

## **MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE USE**

**In the ten year period from 2002 to 2012, Royal Life Saving – Australia calculates that there have been over 130 drowning deaths as a result of flooding, and over half of these were due to cars being driven through flood waters.**

**During this year’s extreme weather events already, there have been five deaths in Queensland and two in NSW as a result of people driving their cars through flood waters.**

**Aided by funding from Royal Life Saving - Australia, a collaborative study with Griffith University will interview 20 participants who have made the decision at some point to drive their vehicle through a deep stretch of flood water.**

### **Looking at why people take risks in floods**

Looking at the reasons why people drive their vehicles through potentially dangerous flood water is the focus of new Griffith and Royal Life Saving Society Australia research which aims to reduce the number of fatalities.

During this year’s extreme weather events already, there have been five deaths in Queensland and two in NSW as a result of people driving their cars through flood waters.

In the ten year period from 2002 to 2012, Royal Life Saving – Australia calculates that there have been over 130 drowning deaths as a result of flooding, and over half of these were due to cars being driven through flood waters.

“We already know that even driving a vehicle through 15 cm of water can cause it to become unstable; that’s aside from the fact that you wouldn’t know about any potential hazards underneath the water nor the condition of the road surface itself,” says study leader Dr Kyra Hamilton from Griffith’s Menzies Health Institute Queensland (MHIQ).

“We also know that driving a vehicle through 60cm of water can make it become buoyant with the potential for it to tip over and consequently submerge its occupants.

Aided by funding from Royal Life Saving - Australia, the collaborative study will interview 20 participants who have made the decision at some point to drive their vehicle through a deep stretch of flood water.

“This research aims to look at why people are taking risks around flood waters,” says Dr Hamilton.

“This will be an in-depth qualitative study, which will discuss with participants the circumstances that led up to them making that decision and through their lived experience, discuss the actual event and the after effects.

“I think we will uncover rich and interesting insights as we really want to get a good understanding of what leads people to drive through flood waters and how that experience shapes their subsequent behaviour.”

“We have a good understanding of the number of drowning deaths as a result of driving through flood waters,” says Royal Life Saving Society Australia National Manager Research & Policy, Amy Peden.

“We have a strong culture around water in Australia, but as yet we do not have a lot of research around the attitudes towards water safety and this research will provide valuable information regarding why people make the choices they do when faced with a flooded road.”

Dr Hamilton says that the results of the study will be used to positively influence public education and advocacy work undertaken by Royal Life Saving around drowning prevention during times of flood. It is also hoped to address a key area of the Australian Water Safety Strategy which aims to reduce drowning as a result of flooding and extreme weather.

Potential participants should contact Mr Jacob Keech via email [jacob.keech@griffithuni.edu.au](mailto:jacob.keech@griffithuni.edu.au)

Website – [www.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.royallifesaving.com.au)

Twitter - @Royallifesaving

Facebook – [facebook.com/RoyalLifeSaving](https://facebook.com/RoyalLifeSaving)

**For all media enquiries contact Ross Woodward, Media Key on 03 6769 6488**