



ADDRESSING DROWNING IN MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES:

SYMPOSIUM ACTION STATEMENTS

MARCH 2019



**Australian
Water Safety
Council**



The Australian Water Safety Council (AWSC) is deeply committed to drowning prevention in Australia and is a collective voice for Australia's leading water safety organisations. The Council acts as a consultative forum comprising of the major water safety and related government agencies and focuses on the presentation of key water safety issues to governments, industry and the community.

The Australian Water Safety Council is committed to improving water safety in Australia as demonstrated through the production and implementation of four National Water Safety Plans/Strategies. These documents have generated bipartisan support for water safety in Australia and have seen the improvement of water safety throughout the country.

The Australian Water Safety Council member bodies continue to demonstrate their commitment to water safety by directing resources of their respective organisations towards the development and implementation of the Australian Water Safety Strategy.

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Symposium presented by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, with support from Australian Government.



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AUSTRALIAN WATER SAFETY COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM: ADDRESSING DROWNING AMONG MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Overview

In December 2018, more than 50 delegates including representatives from the drowning prevention sector, government (Federal, State and Local), researchers and community representatives, convened in Sydney for the Australian Water Safety Council Symposium: Addressing Drowning Among Multicultural Communities. The Symposium aimed to extend our knowledge and commitment to drowning prevention specially focusing on multicultural communities.

Over two days, the Symposium explored key themes in research, community engagement, programs and practice, and strategies for success across four sessions with an emphasis on group discussion and workshopping, with an outcome to develop key action statements.

Day one presented research and evidence relating to drowning and water safety practices among multicultural communities, and a cultural awareness training workshop. Day two focused attention on the identification of key actions that may increase understanding and community engagement, lessons from other sectors, building strong policy and advocacy outcomes, as well as focusing on the needs of multicultural communities.

Symposium outline

Session 1: Research

- A 10 year study of overseas born drowning deaths, Stacey Pidgeon, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
- Coastal activity participation and perceptions of coastal hazards, Shane Daw, Surf Life Saving Australia
- Beach safety knowledge of visiting Study Abroad Students, Rob Brander, University of New South Wales
- Community perceptions of drowning prevention, Tamerlaine Beasley, Beasley Intercultural

Session 2: Community Engagement

- The Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach in action: fire safety awareness among new migrants in rural Victoria, Angela Cook, Country Fire Authority and Thablay Sher and Mura Ra Htoo, Karen community members from Nhill, Victoria
- RLSSWA's Multicultural Swimming and Water Safety Strategy, Trent Hotchkin, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia
- Be Water Safe, Not Sorry: Engaging with multicultural communities to inform a water safety campaign, Jeremy Hill and Cally Sheehan, Office of Emergency Management New South Wales

Session 3: Programs and Practice

- The Aqua English Project – 12 years, 26,000 participants and the delivery of swimming and English program in South East Queensland, Sarah Scarce, The Aqua English Project
- Water competence programs for New Settler and Asian communities in the Auckland Region, Harry Aonga, Drowning Prevention Auckland
- A collaborative approach to training in Multicultural communities, Robyn Larkham, AUSTSWIM
- Beach safety advisor program, Mike Anderson, Surf Life Saving New South Wales

Session 4: What does success look like?

- Life Saving Victoria – Engaging with CALD communities, Rhiannon Birch, Life Saving Victoria
- Working with Non-English speaking communities: theory, practice and realities, Richard Franklin, James Cook University and Royal Life Saving Society - Australia

The AWSC would like to thank all session presenters and delegates who engaged in this important event. Delegates are listed on page 10.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SYMPOSIUM

This section reflects the key insights presented at the Symposium that informed the development of the Action Statements in the next section.

A National Study outlines the magnitude of the drowning of people born overseas

In order to determine the burden of fatal drowning among multicultural communities in Australia, drowning death data of people born overseas was collated from the Royal Life Saving National Fatal Drowning Database over a 10 year period (1 July 2005 – 30 June 2015) and cross-checked against the National Coronial Information System (NCIS). This is the first time an in-depth analysis of drowning statistics among high-risk populations by country of birth has been conducted.

The results of the Royal Life Saving report “A 10 year national study of overseas born drowning deaths in Australia” [1] show that:

- A total of 762 people drowned who were born overseas (between 2005 – 2015), an average of 76 each year, accounted for 27% of total drowning deaths during this period
- This is considered an under-estimate due to 18% of cases where country of birth was unknown
- Most were long term residents in Australia, who had lived in Australia for a period of 10 years or more
- Identified risk factors included: pre-existing medical conditions (38%), alcohol consumption (25%, 58% BAC $\geq 0.05\%$), drugs (23%, 23% illegal) and poor swimming ability (where recorded)

Some groups are more at risk than others

Research implies that people from multicultural communities may be at higher risk of drowning.

The national study of overseas born drowning deaths found that:

- The highest number of overseas born drowning deaths occurred among people born in: China (10%), followed by New Zealand, England and South Korea (6% each)
- When analysed by population living in Australia (100,000), the populations found to be at highest risk of drowning were: Taiwan (4.70), South Korea (4.24) and Ireland (2.75)
- Emerging groups for drowning are recent arrivals (<5 years) and international students

A recent qualitative study [2] targeting people from Chinese, Korean, Indian, Vietnamese and newly arrived African communities found that.

- Adults do not consider swimming and water safety important for them, however they do prioritise swimming lessons for their children
- Most interviewed knew someone who had drowned, either in Australia or their home country, and consequently were very cautious around water
- Most were aware of the flags on the beach and what they mean, although some did not

A study of incoming international students to Australia [3] found that:

- International students generally do not receive a safety briefing before leaving for Australia
- Most incoming international students are infrequent beachgoers with limited ocean swimming skills and have poor knowledge of Australian beach safety and hazards
- Students were less confident about their swimming ability in the ocean compared to a pool, 52% thought that could not swim more than 50m in the ocean, compared to only 21% reporting being able to swim less than 50m in the pool
- Many students were unable to grasp key messages about rip currents, still ignored safety advice and were strongly influenced by group behaviour(s) even after a briefing

Exposure and participation in the coastal environment

Results from the 2018 Surf Life Saving Australia National Coastal Safety Survey on visitation, participation, activity and perception of hazards in the coastal environment reported that:

- When compared to people of other ethnic groups, those of an Asian background were less likely to visit the coast
- 56% of those surveyed from Asian backgrounds reported being unable to swim/or were weak swimmers compared to others
- Overall, people of Asian and European backgrounds reported a very low risk perception of the beach being hazardous (9% each thought very or extremely hazardous)

Lessons learnt

Key lessons presented from long-term projects targeting multicultural communities included:

- Taking a holistic approach
- Being flexible to meet the cultural needs of communities
- Allowing communities to provide input into programs and listening to their needs
- Identifying key leaders/champions within communities to promote the value of swimming and water safety for children and adults
- Longevity and sustainability (where possible)
- Using theoretical frameworks to follow best practice that have been used in other sectors [4]

SYMPOSIUM STATEMENTS: OVERVIEW

A key outcome of the symposium was to draft a collective statement aimed at addressing drowning among multicultural communities across Australia. After considering and debating the latest research, practice and policy from organisations, researchers and advocates, delegates reinforced the importance of a focus on preventing drowning among people from multicultural communities. Most of the actions proposed are multi-sectorial and cross cutting. This declaration does not attempt to assign responsibility but rather suggests next steps moving forward on this important issue.

The Symposium Statements are high level calls to action in the following areas:

- Increasing community engagement
- Improving advocacy of drowning prevention strategies targeted to multicultural communities
- Developing drowning prevention policy that promotes cross-sectoral collaboration and community input
- Encouraging the drowning prevention sector, government, community organisations and, researchers to share resources, research and program outcomes in order to learn from each other
- Establishing a research agenda to improve knowledge of drowning among multicultural communities

The delegates agreed that the statements should be underpinned by the following four principles when focusing on multicultural communities:

- Respect
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Flexibility

ENGAGEMENT: BUILD CLOSER TIES BETWEEN THE DROWNING PREVENTION SECTOR AND MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

ACTIONS

1. Improve knowledge and understanding of community engagement among the drowning prevention sector

Building relationships between the drowning prevention sector and communities under-represented and at increased risk of drowning, will develop trust and increase engagement in order to increase participation and awareness of drowning. Seeking community input from the planning phase is important when understanding the needs of the community. Identifying key leaders or champions is imperative to ensure sustainability and buy-in from the community. Increasing cultural awareness will improve knowledge and skills required when working effectively with culturally diverse populations.

2. Develop best practice guidelines to community engagement

Best practice guidelines for community engagement will assist when planning interventions aimed at reducing drowning among multicultural communities, and would provide an evidence-base for developing programs. Industry-wide guidelines would provide a consistent approach, but should be directed by local community input. For example: Establishing advisory groups with representatives from multicultural communities, drowning prevention sector and government at the beginning of the process would ensure community input. The inclusion of community representatives in the program planning phase should be considered across industry bodies at all levels to ensure that community needs are accounted for. A coordinated approach to community engagement would be beneficial for everyone involved. Another example is providing training and employment opportunities for multicultural communities to who can act as role models and increase social cohesion.

3. Simplify language to improve understanding of key water safety messages

Simple terminology and consistency of key messages will improve ease of understanding when communicating the issue of drowning to multicultural communities. Water safety messages need to be kept simple and in context to avoid confusion. It is essential that multicultural communities understand how to keep safe and what to do in an emergency situation. Community consultation is necessary (as per best practice guidelines) to ensure that messages are culturally appropriate. Advice on translation of materials should be undertaken to reduce duplication.

ADVOCACY: RAISE AWARENESS OF DROWNING IN HIGH-RISK COMMUNITIES

ACTIONS

1. Improve drowning data (including fatal and non-fatal) relating to multicultural communities

Inclusion of information relating to country of birth, length of time in country, cultural background and language in coronial, police and other water-related incident reporting will further improve knowledge of drowning among multicultural communities. For example, including this information in future National Drowning Reports. Conducting qualitative research will capture community perspectives and measure knowledge and attitudes towards water safety that may influence behaviours leading to drowning situations, and will provide data to inform water safety programs, key messages and campaigns.

2. Increase awareness of the drowning burden

Build awareness across all levels of government, health sector, media, the wider drowning prevention sector and community, to increase understanding and awareness of drowning (both fatal and non-fatal) among multicultural communities through advocacy, good quality research and the media. The Australian Water Safety Council and the drowning prevention sector will continue to highlight and respond to drowning among multicultural communities and other high-risk populations.

3. Promote the benefits of learning swimming and water safety skills

Highlighting drowning cases from multicultural communities will raise awareness of the drowning issue, reinforce the impact of drowning and emphasise the value of water safety education for children, adults and their families. Identification of key leaders to champion the benefits of swimming and water safety among their own community will encourage participation and build a water safety culture within the community. Developing relationships between communities and the drowning prevention sector (e.g. facilities) at the local level would increase trust, increase understanding, improve access and promote participation.

POLICY: DEVELOP WATER SAFETY POLICIES SPECIFIC TO MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

ACTIONS

1. Advocate for sustainable funding of water safety programs for multicultural communities

Work to promote long-term, sustainable funding opportunities. This can work well when water safety education is incorporated into program that address broader outcomes, such as health a well-being, social inclusion/cohesion or training and employment. This will ensure that future initiatives are not just one-off occurrences. Sustainable funding will ensure continuity of programs and increase community participation. Advocacy at all levels - national, state and local level - for funding of culturally appropriate programs will enable those most at-risk to access swimming and water safety education.

2. Strengthen stakeholder collaboration

Improving the cross-sectoral nature of drowning prevention initiatives will prevent duplication and reduce competition of resources (financial and physical) being targeted to the same communities. Agencies may need to consider holistic strategies that include the broader benefits of swimming and water safety, such as those aimed at improving physical and mental health, increased social cohesion, settlement outcomes and employment opportunities. To influence cross-sectoral policy and increase collaboration, commitment is required from all agencies working with multicultural communities. For example, all future water safety projects should have a reference group including representatives from the community in which they are working with.

3. Develop policies that reflect community needs

Developing drowning prevention policies/strategies in consultation with community bodies and that is based on good research is essential in order to provide culturally appropriate solutions. It is important that communities are listened to and have an opportunity to present their specific needs for the aquatic context. Knowing that policies/strategies have been developed according to best practice guidelines and with community input may encourage greater up-take and participation. The drowning prevention sector and funding bodies (including local government) need to acknowledge that traditional swimming and water safety program models may not be suitable for multicultural communities. Programs should be flexible to incorporate community needs in order to increase engagement and participation, for example gender-based swimming programs.

PRACTICE: SHARING OF RESEARCH, RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

ACTIONS

1. Improve coordination of program delivery

Creating opportunities for networking, sharing of research, experience, and materials will provide a mechanism to access current practice and knowledge across sectors and communities. For example, presenting research and programs at multi-sectoral conferences and forums such as local government meetings, diversity forums and health and injury prevention networks. Increased opportunities for cross-sectoral agencies to work together to achieve shared outcomes would benefit all organisations. A coordinated approach to program delivery between organisations and communities would provide clarity to program organisers, delivery partners and the participants. Increasing the diversity of the aquatic sector workforce and providing training and employment opportunities to people from multicultural backgrounds is needed to increase engagement and participation from local communities.

2. Conduct an audit of initiatives specific to multicultural communities

Establishing a database to identify drowning prevention/water safety initiatives and materials available (e.g. translated resources) targeting multicultural communities would help to avoid duplication. This would identify who is being targeted, where and what type of interventions are being conducted. This would assist to inform resource allocation where it is most needed.

3. Carry out program evaluation

Evidence on the effectiveness of water safety and drowning prevention programs in relation to drowning outcomes is largely unproven due to the short, one-off nature of many programs and campaigns. Robust evaluations of projects/programs is required to document outcomes and will provide evidence for future funding opportunities. In order to understand the full impact of interventions, it is important to document the broader program outcomes, not only the program outputs. Investigating other injury prevention strategies targeting multicultural communities would be helpful to inform future drowning prevention/water safety strategies, e.g. road safety, fire safety.

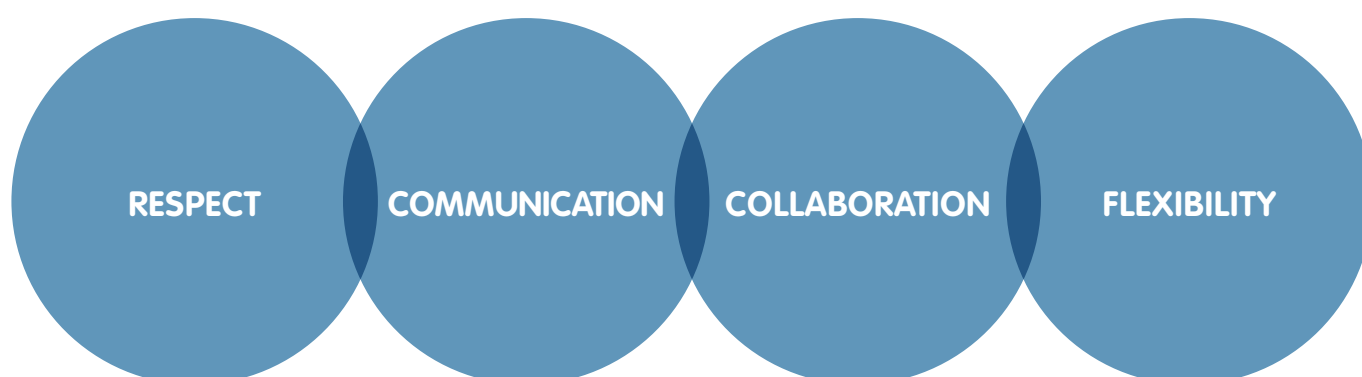
4. Develop a research agenda

A research agenda will inform the engagement, advocacy, policy and best practice going forward, using current evidence based models such as a community participatory action research model. For example: Country Fire Authority Victoria's (CFA) bushfire awareness resource was developed with the Karen community in Nhill, Victoria and utilised this model [5,6]. A mechanism to measure the implementation and outcomes of these action statements will be developed.

ACTION STATEMENT SUMMARY

ENGAGEMENT			
Build closer ties between the drowning prevention sector and multicultural communities			
1. Improve knowledge and understanding of engagement among the drowning prevention sector	2. Develop best practice guidelines to community engagement	3. Simplify language to improve understanding of key water safety messages	
ADVOCACY			
Raise awareness of drowning in high-risk populations			
1. Improve drowning data relating to multicultural communities	2. Increase awareness of the drowning burden	3. Promote the benefits of swimming and water safety skills	
POLICY			
Develop and implement water safety policies specific to multicultural communities			
1. Advocate for sustainable funding of water safety programs for multicultural communities	2. Strengthen stakeholder collaboration	3. Develop policies that reflect community needs	
PRACTICE			
Sharing of research, resources, and programs			
1. Improve coordination of program delivery	2. Conduct an audit of initiatives specific to multicultural communities	3. Carry out program evaluation	4. Develop a research agenda

PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE ACTION STATEMENTS



CLOSING STATEMENT

Having reviewed the available drowning prevention research pertaining to multicultural communities, hearing about a range of programs and practices currently in place, and considering the appropriate next steps, the Australian Water Safety Council, AWSC member organisations, and all symposium delegates confirm our commitment to:

- Ensuring the Australian Water Safety Council and the drowning prevention sector take all necessary steps to reinforce and achieve the engagement, advocacy, policy, and practice actions
- Incorporating culturally diverse drowning perspectives into the Australian Water Safety Strategy and its implementation efforts
- Incorporating culturally diverse drowning perspectives into future Royal Life Saving Society - Australia National Drowning Reports and Surf Life Saving Australia National Coastal Safety Reports
- Stronger cross-sectoral collaboration to reduce drowning (fatal and non-fatal) among multicultural communities across Australia

Justin Scarr

Chair

Australian Water Safety Council

Below: Symposium Delegates, December 2018



THE SYMPOSIUM WAS ATTENDED BY THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

Rishi Acharya, Advance Diversity Services
 Najma Ahmed, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia
 Mike Anderson, Surf Life Saving New South Wales
 Miguel Andrade, NSW Office of Sport and Recreation
 Harry Aonga, Drowning Prevention Auckland
 Tracey Ayton, Australian Swim Schools Association
 Emily Balcombe, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia
 Rhiannon Birch, Life Saving Victoria
 Rob Brander, University of New South Wales
 Davin Bray, Drowning Prevention Auckland
 Clare Burton, Swimming Australia
 Fiona Carr, Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency
 Ash Cater, Royal Life Saving - New South Wales
 Vimala Colless, Wollongong City Council
 Angela Cook, Country Fire Authority Victoria
 Shane Daw, Surf Life Saving Australia
 Paul Dreghorn, Wollongong City Council
 Janelle Falkingham, YMCA Victoria/Australia
 Richard Franklin, James Cook University
 Matt Griffiths, Royal Life Saving - New South Wales
 Jeremy Hillman, New South Wales Office of Emergency Management
 Penny Hodges, Royal Life Saving - New South Wales
 Trent Hotchkin, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia
 Mura Ra Htoo, Nhill, Victoria
 Robyn Larkham, AUSTSWIM
 Jane Luxton, Queensland Department of Education
 Cassandra May, Royal Life Saving Queensland
 Kym McMahon, Swimming Australia

Jen Mickle, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia
 Kimberley Ellis, Royal Life Saving - New South Wales
 Trent O'Hara, Belgravia Leisure
 Alek Olszewski, Western Leisure Services
 Carl Partridge, AUSTWIM
 Kalpna Patel, GyMEA Community Aid and Information Service
 Kim Price, Sunshine Coast Regional Council
 Cameron Pyett, Sutherland Shire Council
 Heba Ridha, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia
 Eveline Rijkse, Surf Life Saving Australia
 Amy Peden, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
 Stacey Pidgeon, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
 Lucy Rae, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
 Craig Roberts, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
 April Ryan, Surf Life Saving Australia
 Justin Scarr, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
 Sarah Scarce, The Aqua English Project
 Monique Sharp, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
 Cally Sheehan, New South Wales Office of Emergency Management
 Thanblay Sher, Nhill, Victoria
 Teresa Stanley, Drowning Prevention Auckland
 John Sullivan, Department of Health
 Danielle Taylor, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
 Jenny Tang, Advance Diversity Services
 Gary Toner, Australian Coaches and Swim Teachers Association (ACSTA)
 Jeff Walkley, Belgravia Foundation
 Jared Wilson, AUSTSWIM

Feedback to this declaration provided by:

Advance Diversity Services
 AUSTSWIM
 Australian Swim Schools Association (ASSA)
 Life Saving Victoria
 Royal Life Saving Society - New South Wales
 Royal Life Saving Society - Western Australia
 Swimming Australia
 Surf Life Saving Australia
 Wollongong City Council
 Associate Professor Richard Franklin
 Tamerlaine Beasley, Beasley Intercultural

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2. Beasley Intercultural (2018), Cultural diversity and drowning prevention report. Beasley Intercultural: Sydney.
3. Clifford KM, Brander RW, Trimble S, Houser C. (2018) Beach safety knowledge of visiting international study abroad students to Australia. *Tourism Management*, 69: 487 - 497.
4. Surf Life Saving Australia National Coastal Safety Survey (2018). Omnipoll online panel.
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6. Country Fire Authority Victoria (2018). Case Study: Nhill Karen Community: A community-based participatory approach in action. <https://news.cfa.vic.gov.au/-/celebrating-the-launch-of-a-karen-fire-safety-film-in-nhill>



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