mark Arbib say it all when, at the launch of the 2011 RLSSA National Drowning Report, he remarked "We cannot be satisfied with incremental improvement, we must act decisively to achieve a dramatic and significant reduction in drowning."

Australia's culture of water safety and our aquatic recreation lifestyle is the envy of many nations. The AWSS 2012-15 also aims to ensure this culture is revitalised and reinforced by increasing access, education and participation opportunities for all Australians.

Three Key Drivers for Drowning Reduction

The AWSC will maintain the three key drivers that will achieve the reduction aimed for in the AWSS 2012-15.

- Taking a life stages perspective
- Targeting high risk locations
- Focusing on key drowning challenges

Mid-term Progress Report – Towards the Aspirational Goal of a 50% Reduction by 2020

While drowning deaths remain unacceptably high, steady progress is being made in a number of key priority areas. Figure 1 below, identifies progress against the goals of the AWSS 2008-11.

Figure 1: Progress Against AWSS 2008-11 Goal Areas

2008-11 Goal Areas	Progress Report
Adopt a Life Stages Approach	
1. Reduce drowning deaths in children under five	On-Track
2. Reduce alcohol related drowning deaths, particularly in men aged 18-34	Of Some Concern
3. Reduce drowning deaths in older people	Of High Concern
Address High Risk Locations	
4. Reduce rural and remote drowning deaths	Of High Concern
5. Reduce surf beach drowning deaths	On-Track
6. Reduce drowning deaths in home swimming pools	Of Some Concern
Meet Key Drowning Challenges	
7. Reduce drowning deaths attributed to high risk recreational activities	Of Some Concern
8. Reduce drowning deaths in high risk populations	Of Some Concern
9. Reduce the impact of climate change and extreme weather on drowning deaths	Of Some Concern

The overarching goal of the AWSS 2012-15 remains achieving a 50% reduction in all drowning deaths by the year 2020. With this in mind, the goal areas of this strategy have been revised from those incorporated within the AWSS 2008-11.

Of particular note is the expansion of the life stage for children to include children aged 5 to 14 years and a move in focus from reducing drowning deaths in males 18-34 who consume alcohol to reducing drowning in all people aged 15 to 24 years. The issue of alcohol and illegal drug related drowning deaths has been elevated to be a goal area of the AWSS 2012-15 in its own right.

Priority Area Two now focuses on reducing drowning deaths in inland waterways, an area of extreme concern. Strengthening the Aquatic Industry becomes Goal 6. This change recognises the importance of the Australian aquatic industry in keeping people safe around water, both through the use of qualified lifeguards at public swimming pools and providing a controlled environment for recreational activities, including learn to swim.

Figure 2 features the AWSS 2012-15 goals and examines their proportional contribution to the current three year average of 306 drowning deaths per annum (2008-09 to 2010-11). It then proposes a target reduction for each goal area based on an overall 50% reduction in drowning deaths (Total target 153 lives saved).

Figure 2: Progress of AWSS 2012-15 Revised Goals and Estimated Required Reduction in Drowning Deaths

AWSS 2012-15 GOAL AREAS		3 year average (08-09 to 10-11) 306 deaths per annum	Total lives saved by 2020 (153)
1. Reduce drowning deaths in children aged 0-14 years	Children 0-4 years	32	17
	Children 5-14 years	14	8
2. Reduce drowning deaths in young people aged 15-24		38	18
3. Reduce drowning deaths in people aged 55+		101	51
4. Reduce drowning deaths in inland waterways		106	54
5. Reduce surf beach drowning deaths		43	21
6. Reduce drowning deaths by strengthening the Aquatic Industry		4	2
7. Reduce alcohol and drug related drowning deaths		59 *	29 ^
8. Reduce drowning deaths attributed to watercraft and recreational aquatic activities	Watercraft	35	17
	Diving	14	8
	Rock Fishing	11	6
	Fishing	5	3
9. Reduce drowning deaths in high risk populations	Indigenous	11	6 ^
	CALD	57	29 ^
	International Tourists	7	3
10. Reduce the impact of disaster and extreme weather on drowning deaths		23 **	12

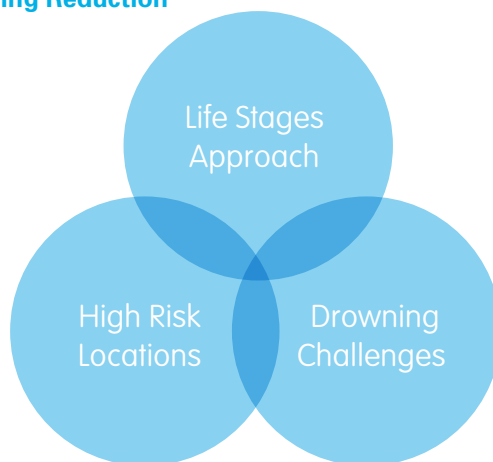
Please note: A drowning death could be included in more than one goal in the table above. There may also be drowning deaths included in the three year average and goal number for lives saved that are not represented across the AWSS 2012-15 goals as depicted above.

* represents cases where alcohol and drug (illegal) consumption was known to be involved

^ represents cases where a reduction in drowning deaths may not be the true measure of success. Work in these areas across the period of the AWSS 2012-15 should be aimed at quantifying the true extent of the drowning problem within this goal areas and conduct further research into how better to prevent drowning deaths in these areas. Therefore it is likely that with further investigation and better data collection, these numbers will increase before they can decrease.

** represents drowning deaths where flooding or extreme weather was known to be involved

Figure 3: Key Drivers of Drowning Reduction



Drowning Prevention Enablers



Enablers to Underpin the AWSS 2012-15

Past successes can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the development of swimming and water safety foundation skills in the community; venues with strong risk management and surveillance systems; dedicated lifesavers, instructors and water safety advocates; collaboration among water safety agencies, government and the community; and continual research and development that has guided policy and practice.

In the AWSS 2008-11 specific goals were allocated to some of the following functions. The AWSC has decided that the following elements underpin many of the key goals and because they are cross-cutting in nature, their contribution is acknowledged as 'enablers' in assisting achievements of goals rather than being a goal in themselves.

- Advocacy
- Policy, Legislation and Standards
- Research
- Education and Training
- Marketing and Communication
- Funding and Resources
- Collaboration and Partnerships

The AWSC acknowledges the significant work undertaken by water safety stakeholders and the resources allocated to improve the quality, reach and capacity across the enablers. The AWSC is committed to working collaboratively to build, improve and share capacity across these important functions.

Supporting Structures:

The implementation of the AWSS 2012-15 is supported by a network designed to facilitate and promote a coordinated approach including:

- The Australian Water Safety Council
- State and Territory Water Safety Councils
- Federal, State and Territory and Local Governments

In recent years State Water Safety Councils have been very responsive to requests for input and have assisted greatly in the broader coordination of the Strategies at State and local levels. This coordination has been evident with the adjustment of planning cycles of States and Territories to dovetail with the national four-year planning cycle and will lead to more effective implementation of strategies in the future.

Cooperation across Government portfolios at National and State and Territory levels has assisted greatly in gaining a whole of government commitment for resolving key drowning prevention issues. An example of strong collaboration is demonstrated in the goal to reduce drowning deaths of the 0-4 years age group in home swimming pools. This had input from Sport, Local Government, Planning and Building Codes departments.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

A Call to Action

The AWSS 2012-15 is comprised of three (3) Priority Areas and ten (10) Goals. It is intended as a call to action for drowning prevention agencies, State and Territory AWSC member groups, governments and the community to consider, prioritise and respond to each goal and priority area in a collaborative effort to achieve the overarching goal of a 50% reduction in drowning deaths by 2020.

The Australian Water Safety Council through its lead agencies plays the key role of leadership, facilitation and promotion through its extensive community networks.

Priority Areas and Goals of the AWSS 2012-15

There are three Priority Areas and ten associated goals of the AWSS 2012-15:

Priority Area 1: Taking a Life Stages Approach

1. Reduce Drowning Deaths in Children Aged 0-14
2. Reduce Drowning Deaths in Young People Aged 15-24
3. Reduce Drowning Deaths in People Aged 55+

Priority Area 2: Targeting High Risk Locations

4. Reduce Drowning Deaths in Inland Waterways
5. Reduce Surf Beach Drowning Deaths
6. Reduce Drowning Deaths by Strengthening the Aquatic Industry

Priority Area 3: Focusing on Key Drowning Challenges

7. Reduce Alcohol and Drug Related Drowning Deaths
8. Reduce Drowning Deaths Attributed to Watercraft and Recreational Aquatic Activities
9. Reduce Drowning Deaths in High Risk Populations
10. Reduce the Impact of Disaster and Extreme Weather on Drowning Deaths



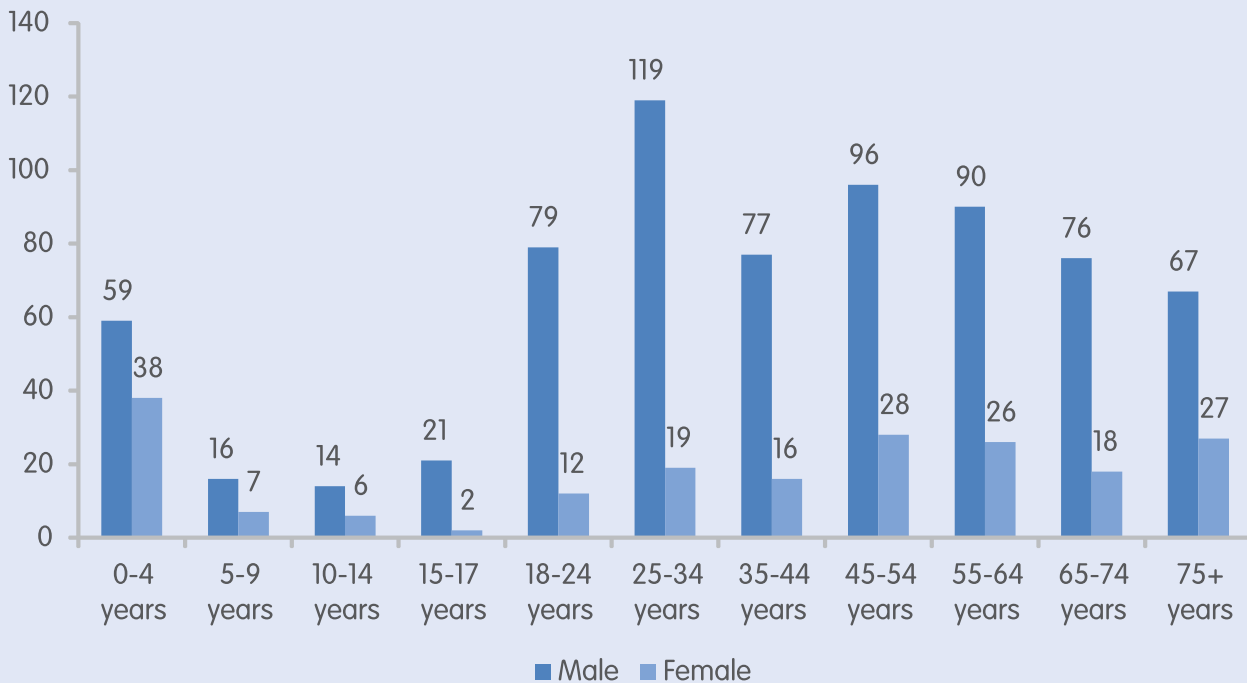
PRIORITY AREA ONE

Taking a Life Stages Approach

Taking a life stages approach is the first key driver of the AWSS 2012-15 and provides the framework for its first Key Priority Area. Epidemiologically, life stages are used to differentiate between complex drowning risk factors and exposure to hazards based on age. These vary naturally throughout a person’s life, along with the physical, emotional and social developmental stages.

Injury profiles, or more specifically, drowning profiles are identifiable for each of the life stages ¹. By understanding the risk, hazard exposures and protective factors inherent in each stage, drowning prevention strategies are specifically targeted towards key demographics.

Figure 4: Age Group Breakdown of Drowning Deaths by Sex, Australia, 2008-09 to 2010-11 (N=918)



* Note: There are 5 cases where age of the drowning victim is not currently known.

In order to achieve a significant reduction in the number of drowning deaths, this Priority Area focuses on three key life stages: Children aged 0-14 years, Young People aged 15-24 years and people aged 55 years and over.

Figure 5: Key Life Stages and Safety Issues

Key Life Stages	Key Locations and Safety Issues
Children 0-14 years	Swimming pools, bathtubs, lack of supervision, access to water, poor swimming and water safety skills
Young People 15-24 years	Peer pressure, risk taking behaviour, drugs and alcohol, increasing independence, inland waterways
People 55+ years	Watercraft, beaches, rivers and oceans, physical changes, medical conditions, overestimation of skills, lack of water safety knowledge, loss of fitness

GOAL 01

Reduce Drowning Deaths in Children Aged 0-14



Key Objectives and Performance Indicators

- 1.1 Strengthen programs that raise awareness and build skills in supervision
 - Programs are evidence based, targeted at parents, carers and supervisors of children under five and evaluated to ensure effectiveness
- 1.2 Harmonise systems that promote, monitor and enforce four sided pool fencing
 - Promotion, monitoring and enforcement programs are adopted, implemented and evaluated in all jurisdictions
- 1.3 Implement systems that ensure all school aged children receive compulsory swimming and water safety education
 - Investigation explores the notion that water familiarisation builds skills and safe behaviours in children under five
 - Swimming and water safety education to be included as a compulsory component of the National Education Curriculum
 - Innovative and effective water safety and lifesaving education programs are being delivered to school children
 - An adequate supply of quality, qualified swim teachers and instructors is available
- 1.4 Promote community wide rescue and resuscitation skills
 - A national campaign or strategy is implemented promoting resuscitation skills to parents
 - Rescue and resuscitation skills are incorporated into the National Education Curriculum
- 1.5 Investigate the drowning preventative effects of survival swimming skills in children and youth
 - A further research project building on initial investigation into establishing national benchmarks in survival swimming skills and its drowning prevention impact has been undertaken
- 1.6 Increase the proportion of farms and rural residential properties with a secure safe play area by 2%
 - The proportion of farm respondents reporting the presence of a safe play area on farms has increased against the baseline measure of 48% in 2011 ²

Background

Globally, drowning death rates are highest in children aged under five years ³. Research conducted by Royal Life Saving shows that between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2011 there were 318 drowning deaths in children aged 0-4 years in Australia. Children under the age of five most commonly (51%) drown in home swimming pools ⁴.

Goal 1 of the AWSS 2012-15 has been expanded to include children aged 5 to 14 years. This allows an in-depth investigation of the different trends in causation as children progress through different developmental and life stages and allows more targeted drowning prevention and water safety education strategies to be developed.

The previously mentioned study showed that as children age, the location and activity prior to drowning changes. Falls which accounted for 50% of all drowning deaths in 0-4 year olds, accounts for just 15% of drowning deaths in the 10-14 years age group. Males accounted for 65% of all drowning deaths within this age group. Of the 139 children aged 5-14 who drowned during the same period, rivers, creeks and streams (32%) were the location where children were most likely to drown.

Home Pool Fencing

Strong evidence shows that effective and carefully monitored home pool fencing can reduce drowning in the 0-4 years age group. A Cochrane Review of the protective effects of home swimming pool fencing has found that fencing which completely encloses all sides of a swimming pool and isolates it from the home is effective in preventing drowning of young children ⁵. A review ⁶ noted that legislation requiring pools to be fenced exists in each Australian State and Territory. However, harmonisation of this legislation is required to ensure that compliance is achieved, that home pools and their fencing are regularly monitored and systems are evaluated in all jurisdictions.

CPR and First Aid

Evidence supports the teaching of tertiary prevention skills such as CPR to parents to increase survival outcomes of drowning in children ¹⁴. Parents are often first on the scene and CPR, particularly the lifesaving skill of rescue breathing, has been shown to save lives ¹⁵. The AWSC calls for compulsory CPR training for all parents of children under five. These skills have wider value and therefore the inclusion of rescue and resuscitation education in the Australian Curriculum is a key priority.

Safe Play Areas on Farms

There is evidence that child safe play areas on farms and rural residential properties can reduce the number of drowning deaths in children under five⁷. The creation of a safe play area is the most common intervention aimed at preventing child injury on farms⁸ and the AWSC encourages strategies that take this prevention message directly to rural Australia.

Interventions should focus on providing incentives for safe play areas to be constructed and/or existing play areas to be improved to meet the Safe Play Area Guidelines⁹. Broad scale community promotion of safe play areas in rural areas is also required. However based on coronial records some geographic areas will require more intensive promotions, as will some farmers with particular farming methods. Furthermore, a communication strategy that targets people living on small farms is required as the way in which they obtain safety information is known to be different from mainstream farmers¹⁰.

Adult Supervision

Adult or carer supervision has long been identified as having a protective effect against the risk of drowning in children aged under five years. Research into non-swimming pool child drowning deaths in Queensland identified carer supervision as a factor in these deaths and it is continually argued to be the most effective means of preventing drowning⁶. A dramatic reduction in the number of drowning deaths of children under five in public swimming pools and spas in Victoria has been partly attributed to public awareness campaigns focused on carer supervision¹¹.

A study of drowning deaths in children aged 5-9 years also reinforces the imperative that supervision remains vital, particularly as the research shows increasing proportions of children in this age group are drowning in open water locations such as rivers, lakes and dams⁴.

Swimming and Water Safety Education

All children have the right to access a quality swimming and water safety education that includes skills such as basic swimming techniques and treading water, survival techniques, floating and rescue skills. In order to prevent drowning, every Australian child must have basic swimming and water safety skills and knowledge of how to be safe when they are in, on, or around the water¹².

Responsibility for the quality of swimming and water safety education for Australian children is not the remit of one single organisation or institution. Organisations, agencies and parents play a role in ensuring full participation¹². However, a key area of provision is provided by the education system. The first 3-4 years of schooling also provides a good opportunity to identify those children who have insufficient swimming and water safety skills, as well as building strength, endurance and confidence in those whose skills are progressing well⁴. Including swimming and water safety education competencies in the Australian Curriculum for Primary and Secondary School, provides a basis for all children to receive a basic swimming and water safety education. However, further policy and programs will be required to ensure this becomes a compulsory feature in all schools Australia-wide.

Case Study: National Water Safety Education Competency Framework¹³

School Level	Competency framework	Minimum competencies	% Target Population
(I) Infant And Pre-School	Experience in skill competencies for safe water entries & exits, floating & sculling, breathing, movement & swimming strokes, survival & underwater skills, water safety education & parent education	• Participation in the program	100%
(II) Primary School	Personal Aquatic Survival section of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework • Competencies to be achieved by the completion of Primary School education	• Equivalent to Swim and Survive Level 4 (and Surf Ed where available) • Level 5 Swim and Survive (and Surf Ed where available) • Level 6 Swim and Survive (and Surf Ed where available)	100% 75% 50%
(III) Secondary School	Life Saving section of the National Water Safety Framework – including exposure to Basic First Aid & Resuscitation Training • Competencies to be achieved by the completion of Year 10	• Equivalent to RLSSA Dry Rescue, including Resuscitation (and SLSSA Surf Survival where available) • RLSSA Bronze Star (and SLSSA Surf Survival where available) • RLSSA/SLSSA Bronze Medallion	100% 75% 50%

GOAL 02



Reduce Drowning Deaths in Young People Aged 15-24

Key Objectives and Performance Indicators

- 2.1 Undertake research to identify the underlying factors leading to drowning in this age group and propose a reduction strategy
 - A research project investigating the factors leading to drowning has been undertaken
- 2.2 Develop programs that provide the skills and knowledge for safe water participation and modification of risk taking behaviour by young people which aim to reduce drowning
 - Programs have been implemented that provide appropriate aquatic skills and knowledge including addressing risk taking behaviour
 - A range of alcohol and drowning themes contribute to the design, development and evaluation of interventions in this area

Background

In the nine financial years between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2011, 321 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 drowned in Australia. In-depth analysis has been conducted into the circumstances of drowning deaths in the 15-19 years age group. Of the 132 drowning deaths that occurred in this age group, the most common drowning locations were rivers, creeks and streams (31%), beaches (21%) and ocean/harbour locations (16%). Swimming and recreating (40%), watercraft (11%) and falls into water (9%) were the most common activities prior to drowning. In 12% of cases activity prior to drowning was unknown, suggesting a number of drowning deaths in this age group occur when people are on their own⁴.

Further analysis shows that drowning continues to increase in the 20-24 years age group, with 189 people drowning over the nine year period, 84% being male⁴. Research is required to further clarify risk factors for drowning and determine effective prevention strategies to target a reduction in drowning in the 20-24 years age group.

Youth and Alcohol

Drowning has significantly contributed to unintentional injury deaths for young adult males in Australia, with non-fatal drowning incidents resulting in high rates of injury hospitalisation. Combining alcohol, risky behaviour and aquatic activity has often resulted in serious injuries and death, as borne out by past analysis which indicates 30-50% of adolescent drowning deaths and 25-50% of adult drowning deaths involved alcohol consumption¹⁶. Research into drowning in the 15-19 years age group identified alcohol was known to be involved in 21% of all drowning deaths, most commonly at river, creek and stream locations⁴. The risk to personal safety from alcohol consumption and drug use in adolescent/young adult age groups recreating in aquatic environments is a priority concern.

Risk Taking Behaviour

Studies claim that adolescent children have tendencies toward greater risk taking and novelty seeking behaviours with an associated elevated risk of injury¹⁷. Reckless behaviour during adolescence and early adulthood is associated with egocentrism and a sense of vulnerability¹⁸. Although they are aware of and can analyse the risks associated with a particular action, many may not be deterred from undertaking that action due to concerns regarding conformity and peer approval^{19,20}. This may include putting themselves at risk of drowning because they are not comfortable admitting a lack of swimming skills or consuming drugs and alcohol around water⁴.

Increasing Independence

Research into drowning deaths in the 15 to 19 years range identifies young adults in this age range assert independence from their parents and increasingly rely on their peer group. Whilst supervision continues to be a strategy for preventing drowning in this age group, this supervision changes from being provided by parents to almost entirely being provided by peers and lifeguards⁴. The use of motor vehicles provides a means to access aquatic environments further afield from a young adult's traditional surroundings. Driving is also an activity prior to drowning that continues to increase in the 15-19 years age group⁴, reinforcing the need for the provision of flood risk information in driving education.

The Role of Secondary School

It is thought that the lifesaving skills of swimming and water safety that are taught from age five onwards, can equip young adults with the skills and confidence to enjoy water safely and potentially provide protection for peers as well through the provision of skills in basic rescue and resuscitation. Lifesaving education during the Secondary school years ensures adolescents will be sufficiently equipped with swimming and water safety skills and knowledge to make appropriate decisions when faced with a variety of situations which pose a drowning risk ⁴.

Similar to the log book and a required number of hours under supervision in a licensed driver system, closer supervision of adolescents around water during the Secondary school years is required to ensure skills and knowledge are sufficient. In accordance with the National Water Safety Education Competency Framework, the AWSC believes 100% of Secondary school students should achieve a minimum competency equivalent to the Royal Life Saving Dry Rescue including resuscitation (and SLSA Surf Survival where available) ¹³.

Components of Successful Strategies for this Life Stage

Successful strategies targeting this life stage require a multi-faceted approach. Research states that peers, parents, communities, policy makers and adolescents form a system that can promote or prevent injury. Intervention strategies at a community level have been found to be more effective than those targeting skill building and there is little evidence that education interventions alone reduces short term injury incidence ¹⁷.

Effective communication strategies are key in this notoriously hard to reach life stage. The use of social networking platforms, the internet and multi-media may assist in reaching the target audience. The development of mentoring schemes and effective 'positive peer pressure' may also improve the likelihood of acceptance of proposed behaviour change.

Case Study: Duke of Edinburgh Awards – Youth Leadership & Skill Development

The Duke of Edinburgh Awards is the largest structured and holistic youth self-development program in Australia, having been in operation for over 50 years. The Awards are aimed at young Australians (aged 14-25) and aim to teach skills, improve physical wellbeing, promote community volunteering and encourage participants to undertake an adventure.

The program has three levels; Bronze, Silver and Gold. Each is progressively more challenging across a number of sections including; volunteering, skill, fitness/physical recreation, adventurous journey and a residential project for Gold level participants only.

The Duke of Edinburgh can be found right across Australia, engaging over 33,000 young people and over 100,000 adult volunteers annually. Through schools, youth organisations, community groups, correctional services, employers and Government departments, the awards promote leadership, skill development, positive behaviours and self-confidence in Australian young adults ²¹.

Participants are able to complete their Bronze Medallion as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Other award participants have chosen to take water safety messages into remote areas through community based drowning prevention activities.

GOAL 03



Reduce Drowning Deaths in People Aged 55+

Key Objectives and Performance Indicators

- 3.1 Conduct further investigation of the segmentation within this broad age group to gain a greater understanding of the needs and risk factors of individual segments
 - Further investigation has been conducted employing original and evidence based segmentations
- 3.2 Create and implement a national public awareness campaign targeting drowning prevention strategies for people aged 55+
 - Evidence based drowning prevention campaign for people aged 55+ is implemented and evaluated
- 3.3 Create or strengthen drowning prevention and healthy activity based programs targeting people aged 55+ based on the findings of further segmentation based investigation
 - Availability and participation in programs focusing on healthy activity is measured and increased
 - Risk factors for people aged 55+ are investigated across facilities and locations
 - Development of the guidelines for safe aquatic participation of Australians aged 55+
- 3.4 Implement strategies that foster more inclusive aquatic venues and associated workforces to meet the growing needs of people aged 55+
 - Industry and workforce development programs are implemented and monitored

Background

It is well documented that Australia's population is ageing²² and population projections suggest this will continue to have a significant impact in many areas. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates that by June 2020, there will be over 7.2 million people aged 55+ and that by 2056, one in four Australians will be aged 65+²³.

The Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2011 found 117 people aged 55+ drowned between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2011²⁴. Australians aged 55+ drown in a diverse range of aquatic settings including rivers, creeks and streams (33%), ocean/harbour locations (17%) and beaches (13%). Common activities prior to drowning for people aged 55+ were using watercraft and falls into water (14% each respectively). Activity was unknown in 26% of drowning deaths suggesting people aged 55+ are more likely to be alone when they drown.

The 117 drowning deaths for this age group in 2010-2011, represents a 67% increase on the three year average of 70. The scale of drowning within this life stage is of extreme concern and requires immediate and sustained action in order to achieve a 50% reduction in drowning deaths in this age group.

Known Risk Factors

A report into the aquatic safety of people aged 55+²⁵ identified a range of factors including alcohol, drugs, mental health and other medical events which contribute to an increased risk of drowning in this life stage. People aged 55+ may respond to aquatic situations by reliance on skills (e.g., swimming) gained earlier in life and consequently overestimate their current abilities. Reduced fitness, greater exposure through increased aquatic activities, with increased time spent near water (due to both increased leisure time and living near the water), are likely factors contributing to the drowning rate. The impact of medical conditions and the use of medication have also been posited as reasons which can contribute to unintentional injury or drowning death.

Ageing Friendly Infrastructure and Targeted Programs

Further investigation into infrastructure management and development related to ageing friendly aquatic recreational facilities and services provided by public, private and local government sectors is needed. Research has identified a number of barriers that prevented Australians aged 55+ from participating in aquatic activities including accessibility (both to the venue and getting in the water), cost (both to travel to the venue and entry to the venue), body image, age of instructors and temperature²⁵.

Drowning Prevention Measures

Drowning prevention measures must be developed and implemented for people aged 55+ that consider the following factors;

- Increasing numbers living outside of residential care
- Diversity in language, culture, skills and life experience
- A third of the population aged over 55 years live outside of major cities
- Changes in income and the impact of this on recreation, location, mobility
- Life expectancy, counter with increased use of medication
- Working longer and/or contributing to community via volunteer pathways
- Role of older people, particularly grandparents, as carers of children

Programs in this area are likely to have a duality of purpose by aiming to reduce drowning and increase health and wellbeing. Aquatic skill and fitness based activities may also be useful in fall prevention, increasing social inclusion and promoting strong community engagement among people over 55.

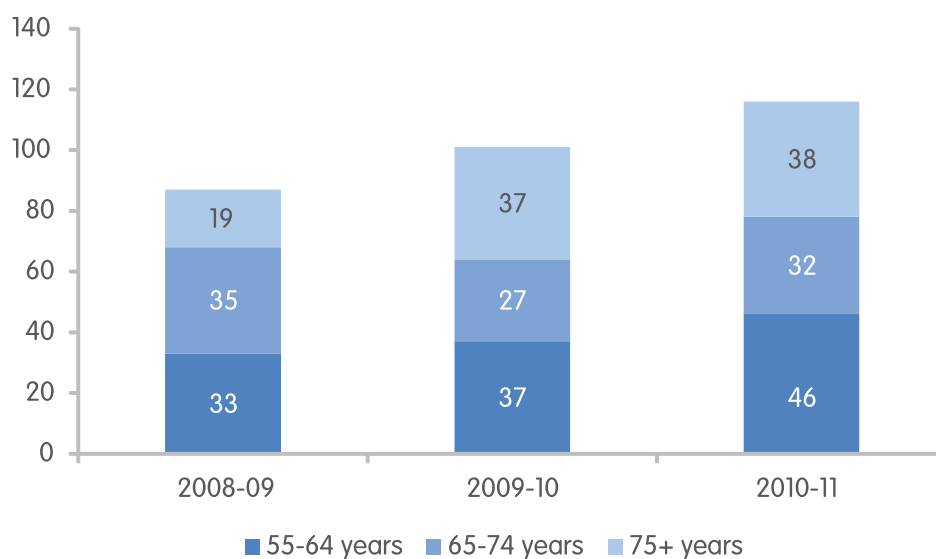
Greater Segmentation and Further Research Required

The Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2011 conducted a segmented analysis of drowning deaths within the 55+ years age group. The number and circumstances of drowning deaths were examined in the three age groups; 55-64 years, 65-74 years and the 75+ years. This analysis found drowning deaths at ocean/harbour and rock locations decreased as people aged, while drowning deaths in bathtubs / spa baths, lakes, dams and lagoons and swimming pools increased as people aged.

There were also changes in activity immediately prior to drowning as people aged. Watercraft and rock fishing related drowning decreased as people aged 55+ grew older, whereas swimming, driving and bathing related drowning deaths all increased as people aged.

Many unanswered questions remain around drowning deaths in people aged 55+ and what may constitute effective strategies for prevention. This confirms that further research needs to be undertaken.

Figure 6: Drowning Deaths of People Aged 55+ by Age Group by Financial Year, Australia 2008-09 to 2010-11 (N=304)



Case Study: The Benefits of Aquatic Exercise on Older People

A recent study reports on the health benefits and curative effects of aquatic exercise.

The study by Honda and Kamioka reviewed previously conducted systematic reviews and randomised control trials for aquatic exercise.

Aquatic exercise (defined as walking in all directions, stretching, and various exercises and conditioning performed with the feet grounded on the floor of a swimming pool) was found to act as a mechanism for pain relief for loco-motor diseases such as osteoarthritis. Warm water and buoyancy block pain receptors and enhance blood flow which aids in muscle relaxation. Aquatic exercise may also encourage patients to become more active thereby improving their quality of life ²⁶.



PRIORITY AREA TWO

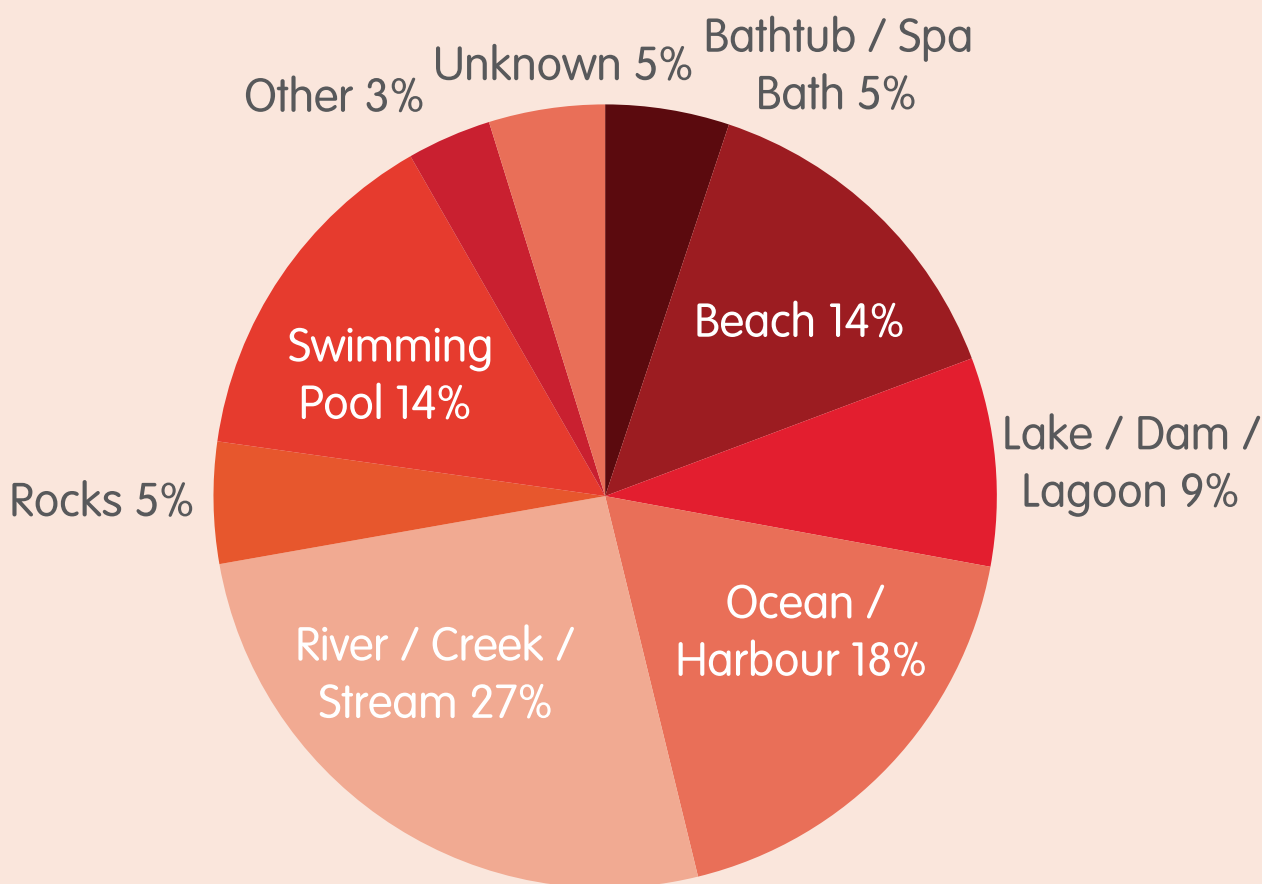
Targeting High Risk Locations

The AWSS 2012-15 continues to reflect the need for drowning reduction strategies at high risk locations, such as inland waterways and surf beach locations. Reductions in drowning deaths at these locations are vital to achieving a 50% reduction in all drowning deaths by the year 2020.

Inland waterways (rivers, creeks, streams, lakes, dams and lagoons) and surf beaches account for 49% of all drowning deaths between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2011.

Strengthening the Australian aquatic industry has been included in Priority Area 2. Although the monitoring of safety standards at aquatic facilities is a process that has been taking place for a number of years, the inclusion of this goal recognises the contribution the Australian aquatic industry makes to ensure people are able to safely participate in aquatic recreational activities.

Figure 7: Location of Drowning Deaths, Australia 2008-09 to 2010-11 (N=918)



GOAL 04**Reduce Drowning Deaths in Inland Waterways****Key Objectives and Performance Indicators**

- 4.1 Continue implementation of the national rural and remote water safety strategy with a focus on drowning deaths in inland waterways
 - A national rural and remote water safety strategy is being implemented and monitored with a heightened emphasis on river safety and awareness
- 4.2 Increase access to inland waterway safety programs for people living in rural and remote areas
 - Increased emphasis on river water safety skills and awareness
 - Rural and remote access to programs is being tracked and an increase is evident
 - Increased access provided to standardised signage, messaging and equipment
- 4.3 Address infrastructure and human resources in rural and remote areas to ensure adequate coverage of aquatic instructors and safety risk management
 - Shortages of aquatic instructors in rural and remote areas have been addressed and are being monitored
 - Risk reduction strategies and programs are refined, implemented and the effectiveness is being monitored

Defining Inland Waterways

Inland waterways are ecological zones that include rivers, creeks, streams, lakes, dams and lagoons. They are often common recreational locations, both for activities that take place in the water and the use of public spaces alongside these waterways.

Drowning Deaths in Inland Waterways

The Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2011 identified that 45% of all drowning deaths occurred in inland waterways. The largest number of drowning deaths (114) occurred in rivers, creeks and streams²⁴. Being swept away by flood waters, driving or being a passenger in non-aquatic transport (18%) and falls (13%) were common activities prior to drowning in rivers, creeks and streams²⁴.

A nine year analysis of drowning deaths in inland waterways in New South Wales found that 29% (270) of all drowning deaths occurred in inland waterways²⁷. The high number of drowning deaths that occur in inland waterways every year is of concern, and a range of effective strategies are required to ensure the safety of those who frequent inland waterways.

Hazards and Risks of Inland Waterways

The environmental characteristics of inland waterways vary greatly as do patterns of usage. Environmental characteristics which influence hazards include; crumbling banks and shifting beds, strong or unpredictable currents, submerged hazards, increased turbidity and low visibility, variable water depths and cold water temperatures²⁸.

Community Education Programs

There are several examples of education programs targeting rural residents. The Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) Beach to Bush program aims to familiarise rural residents with beach risks and provide safety information. Farmsafe Australia promote Safe Play Areas on farms and rural properties. Royal Life Saving has also developed the Keep Watch @ The Farm program, to promote the four key actions of supervise, restrict access, water awareness and resuscitation to farmers and rural communities.

Infrastructure and Instructor Shortages in Rural Areas

A report addressing access to rural and remote aquatic education instructors found that there is limited access to AUSTSWIM trained instructors. This compounds problems associated with limited access to supervised aquatic recreational facilities³⁰. Increased access to qualified instructors and programs must be facilitated to encourage rural residents to develop skills in swimming and water safety instruction.

Governments and private organisations should also carefully consider the construction of new pools and ensure that these facilities are located where they are needed most. This could include a greater investment in aquatic infrastructure in rural and remote areas and in areas servicing low socio-economic populations¹².

Australian Rural and Remote Water Safety Plan 2010-2015

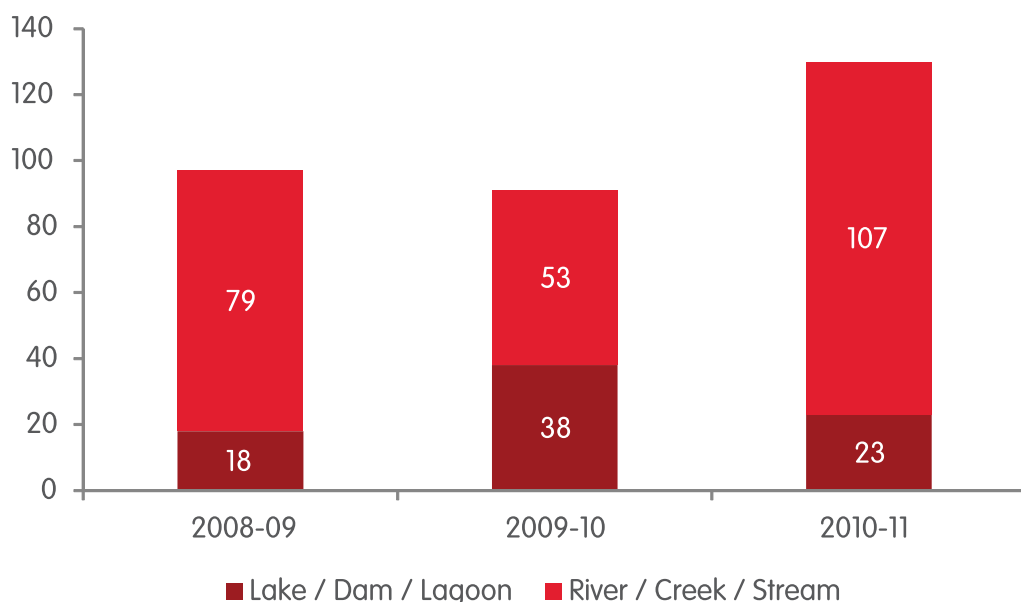
The Australian Rural and Remote Water Safety Plan 2010-2015 was developed by the AWSC to add to the areas of the Australian Water Safety Strategy where specific activities, programs and services would benefit from a rural and remote perspective, or where specific work is required in rural and remote areas ²⁹.

The Plan identified a number of issues of immediate importance to rural and remote areas in order to prevent drowning and enhance rural water safety. These included, reducing alcohol related rural and remote drowning

deaths, reducing river and farm drowning deaths, extending the rural and remote drowning prevention evidence base and extending lifesaving services in rural and remote areas known to be at high risk ²⁹.

The AWSC will continue to work with State and Territory Water Safety Councils and council member organisations to implement the recommended actions for the specific issues identified in the Plan.

Figure 8: Inland Waterway Drowning Deaths by Location Category by Financial Year, Australia 2008-09 to 2010-11 (N=318)



Case Study: A Nine Year Analysis of Drowning Deaths in NSW Inland Waterways

To determine the scale of fatal drowning in inland waterways in New South Wales, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia has conducted an analysis of drowning deaths across a nine year period ²⁷. Information on drowning deaths was collected from the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) and media reports.

Between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2011, there were 931 drowning deaths in New South Wales. Of these, 270 (29%) occurred in inland waterways. Rivers, creeks and streams is the category with the most drowning deaths with 201 compared with 69 in lakes, dams and lagoons. Men are overrepresented in inland waterway drowning statistics with 81% of males drowning in rivers, creeks and streams. Men account for 94% of all drowning deaths in lakes, dams and lagoons.

Common activities prior to drowning were using watercraft (20%), non-aquatic transport (19%) and falling into water (13%). There were a high proportion of cases where people were on their own and as such activity prior to drowning was unknown in 23% of cases. Alcohol was known to be present in a third (31%) of all inland waterway drowning deaths.

GOAL 05**Reduce Surf Beach Drowning Deaths****Key Objectives and Performance Indicators**

- 5.1 Identify non-patrolled surf beaches with high drowning rates and implement risk reduction strategies
 - A comprehensive surf beach black spot program is implemented, expanded and evaluated
- 5.2 Develop and implement a national rip awareness program
 - A national rip awareness program is developed, implemented and its effectiveness in reducing drowning is measured
- 5.3 Develop and implement interventions targeted at populations at high risk of surf beach drowning
 - Interventions targeting high risk populations are being implemented and evaluated
 - Use of non-traditional resources such as surf-board riders
- 5.4 Expansion of surf lifesaving patrolling through improving technology and services
 - Utilisation of more advanced equipment, information technology and research in surf lifesaving practice

Surf Beaches

The coastal regions of Australia continue to have the highest population density in the country. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census-based research shows that the rate of growth in coastal Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in the year to June 2004 was 60% higher than the national average Australia-wide growth rate. These growth areas are centred around north-west Western Australia, the far North and far South Coast of New South Wales, and along the Pacific coastline of Queensland.

As a consequence, surf beaches experience high rates of drowning and this must be addressed in order for the AWSC to reduce drowning markedly. Only about 400 of Australia's 11,011 beaches on 35,877 km of coastline are patrolled by lifeguard/lifesaving services³¹ and each have varying hazards and associated risk ratings.

The increasing non-metropolitan coastal population brings with it further challenges for these scarce resources. It exerts extra pressure on community infrastructure, including aquatic facilities, and exposes gaps or inadequacies in existing community groups such as lifesaving clubs.

Further to natural population growth and relocation, our beaches receive over 55 million domestic and international visitors each year. This brings with it additional challenges such as language barriers and cultural differences.

Expansion of Services

To address these issues, improvement and more effective patrolling methods of existing services needs to be achieved. This can be done through the use of more advanced equipment, information technology and research. An example of this is the use of webcam monitoring systems that are now in development as well as ABSAMP (the Australian Beach Safety and Management Program), which through PDA access will hopefully be available to lifeguards at all times.

Drowning Deaths

There have been 157 drowning deaths at surf beaches in Australia in the last 3 years. The number of people drowning at surf beaches has ranged from 44 to 58 per year, averaging 52 surf beach drowning deaths per annum. Approximately two thirds of coastal drowning deaths occur in close proximity to surf beaches. Swimming/wading is the most common activity immediately prior to drowning. Other activities include surfing, fishing and snorkelling.

More than 50% of drowning deaths occur outside of normal patrolling times, whether outside of normal patrolling season or at a time of day before or after a lifeguard/lifesaving service is on active duty. More than 80% of coastal drowning deaths involve males³²

Swim Between the Flags

There is strong evidence that swimming between the flags at patrolled beaches reduces the risk of drowning³³. However, a recent report identified that more than 42% of people surveyed had swum outside of the red and yellow flags at some point during a year. This may be due to a fatiguing of the consistent messaging in the community. The development of auxiliary and supporting messages should be explored, for example “If we can’t see you, we can’t save you.”

Unpatrolled Surf Beaches

Increased coastal migration, often to areas without adequate public safety infrastructure and services, is placing a greater number of people at risk of drowning. With only 4% of Australian beaches patrolled, there is a need to expand our reach or rethink lifeguard service provision. There is also potential to work with local Boardriders clubs and surfing communities to increase the lifesaving skills of those regular ocean users.

Drowning Black Spots

A black spot refers to any area with a high concentration of coastal and ocean drowning combined with a likely probability of these reoccurring. It shows an assessment of lifesaving resources and population trends in these areas is required to develop strategies aimed at reducing drowning incidents and removing the black spots.

The SLSA Total Service Plan examines these areas along with potential black spots and recommends national, state and local strategies to reduce coastal area drowning deaths.

Rip Current Safety

Rip currents are strong flows of water running away from a beach, usually in a deeper channel between adjacent sandbars or rocky headlands. Over 51% of swimming and wading drowning deaths in Australia can be attributed to rip currents³⁴. An ongoing public awareness campaign is required to promote evidence based identification, avoidance and survival techniques.

Open Water Survival Skills

The learn-to-swim industry in Australia is based primarily in swimming pools, and people are not necessarily trained for the open water environment. Providing opportunities for individuals to learn basic survival skills in open water under close supervision and instruction is vital.

Case Study: Surf Ed

More than just fun and games, Surf Ed programs provide a series of surf awareness and aquatic skill development programs. They give people a chance to learn survival skills, and experience the power of the surf under the close eye of Surf Lifesavers. The program is available in a variety of formats, adapted to the local environment anywhere around Australia.

When we think about learning to swim, it usually starts in a pool. As the summer weather comes around, we head to the beach with plenty of confidence. However, staying safe in the ocean requires specific skills and knowledge. Surf Ed fills this gap between the pool and the surf, giving people the confidence to enjoy our coastline safely and participate in a lifetime of aquatic activities like surfing, ocean swimming, kayaking or sailing. It all starts with confidence in the ocean.

Clayton Winkle started swimming at his local swim school in Sydney when he was 3, and was quite an accomplished swimmer by the time he was 6. On a family trip to the beach, Clayton was dumped by a wave close to the shoreline, and his confidence suffered. His parents enrolled him in a Surf Ed holiday program, and soon he could read the waves, wade, bodysurf and paddle boards. You can hardly keep him out of the surf! That’s the power of Surf Ed, confidence to enjoy the ocean.

GOAL 06**Reduce Drowning Deaths by Strengthening the Aquatic Industry****Key Objectives and Performance Indicators**

- 6.1** Implement programs that improve management standards and practices and that minimise risk in aquatic recreational environments
- Risk reduction strategies and programs are refined, implemented and the effectiveness is being monitored
 - All aquatic locations have had safety risk assessments
- 6.2** Research the role and contribution that safe, effectively managed venues make to drowning prevention and safe healthy communities in Australia
- A comprehensive research project has been completed and its recommendations are influencing future practice
- 6.3** Support national accreditation structures to ensure high quality education, training and professional development of qualified swim teachers and lifeguards
- An accreditation structure is in place to ensure ongoing supply of quality teachers and instructors and lifeguards
- 6.3** Strengthen the skills, standards & recognition of our paid and volunteer drowning prevention workforce
- Workforce development strategies have been developed, implemented and evaluated

Safe Venues

There are over 1200 public swimming pools across Australia. These facilities play a vital role in aquatic skill development, recreation, sport and healthy active lifestyles in the community. Aquatic facilities provide employment opportunities for local people and are essential to the social fabric of the community, particularly in rural and remote communities.

The Australian aquatic industry is diverse with models ranging from local government, state government, non-government organisations and private business all playing a role in providing swimming and water safety education and safe aquatic environments.

Venue Management

Over the past decade there has been an increase in the level of cooperation between water safety agencies and government to address the issue of aquatic venue safety. It is critical that both risk and liability management issues are addressed through a range of standards, legislation and management strategies.

The continued management of safe venues requires ongoing work to ensure that standards, policies and practices consider the issues of drowning prevention. In addition to Australian Standards, Codes of Practice and Organisational policy, Royal Life Saving publish Guidelines intended to guide safety in public swimming pools.

Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (GSPO)

The Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (GSPO) is an example of a venue based risk management tool for improving aquatic health and safety. The GSPO acts as a voluntary guide for operators on the safe operation of swimming facilities through the provision of industry best practice information which assists an operator in satisfying their legislative duties.

The GSPO was established in consultation with industry and other expert personnel and is subject to ongoing review and formal evaluation. The GSPO takes a risk management approach to areas such as: general and technical operations, first aid, facility design, supervision, programs and low patronage pools.

Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment (AFSA)

The increased demands on facility managers to improve safety standards and keep abreast of industry best practice can be difficult and frequently time consuming. Often, the skills required to assess and improve safety are not available internally. Risk management is an essential tool for the successful and continued operation of an aquatic or leisure facility. To this end, Royal Life Saving provides the Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment (AFSA), which provides an independent and comprehensive assessment of the operations of an aquatic facility and provides recommendations for best practice for public safety, management and operation in aquatic facilities.

Accreditation

The AWSC recognises the role that qualification and training programs play in supporting venue safety, particularly by providing entry level pathways into industry positions. Industry based accreditation and ongoing professional development systems are of further significance to drowning prevention. Such systems provide an ongoing basis for currency of skills, competence and learning of best practice techniques.

Industry accreditation systems are vital in swimming and water safety instruction, where the AUSTSWIM award plays this role. These systems also support the industry requirement for ongoing professional development.

Venue Access

Accessibility of safe, convenient and affordable aquatic recreation venue is vital in providing aquatic education opportunities. The AWSC must research areas of need and lobby relevant authorities, institutions and organisations to ensure ongoing and improved accessibility.

Evidence Based Practice

The United States Lifeguard Standards Coalition (USLSC) has recently presented its first outcomes and recommendations. These recommendations are intended to have a positive influence on the training of lifeguards and the practice of lifeguarding within their own organisations and, by freely sharing this research information and results, within other lifeguard training organisations as well ³⁵.

These standards aim to promote best practice in lifeguarding based on the highest level of evidence available. The review covered topics such as: prevention and vigilance, rescue and standards of a lifeguard and resuscitation, first aid and education.

This practice is being adopted in Australia, with the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation incorporating a review of relevant literature prior to the commencement of the review process.

Case Study: State of the Industry 2011

The Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment (AFSA) continues to be used as an important measure of safety and compliance in aquatic facilities throughout Australia. Utilising the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation as its primary assessment criteria has allowed facility operators to compare their facility against the accepted industry standard.

The 2011 State of the Industry report analyses the results of AFSAs conducted between 1st April 2010 and 31st March, 2011. During this period 186 assessments were conducted across Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.

The report demonstrated an overall improvement in the level of compliance. A number of areas have been identified as being a source of concern both within individual facilities and across parts of the industry. Supervision is an area where the documentation of the risk management process was often found to be inadequate. An effective supervision strategy can only be developed and implemented from a thorough understanding of those factors that may affect patron safety as well as those factors that influence a lifeguard's ability to provide effective supervision. Sixteen percent of facilities assessed had employed lifeguards without current qualifications.

The report highlights the need for aquatic facilities to better understand risk within their facilities in order to formulate a more thorough understanding of the application of GSPO. This understanding will contribute to an improvement in all aspects of safety across their facility from signage to supervision.

A collaborative approach across the industry will contribute to an overall improvement in the standard of safety. Whilst this may be facilitated by organisations such as Royal Life Saving or industry bodies, it is a willingness to engage and collaborate with these organisations and others within the industry that will ensure the success of these initiatives.



Focusing on Key Drowning Challenges

Focusing on key drowning challenges will require a range of different drowning prevention strategies, across several diverse issues. This section seeks not to repeat those issues identified previously, but to identify those drowning challenges which will require a different approach, as well as those where there is a need for further research to clarify the issues and guide the development of effective prevention strategies.

Community safety has been a long standing aim of lifesaving agencies. In accordance with this aim, the goals within this priority area specifically address the need to reduce drowning deaths that can be attributed to:

- Alcohol and drugs
- Watercraft and recreational aquatic activities
- High risk populations
- Disaster and extreme weather

One of the key drowning challenges dealt with in Priority Area Three of the AWSS 2012-15 is to reduce drowning deaths involving the consumption of drugs and alcohol (Goal 7). This includes communicating with notoriously hard to reach populations regarding the risks of combining drugs and alcohol with aquatic recreational pursuits.

Goal 8 deals with aquatic recreational activities such as boating and other watercraft activity; fishing (particularly rock fishing); scuba diving and snorkelling. These activities present a drowning risk due to increased exposure to hazards. Drowning deaths across these categories represented almost 20% of all drowning deaths in 2011 ²⁴.

Goal 9 aims to reduce drowning deaths in high risk populations. Specifically this section looks at developing drowning prevention strategies for Indigenous people, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, international students and tourists (both domestic and international). This highlights the need to consider cultural backgrounds and life experiences when developing these strategies.

Goal 10 targets extreme weather conditions, as evidenced by the QLD floods in early 2011 and Tropical Cyclone Yasi which hit northern Queensland in February 2011, highlight some of the effects of extreme weather on drowning. Thirty eight people died in the Queensland floods and 52 drowning deaths in total occurred in the 2010-11 financial year as a result of flooding ²⁴.

GOAL 07

Reduce Alcohol and Drug Related Drowning Deaths



Key Objectives and Performance Indicators

- 7.1** Create and implement a national drug and alcohol drowning reduction strategy
- Relationships have been built with other sectors with common problems dealing with alcohol and drugs
 - Alcohol and drowning strategy is developed and is being implemented nationally
- 7.2** Investigate the role of alcohol in drowning, including social and cultural factors, and develop programs that aim to reduce drowning
- A range of alcohol and drowning themes are researched and contribute to the design, development and evaluation of interventions in this area
- 7.3** Collaborate with recreational boating and fishing groups, alcohol related advocacy groups and government to build effective policy and interventions in this area
- Strategies are implemented that encourage collaboration among multiple stakeholders and result in effective policy and interventions

Background

The consumption of alcohol is culturally intrinsic in Australia, is normalised as socially acceptable and an expected behaviour³⁶. Our love of combining aquatic recreational pursuits and alcohol leads to an increased risk of drowning and a decreased ability to respond to the associated hazards. Recreational use of alcohol can be accompanied by illegal drugs or with larger than prescribed prescription drug consumption, particularly by younger age groups to enhance recreational activities.

The Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2011 identified 38 drowning deaths where alcohol was known to be involved and 15 drowning deaths where drugs were known to be involved²⁴. In a large number of cases the alcohol readings were extremely high (0.1 and above). Men aged 45-54 were most likely to have consumed alcohol immediately prior to drowning, comprising almost one third of the total number of cases identified. Similarly, males were four times more likely to have drugs in their system when they drowned. Cannabis was the most commonly found drug in drowning cases²⁴.

An analysis of alcohol involvement in the 517 drowning deaths in NSW between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2007, identified alcohol was involved in just under one quarter (20%) of all drowning deaths. Of these, 81.2% were male. Over half of the cases identified had a BAC over 0.10g/100ml³⁷.

Effects of Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol consumption is known to impair balance and coordination, judgment and cognition, thus placing the individual at greater risk of drowning. The effects are magnified when the person in question is skipping a vessel, supervising children or swimming alone^{38,39}.

Evidence to Support the Link

There is strong evidence that alcohol consumption significantly increases the likelihood of immersions resulting in drowning during aquatic activities⁴⁰. One study found that alcohol contributed to approximately 30% of drowning deaths associated with recreational aquatic activity and to approximately 35% of recreational boating drowning deaths⁴¹.

Blood Alcohol Levels

Legislation prescribing maximum blood alcohol levels for recreational boat operators, coupled with random breath testing, logically have a drowning prevention impact although this impact requires further investigation. Research is required in this area, including an investigation of health interventions which target men and the consumption of alcohol in proximity to water. Gaps in our knowledge regarding effective strategies to reach this cohort must be filled, and key questions such as the role of community lifesaving education in preventing drowning in men must be answered.

Collaboration for Prevention

Over 80% of drowning deaths are thought to be preventable and the implementation of drowning prevention strategies is preferable to relying on rescue or resuscitation methods^{42,43}. Water safety messages are a useful tool to educate the general public, however strategies at a community or macro-level have been found to be more effective¹⁷.

It is well recognised that people are at a greater risk of harm from drugs and alcohol at points of life transition. These include transitioning from Primary to Secondary school, from Secondary school to Tertiary education or the workforce, or leaving home and retiring⁴⁴. Peer groups, families, communities, policy makers and the individual all have a role to play in preventing drowning by highlighting the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol whilst recreating in, on or near the water.

National Drug and Alcohol Drowning Reduction Strategy

The AWSC feels there is a strong need for a comprehensive and evidence based alcohol and drug drowning prevention strategy to be developed to guide prevention efforts and program development in this area. This strategy would benefit from an analysis of broader drug and alcohol reduction strategies in injury prevention and education fields.

Improvements in Data Collection Needed

The role of alcohol and drugs is not routinely ascertained as an autopsy outcome and reported against, which continues to be problematic for determining the role of alcohol and drugs in drowning deaths⁴⁵. The high number of cases where alcohol and drug consumption is unknown, up to 46% of cases in one study⁴⁶, supports the call for improvements in data collection to establish the true picture of alcohol related drowning deaths.

Case Study: National Drug Strategy 2010-2015

The National Drug Strategy 2010-2015 aims to build safe and healthy communities by minimising alcohol, tobacco and other drug-related, health, social and economic harms among individuals, families and communities. The cost to Australian society of alcohol, tobacco and other drug misuse in the financial year 2004-05 was estimated at \$56.1 billion, including costs to the health and hospitals system, lost workplace productivity, road accidents and crime⁴⁴.

The strategy takes a harm minimisation approach by using three key pillars to achieve its aims. These are demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction. The strategy is underpinned by strong partnerships, particularly across the health and law enforcement sectors, between the government and non-government sectors and among policy makers, service providers and experts⁴⁴.

A National Drug and Alcohol Drowning Reduction Strategy should draw upon relevant components of the National Drug Strategy 2010-2015 to ensure coordination with broader approaches to minimise harm in drug and alcohol use in Australia.

GOAL 08



Reduce Drowning Deaths Attributed to Watercraft and Recreational Aquatic Activities

Key Objectives and Performance Indicators

- 8.1 Increase access to drowning prevention education and skills for recreational watercraft users
 - Evidence based programs have been developed, are being implemented, monitored and evaluated
- 8.2 Advocate for national consistency in policy, legislation and best practice in recreational boating
 - Advocacy strategies have been implemented and policy, legislation and best practice established
- 8.3 Increase access to drowning prevention education and skills for recreational fishers
 - Evidence based programs have been developed, are being implemented, monitored and evaluated
- 8.4 Advocate for the development of a National Code of Practice for recreational scuba divers, snorkelers and dive professionals
 - A National Code of Practice that incorporates relevant Australian Standards has been achieved through a process of consultation and the existence of the code has been communicated to the relevant stakeholders

Recreational Watercraft

Recreational watercraft includes activities such as; boating, sailing, personal watercraft (PWC), canoeing, kayaking and surfing, and are a popular element of the Australian way of life. The extensive range of Australian waterways means that recreational watercraft related drowning deaths occur in almost all types of water bodies.

Research conducted by the NSW Waterways Authority indicated that boating incidents are commonly attributable to environmental factors such as tides, river flows, poor visibility, rough seas, adverse weather, on coastal bars and boating at night. These heightened risk factors are difficult to eliminate. Preventative strategies such as the use of personal flotation devices (PFDs) legislation, watercraft user education and fostering communication strategies that link weather forecast announcements to drowning risk must all be explored by AWSC, governments and the Australian community.

Safety Awareness Initiatives

“You’re the Skipper. You’re Responsible” is a safety awareness initiative that has been launched by the NSW Government, Roads and Maritime Services⁴⁷. The campaign is designed to encourage all recreational operators to take responsibility for their actions on the water. Boat operators, or skippers, are responsible for the safety of their vessel and the people on board. They’re also responsible when it comes to assisting other vessels in need.

The NSW Government will use the new campaign as an education tool online, and promoted through the Boating Safety Course and incorporated in radio and television advertising for the coming boating season. The message has also been mailed out to 200,000 people through the boat registration renewal process⁴⁷.

Recreational Fishing

Recreational fishing includes fishing on inland waterways, from recreational boats and from coastal rock platforms. Coastal rock fishing is of greatest concern with an estimated 60,000 anglers fishing from rock platforms every year⁴⁸. This high risk activity has been described by the NSW Coroner in 1993 as having the highest fatality of any sport in the country⁴⁹.

In 2003 the NSW Water Safety Taskforce suggested four broad strategies to address drowning deaths in this area: improving knowledge about the risks of rock fishing; reducing risk taking behaviour through education and taking personal responsibility; promoting safe rock fishing, including the use of key messages; and increasing the ability of rock fishers to stay afloat⁵⁰.

The link between fishing and recreational boating drowning deaths must be investigated, with many boating deaths occurring during or in transit to a fishing activity. This makes both boaters and anglers key targets for prevention strategies.

Scuba Diving and Snorkelling

Australia's coastal environment and weather provide excellent conditions for diving and snorkelling. Diving and snorkelling continue to grow in popularity, with many people visiting Australia for the sole purpose of undertaking these activities.

Over the period 1987–1996 there were 60 deaths due to snorkelling activities. Of those who drowned about one-third were inexperienced or were novices (38%), and one third were tourists (37%)⁵¹. Between 1994–2006 there were 140 snorkelling deaths of which details were available for 130. Of these, 60 were thought to be cardiac-related and 33 involved inexperienced or novice snorkelers⁵².

Impact of Medical Conditions on Safe Snorkelling and Scuba Diving

Efforts around drowning prevention for scuba divers and snorkelers must take into account the role medical conditions play on drowning risk. There has been an increase in cardiac-related deaths in older divers, some dying as a result of becoming unconscious in the water and subsequently drowning⁵³. A campaign should be developed to educate participants and the dive industry about the risks posed by certain medical conditions, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed.

Case Study: Diver Drowning Reduction Campaign

The Diver Alert Network (DAN) has recently launched a campaign aimed at reducing drowning within the dive community. The campaign outlines strategies for prevention and actions to be undertaken in an emergency⁵³.

Strategies for prevention include ensuring divers are fit and healthy enough for diving. Some dives can require considerable exertion and an adequate level of fitness is necessary to conduct these safely as exhaustion can lead to drowning. Another strategy is to ensure that general aquatic skills are strong enough to provide protection in the water. Diving certification only requires basic swimming and snorkelling skills and it is important to build upon these, where necessary, in order to deal with more challenging situations should they arise.

It is also important to choose dive sites and conditions compatible with your abilities. Sometimes this means withdrawing from a planned dive. Using good and well maintained equipment and ensuring correct weighting and buoyancy control are important factors in reducing the likelihood of drowning. Maintain close contact with your buddy. A buddy's presence will usually increase the likelihood of help when required and reduce the time to rescue and first aid management, both of which are important to the chances of survival.

Gas supply must be monitored carefully. In an emergency, divers are urged to stay calm and get buoyant by inflating their Buoyancy Control Device (BCD) and ditching their weights⁵³. The DAN believes many drowning deaths in divers can be prevented by appropriate education and vigilance.

GOAL 09

Reduce Drowning Deaths in High Risk Populations



Key Objectives and Performance Indicators

- 9.1 Monitor and expand strategies to reduce drowning in Indigenous people
- A range of strategies aimed at reducing drowning in Indigenous people have been implemented, expanded and their effectiveness evaluated
- 9.2 Continue and expand a community development approach to working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities including a skill building approach and workforce development
- Programs targeting high risk populations reflect sound community development approaches
 - Approaches reflect a segmentation of cultures and address specific needs and characteristics
- 9.3 Monitor and expand interventions targeted at reducing drowning in tourists and international students
- Tourist and international student drowning has been addressed through targeted interventions across the range of aquatic environments

Background

CALD communities, tourists (both domestic and international) and Indigenous groups have been identified by the AWSC as communities at an increased risk of drowning and aquatic injury when compared to the rest of the Australian population.

Indigenous Drowning

Indigenous drowning data indicates that this group is over three times more likely to drown than other Australians. Indigenous males living in rural and remote areas are 1.9 times and females 10.5 times more likely to drown than Indigenous Australians from other areas⁵⁴. The Royal Life Saving 2011 National Drowning Report found that 14 people drowned who were known to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders²⁴.

Drowning incidents involving Indigenous people in remote areas, particularly those in the Northern Territory and Queensland, should be addressed with increased access to programs developed in a regionally and culturally sensitive fashion. Programs such as the Northern Territory Remote Pools Program aim to maximise the benefits of swimming pools in some of these communities, and have both a drowning prevention impact as well as providing a basis for social, economic and health benefits.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities

Building awareness of hazards, risks and the role of secondary and tertiary prevention measures is a significant factor in addressing drowning in high risk populations. Although the situation is improving, lifesaving systems are not as common in developing countries and even some high income countries, meaning that tourists and recently arrived migrants are at a greater risk of drowning due to lower levels of awareness and foundation aquatic skills.

Reaching CALD communities with strategies to address drowning prevention and water safety is often difficult and these groups are far less likely to access programs via traditional modes. This issue is worsened by an often heightened risk of drowning or injury due to a lack of knowledge about Australian aquatic conditions¹³.

Participation rates in aquatic education programs are much lower among CALD communities and strategies to address this through community development should be encouraged. This can be beneficial both for achieving a reduction in drowning and in promoting greater social cohesion across Australian communities.

Tourist Drowning Deaths

Tourists, both domestic and international, are often unaware of the hazards and risks that Australian waterways can pose, particularly on surf beaches and in inland waterways. Whilst there has been a significant and justifiable focus on coastal and scuba drowning deaths, the issue is not restricted to these waterways and recreational activities⁵⁵. In the 2010-11 financial year there were 19 international tourists who drowned in Australia. The international tourists were from a variety of countries including Ireland (3), China (2), India (2) and Germany (2)²⁴.

Tourist related swimming pool deaths involving very young children continue to be of concern. With increases in domestic tourism and tourists coming from Asia, the AWSC calls on the tourism industry to ensure the implementation of water safety and risk management plans in resorts, hotels and caravan parks. This includes signage, effective barriers and education programs targeting parental supervision in order to reduce drowning incidents.

Surf Life Saving Australia has partnered with Tourism Australia and the Australian Tourism Export Council to screen an education video on inbound flights on a number of airlines. The video, which has been translated into eight languages, provides five simple beach safety messages in a bid to reduce the number of tourists drowning on Australian beaches⁵⁶.

International Students

There have been several drowning incidents involving international students, Tertiary education being a key area of export growth across all States and Territories. International students differ from tourists as the length and location of their experience in Australia increases the likelihood that they will be exposed to hazardous and unfamiliar aquatic conditions.

A recent coronial inquest into the drowning of four people in NSW found that overseas students are not routinely given water safety information as part of their orientation to living in Australia⁵⁷. A further study found that 77% of international students surveyed did not know what a rip was⁵⁸. Water safety education, including the identification of hazards, should be a mandatory part of student orientation, particularly in educational institutions exposed to known local water hazards.

Case Study: Remote Pools – A Royal Life Saving Review of Swimming Pools in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory

Royal Life Saving has produced a review of swimming pools in remote areas of the Northern Territory. The review found that there are 18 swimming pools in remote areas across the Northern Territory, servicing a population exceeding 19,000 people in mainly remote Indigenous communities⁵⁹.

Through the use of key stakeholder interviews, formal and informal meetings, workshops and conferences, many of which were conducted in the 18 remote communities with swimming pools, Royal Life Saving sought to identify strategies for improving the management and operation of those swimming pools.

Royal Life Saving believes that swimming pools must be considered a core community service, with potential benefits that reach beyond the simple provision of recreational swimming opportunities for children and interested adults. Pools should be viewed as a social asset with strong links to a range of outcomes in the areas of health, employment, youth leadership and family relations.

Royal Life Saving will continue its long standing commitment to working to achieve the health, social and economic benefits of swimming pools in remote areas through strong partnerships with all levels of government and supportive relationships with communities across the Northern Territory.

GOAL 10



Reduce the Impact of Disaster and Extreme Weather on Drowning Deaths

Key Objectives and Performance Indicators

- 10.1 Forge greater links and recognition of drowning prevention in national, regional and community level Disaster Mitigation Programs
 - Drowning and drowning prevention strategies have been incorporated into national, regional and local level Disaster Mitigation Programs
- 10.2 Implement strategies that raise community awareness & skills to prevent drowning during floods
 - Community awareness programs including increased signage have been implemented
- 10.3 Collaboration is expanded with emergency response agencies to strengthen skills and awareness of aquatic rescue strategies
 - Collaborative relationships have been established and strategies being implemented to strengthen aquatic rescue skills at an agency and community level

Background

Disasters, particularly natural disasters such as flooding, storm surges and Tsunamis affect millions of people globally every year. Drowning is a common consequence during these events. Changed weather conditions, gradual or sudden, impact upon water conditions and varying natural water flows will induce changes in recreational behaviours. These changes have short and long term impacts for water safety agencies, emergency services and rescue response agencies.

Hyogo Framework

It may be valuable to view these strategies with reference to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction - Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-15⁶⁰ which was developed to reduce deaths as a result of disasters. Titled “Building the Resilience for Nations and Communities to Disasters”, the framework sets out five key priorities for action. These areas are addressed below, alongside some suggested AWSC areas for action.

Proactive Strategies to Reduce Drowning

Whilst the impact of climate change on rates of drowning and drowning death is difficult to forecast there are some proactive strategies that AWSC advocates to mitigate effects of this long term risk.

Figure 9: United Nations Hyogo Framework

Hyogo Framework Five Key Priorities	Suggested Actions
1. Making disaster risk reduction a priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater links between AWSC and water safety advocates and National, State and community level Disaster Mitigation programs
2. Improving risk information and early warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater links to early warning systems • Signage at flash flood prone waterways
3. Building a culture of safety and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community level awareness programs • Community level lifesaving, survival and rescue skill development programs
4. Reducing the risks in key sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of groups and regions at significant risk • Strengthen building codes • Monitor and/or modify floodway and storm water drains • Community education awareness and preparedness
5. Strengthening preparedness for response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with disaster response agencies • Training emergency service workers in water rescue and response • Increase in availability of public rescue equipment

Water Rescue Training

The water rescue training of emergency service workers may be supported by installation of rescue equipment in areas prone to flash flooding as an effective drowning prevention strategy. Community level preparedness and response programs must be facilitated in order to reduce drowning as a result of flash flooding.

Building Codes

Building codes including road ways, housing and infrastructure should consider the future impact of rising sea levels, increased storm activity and flooding. Consideration must be given to the future development impact of this change on coastal infrastructure including surf life saving clubs.

Whilst there is still a level of community debate regarding climate change, efforts must be made to improve the scientific evidence base supporting the relationship between extreme weather and drowning. This research must include modelling the impact of changes in exposure and behaviour likely to result from climate change on drowning prevention strategies.

Coordination of Disaster Response and Risk Reduction

There are a number of organisations responsible for disaster response and risk reduction in Australia. The Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre has been established so that Australia has an independent capability to detect, monitor, verify and warn the community of the existence of tsunami activity in our region and possible threats to Australian coastal locations and offshore islands ⁶¹.

Emergency Management Australia is a division of the Attorney-General's Department and prepares for emergencies and disasters through the development and maintenance of national plans and coordination of the Australian Government's crisis response and recovery efforts.

The State Emergency Services (SES) is charged with responding to natural disaster in each Australian State and Territory. The SES provides emergency and rescue services to the community and is made up almost entirely of volunteers. The SES is coordinated by the Australian Council of State Emergency Services. The major responsibility of the SES is to provide flood and storm operations, however the SES also provides general rescue efforts in rural parts of each State and Territory.

The AWSC aims to collaborate with these, and other organisations, to incorporate drowning prevention strategies into disaster mitigation programs at all levels of government.

Case Study: Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry Findings

The Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry was established to investigate seven matters arising from the floods in 2010-11 ⁶². Prolonged and extensive rainfall over large areas of Queensland led to flooding of historic proportions in December 2010 and January 2011. Thirty three people died and three remain missing.

The aim of the inquiry was to make recommendations for the improvement of preparation and planning for future floods and emergency response in natural disasters, as well as for any legislative change needed. Although Queensland already had an existing emergency management structure it had never been tested by a disaster of the flood's proportions. The inquiry made a number of recommendations.

Recommendations regarding drowning prevention included conducting a public education campaign about the dangers of driving in floodwaters. This campaign is to be delivered by the Queensland government through various media to reach as many people as possible with consistent messaging. Local government's susceptible to flooding should conduct community education programs that include information on preparing for flooding, how to contact the SES and other relevant organisations if in need of assistance and putting specific measures in place for evacuations of people who require particular assistance such as the elderly and people with a disability.

Communities at risk of flooding should consider installing sirens, alarm activating gauges and the installation of an automated local evaluation in real time system (ALERT system) for particular waterways. There are also recommendations regarding revision of operations documents for the conduct of swift water rescues and a directive for every rescue appliance to carry personal flotation devices suitably sized for children or infants as well as waterproof radios ⁶².

Facilitating Communication of the Strategy to Key Stakeholders

Background

Communication and implementation of the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015 by key stakeholders is vital to maximising the AWSS 2012-15's success in reducing the number of drowning deaths in Australia.

Just as the AWSS 2012-15 puts the onus back on individual organisations and water safety advocates to act to reduce drowning deaths in Australia, this aspect encourages individual stakeholders to contribute to the effective communication of the AWSS 2012-15.

Accordingly the AWSC aims to provide tools for the communication of the AWSS 2012-15 by member organisations and other stakeholder groups.

Guiding Principles

The communication of the AWSS 2012-15 is guided by the following principles:

- The AWSC is a water safety advocacy group that supports the implementation of the AWSS 2012-15 by member organisations
- The AWSC relies on the contributions of the water safety community and government to achieve the goals of the AWSS 2012-15
- The AWSS 2012-15 is intended to influence and guide the policies and actions of water safety organisations and stakeholders
- The ultimate measure of success is the reduction of drowning and this is central to the communication of the AWSS 2012-15
- Drowning is complex and prevention strategies need to be multifaceted and be conducted across jurisdictions
- Government and water safety agencies are encouraged to adopt communication strategies aimed at reinforcing the goals and objectives of the AWSS 2012-15
- The principal activities of the AWSC include meetings with stakeholders & biennial water safety conferences

Stakeholder Analysis and Suggested Actions

Identifying stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities underpins the effective communication of the AWSS 2012-15 (see Stakeholder map on page 3 of this document). Stakeholder analysis involves identifying stakeholders likely to be involved in, affected by, or part of the activities or outcomes of a project. By identifying stakeholders, it is possible to gain insights into how best to engage them in the AWSS 2012-15.

The AWSC acknowledges that there are many stakeholders to the AWSS 2012-15 at National, State and Territory and local levels. National stakeholders to the AWSS 2012-15 include national water safety agencies, the aquatic industry and Australian government agencies. At a State and Territory level, stakeholders are State and Territory based water safety agencies, industry and governments. At a local level, local councils, local government organisations, the aquatic industry, members of the water safety workforce and community safety groups are stakeholders to the AWSS 2012-15.

There are actions that stakeholders should undertake internally and externally to promote the AWSS 2012-15. Internal communication should aim to influence the alignment of activities to elements of the AWSS 2012-15.

Modifying organisational plans to reflect relevant goals and objectives of the AWSS 2012-15 is an example of successful internal communication. Communicating elements of the AWSS 2012-15 externally, such as to businesses, corporate partners and the community, may be effective in gaining additional support. This may be measured through media monitoring or the collection of media clips incorporating language used by stakeholders in support of the AWSS 2012-15.

Communication Tools and Strategies

To facilitate communication of the AWSS 2012-15 as well as track progress against the goals, meetings between stakeholders should be conducted.

The development of flexible tools and strategies will also assist in the communication of the AWSS 2012-15 across jurisdictions. The AWSC advocates the use of the following mechanisms to communicate the existence and content of the AWSS 2012-15.

Terminology

The use of accurate and consistent terminology is important for ensuring the effective communication of the AWSS 2012-15 across stakeholders. As such, the following tools and strategies are proposed:

1. The full name of the Strategy is to be used in all cases where possible, that is, the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015. The document may also be referred to as AWSS 2012-15 if the acronym has been explained in the first use, that is Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-15 (AWSS 2012-15).
2. The document may then be referred to as the AWSS 2012-15 if point 1 has been followed.
3. Reference should be made to the overarching aim of the AWSS 2012-15 which is a 50% reduction in drowning deaths by the year 2020.

Graphic Devices

The icons used to identify each of the goals of the AWSS 2012-15 in this document succinctly communicate the focus of each goal. The icons are also colour-coded, grouping each goal under one of the three key priority areas of the AWSS 2012-15. The following actions are proposed for wider use of these icons:

1. Icons in this AWSS 2012-15 should be created to be used as individual communication tools.
2. Icons are to be used in annual reports for outlining progress against each of the AWSS 2012-15's goals.
3. Consideration should be given to utilising the icons in web content. This could be via individual web pages on the AWSC website devoted to each goal of the AWSS 2012-15.

Media Statements

The media is a powerful tool for communication and raising awareness. To compete in an already crowded sphere, messages around the AWSS 2012-15 need to be clear and consistent. As such, the following statements should be considered for use by individual water safety agencies when engaging with the media:

1. The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-15 aims to reduce drowning deaths by 50% by the year 2020.
2. The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-15 has been developed by the AWSC through a consultative process focused on identifying evidence based prevention strategies.
3. Where possible, a statement linking action to a specific goal of the Strategy should be included. E.g. "The Royal Life Saving Keep Watch Campaign is working towards achieving Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-15 Goal 1: Reduce drowning deaths in children aged 0-14 through the promotion of its four key messages: Supervision, restricting access, water familiarisation and resuscitation."

Annual Reporting

Annual reporting by AWSC stakeholders is useful in measuring achievements against the individual goals of the AWSS 2012-15 as well as measuring success against the overall goal of reducing drowning deaths. As such, the following tools and strategies are proposed:

1. A template for annual reporting of progress against the AWSS 2012-15 is developed for use by AWSC member organisations.
2. Stakeholders are encouraged to make information available to the AWSC that supports achievements against the AWSS 2012-15.
3. The AWSC will encourage similar processes of annual reporting at the State and Territory and at local level.
4. A reporting device for communicating progress against the AWSS 2012-15 should also be considered.

Communication Activities

There are a number of activities that the AWSC will conduct or facilitate to further enhance the communication of the AWSS 2012-15 to government and the water safety community.

Conferences

The AWSC will facilitate biennial water safety conferences. Conference content and presentations will track progress against the AWSS 2012-15. Conference streams will reflect the AWSS 2012-15, potentially linking to specific goals.

Website

The AWSS 2012-15 is to be made available on the AWSC website. The structure and manner in which the information is communicated should be considered. A separate page may be devoted to each goal of the AWSS 2012-15, with opportunities for news updates highlighting achievements in real time.

Workshops/Seminars

Workshops and seminars should be conducted to further communicate and facilitate discussion of the AWSS 2012-15. The AWSC supports and encourages frequent dialogue on the AWSS 2012-15's goals and objectives as a means of prompting further action and disseminating new ideas and approaches.

Distribution

The AWSC should ensure that a copy of the AWSS 2012-15 has been distributed to all key stakeholders. This may be through printed or electronic means, or by directing stakeholders to the AWSC website (www.watersafety.com.au). Updates of progress should also be distributed to stakeholders. This can be achieved through reporting of actions against the goals and performance indicators of the AWSS 2012-15.

IMPLEMENTATION

The intent of the AWSS 2012-15 is to promote the alignment of National, State and Territory and regional water safety plans to the ten Goals of the AWSS 2012-15. These Goals underpin the planning, implementation, measurement and evaluation of the AWSS 2012-15. Consistency in planning is a key outcome of this AWSS 2012-15 and if we are to realise our aspirational Goal of reducing drowning deaths by 50% by 2020 it is essential that all actions are considered against the AWSS 2012-15.

Planning Template

An implementation planning template is available under the AWSS 2012-15 tab on www.watersafety.com.au to encourage water safety agencies, key stakeholders and Government to align their plans to the AWSS 2012-15. This template may be utilised as is or adapted to suit each organisation's scope and objectives.

Prioritisation

The prioritisation of the Goals contained in the AWSS 2012-15 is based on an overview of the patterns of drowning across Australia. When developing a plan it is essential that a contextualisation of the goals occurs and emphasis is given to the areas of pressing need. It is also vital that each organisation or individual give priority to the goals they can best address or that closely align with the organisation's scope and objectives.

Tracking Progress

Water Safety Agencies are encouraged to communicate their activity against the plan in a fashion consistent with the Goals of the AWSS 2012-15. Forecasting action and tracking contributions will assist the AWSC in evaluating the progress of the AWSS 2012-15 as well as assist in defining future direction. Tracking progress will also provide member organisations with the opportunity to evaluate their own achievements against the goals and objectives of the AWSS 2012-15.

Reporting

In order to measure progress made against the goals and objectives of the AWSS 2012-15, the AWSC encourages annual reporting by member organisations and the broader water safety community. This will provide support for current actions as well as ensure that future strategies target areas of most need and therefore maximise success.

Case Study in Success of AWSS 2008-2011

The NSW Water Safety Advisory Council (WSAC) is comprised of experts, both Government and non-Government in all fields of water safety; boating, fishing, swimming, surf, inland waterways, swimming pools, training, education, policy and legislation.

In 2011, the NSW Liberals and Nationals Government tasked the WSAC to advise on allocation of the Government's commitment to provide \$8 million over four years to a Water Safety Black Spots Fund; to address drowning or near drowning across NSW. This Fund draws in part on Priority Area 2, Goal 7 and Goal 8 of the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008-2011 to define what is clarified as a black spot to assist those in applying for funding.

Some organisations applying for funds have also used the strategy as further support for what they consider a black spot if that particular 'spot' had been identified as an area for action in the national strategy.

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