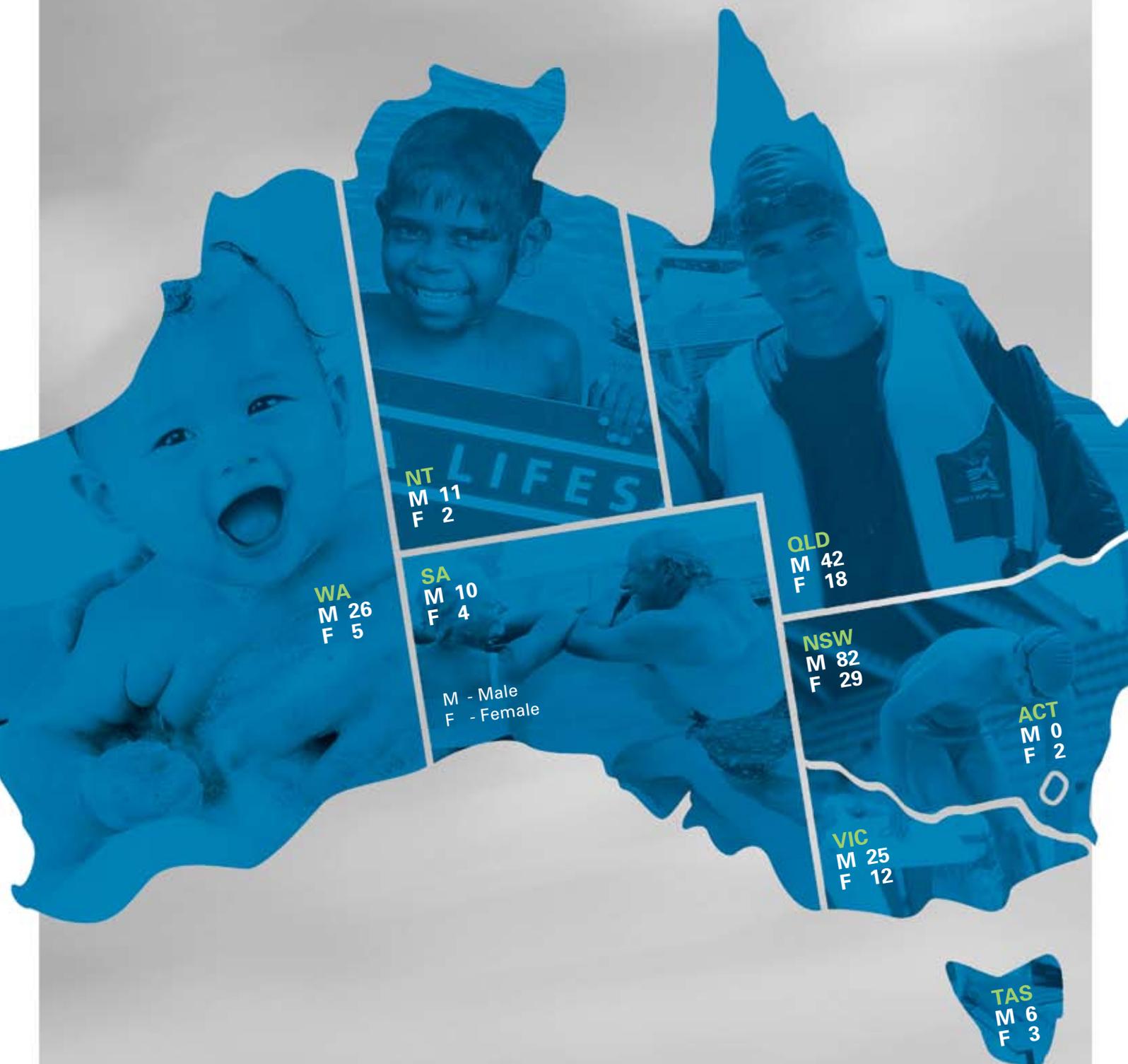


THE NATIONAL DROWNING REPORT

2007



HOW MANY PEOPLE DROWNED IN 2006/07?

277 people drowned in Australian waterways between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007. This figure is an increase of 12 on last year's figure and an increase of 13 on the 5 year average. The drowning rate per 100,000 people was 1.33 (Figure 1).

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER



Royal Life Saving

THE ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

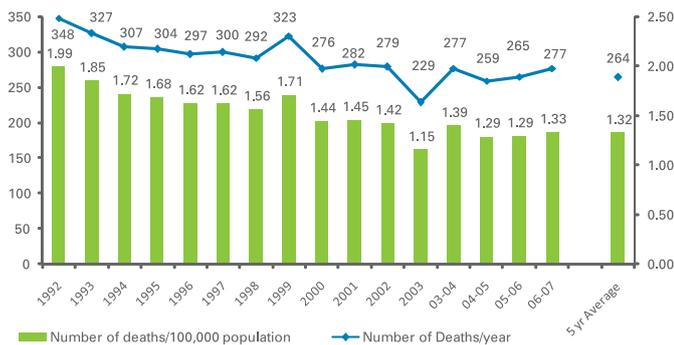
ZERO DROWNING CHALLENGE

Every year Royal Life Saving issues a 'Zero Drowning Challenge' and works towards preventing all drowning deaths in Australia through a range of innovative and well researched strategies.

We believe that *Everyone Can Be A Lifesaver* and one way that we set about achieving this is through the RLSSA Community Development Model. This model aims to maximise the health, social and economic benefits of community swimming pools.

The RLSSA Community Development Model is being implemented through the Nuiyu Nambiyu Aquatic Recreation Project in the Northern Territory, and the Muslim Aquatic Recreation projects in Sydney and Melbourne. These projects are building communities that embrace water safety, the benefits of physical activity, and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

FIGURE 1. Unintentional Drowning Deaths and Death Rates. Australia 1992-2006/07



METHODS

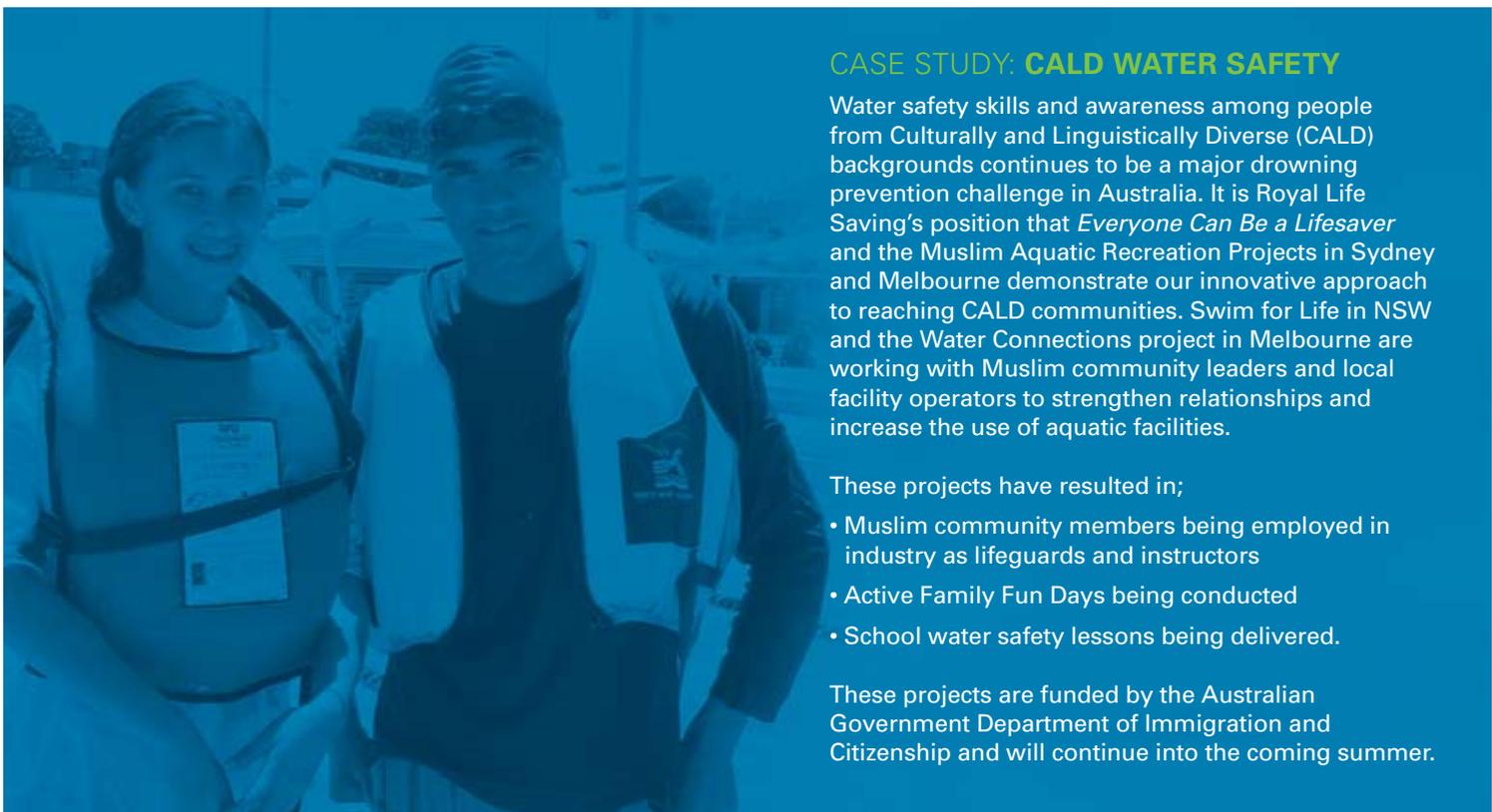
Information for the National Drowning Report 2007 is collected by Royal Life Saving Branches and analysed by the National Office. Information is collected from State and Territory Coronial Offices, the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) and media reports.

Royal Life Saving uses a media monitoring service (both electronic and print all year round) to find drowning deaths reported in the media.

All care is taken to ensure that the information is as accurate as possible. However, these figures should be considered interim until the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) releases its 'causes of death' figures for the year 2007. These figures may change depending upon ongoing coronial investigations and findings as 78% of cases are still open. The report contains information available on drowning deaths known as at 7 September 2007.

The 5 year average figures are based on information provided by the ABS for the financial years 2001/02 and 2002/03 (which includes 'Accidental Drowning', 'Water Transport Drowning' and 'Drowning due to Cataclysmic Events') and from Royal Life Saving National Drowning Reports from the years 2004 to 2006. Information does not include suicide, homicide, natural death (such as cardiac arrest), shark and crocodile attack, or hypothermia where known. Due to ABS coding changes different sources have been used to calculate the 5 year average.

The 5 year average for location and activity is 260, whereas the overall five year average is 264.



CASE STUDY: CALD WATER SAFETY

Water safety skills and awareness among people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds continues to be a major drowning prevention challenge in Australia. It is Royal Life Saving's position that *Everyone Can Be a Lifesaver* and the Muslim Aquatic Recreation Projects in Sydney and Melbourne demonstrate our innovative approach to reaching CALD communities. Swim for Life in NSW and the Water Connections project in Melbourne are working with Muslim community leaders and local facility operators to strengthen relationships and increase the use of aquatic facilities.

These projects have resulted in;

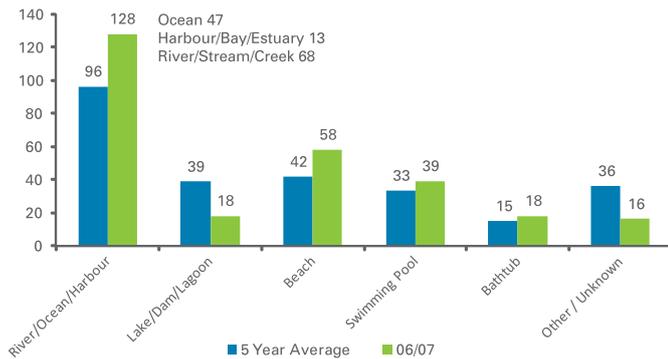
- Muslim community members being employed in industry as lifeguards and instructors
- Active Family Fun Days being conducted
- School water safety lessons being delivered.

These projects are funded by the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship and will continue into the coming summer.

WHERE ARE PEOPLE DROWNING?

The great news is there has been a 53% reduction in the drowning deaths in lakes/dams/lagoons (against the 5 year average). However drowning deaths at all other locations have increased on the 5 year average. The biggest change was at the beach where there was a 39% increase on the 5 year average. Common activities at river/ocean/harbour locations were using watercraft, and swimming or undertaking leisure activities. (Figure 2)

FIGURE 2. Drowning Deaths by Location, Australia 5 Year Average, 2006/07

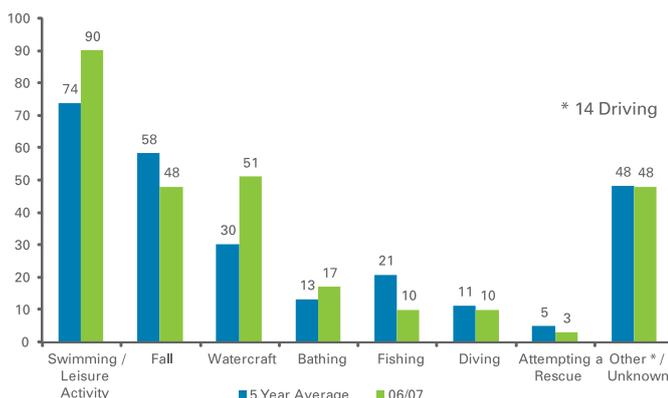


WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE PEOPLE UNDERTAKING PRIOR TO DROWNING?

Water sports and recreational activities continue to be popular with Australians of all backgrounds. Unfortunately these activities do not come without drowning risk. This year there was a decrease in the number of deaths on the 5 year average for fishing (52%), attempting a rescue (38%), falling into water (18%), and diving (11%).

There was an increase on the 5 year average in the number of people who drowned while swimming/ undertaking leisure activities in water (22%), while on a watercraft (boat, board, jet ski, etc) (69%), and bathing (29%) (Figure 3). Using the NCIS improves case ascertainment, but due to a number of factors, including privacy and a lack of witnesses to the drowning some information may not be available. This is reflected in the large number of other/unknown cases.

FIGURE 3. Drowning Deaths by Activity, Australia, 5 Year Average, 2006/07



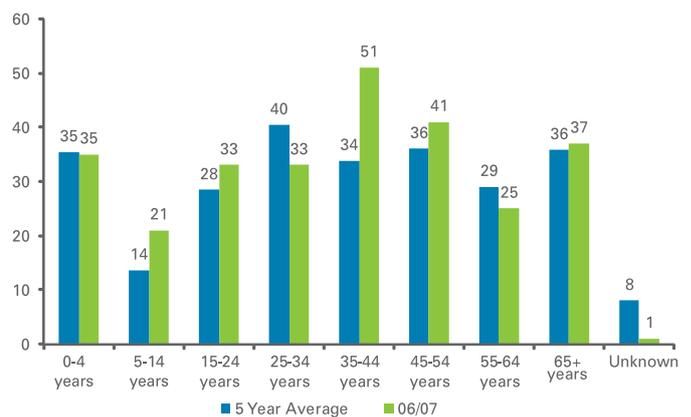
WHO DROWNS IN AUSTRALIA?

Last year 202 (73%) males and 75 (27%) females drowned, making males almost 3 times more likely to drown than females. Drowning deaths are up by 5% on the 5 year average.

This is partially due to the climatic conditions around Australia causing storms, floods, large surf and other conditions that place people at greater risk of drowning (there were 14 deaths of people who drowned while driving across or into flooded roads or were swept away).

There was an increase in number of drowning deaths against the 5 year average in all age groups except for the 0-4, 25-34 and 55-64 years. The largest increases on the 5 year average were in the 5-14 years age group (54%) and 35-44 years age group (51%). (Figure 4)

FIGURE 4. Drowning Deaths by Age Group, Australia, 5 Year Average, 2006/07



CASE STUDY: EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS

Each year we see a number of people who drown during storms and flooding. This year was no exception with 8 people drowning in one event alone in NSW.

These climatic conditions are predicted to continue and Royal Life Saving recommends taking great care when coming across flooded waterways. Also consider undertaking a Bronze Medallion to ensure your safety and that of those around you.

THE BRONZE MEDALLION
GIVES YOU SKILLS AND
KNOWLEDGE TO PREVENT
OR RESPOND TO AQUATIC
EMERGENCIES

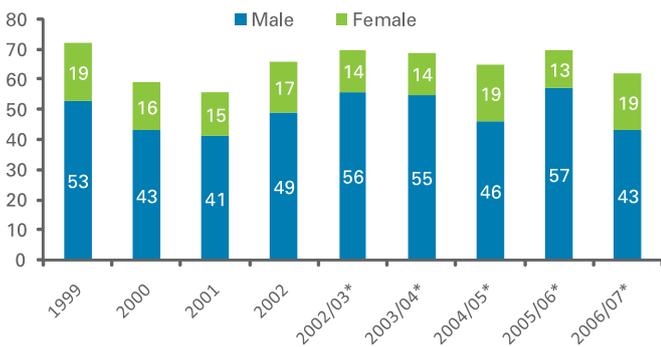
OLDER AUSTRALIANS (55+)

By 2020 there will be over 7 million people living in Australia aged over 55 years. This year we are highlighting drowning deaths of those aged over 55 years. Why are we doing this? Because Royal Life Saving believes that *Everyone Can Be a Life Saver*, and as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age many of them are taking up aquatic activities that they did not previously have time for and are therefore at greater risk. Royal Life Saving would also like to encourage older Australians to reacquaint themselves with the water and recommend gentle aquatic based exercise for fun or as a way to stay or get fit.

HOW MANY OLDER AUSTRALIANS DROWNED?

There were 62 Older Australians aged over 55 years who drowned this year, this is down by 3 (5%) on the 5 year average of 65 (Figure 4). Of the 62 deaths two thirds (69%) of those who drowned were males (Figure 7).

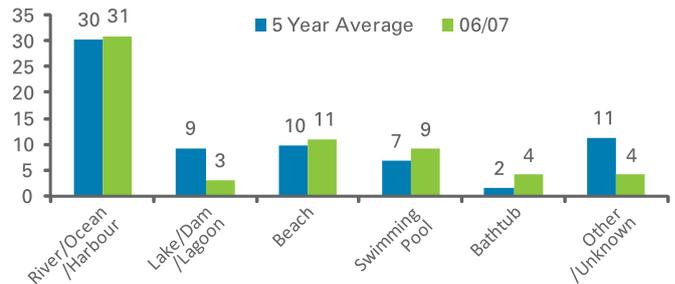
FIGURE 7. Drowning Deaths of Older Australians 55+ years, Australia 1999-2006/07



WHERE AND HOW?

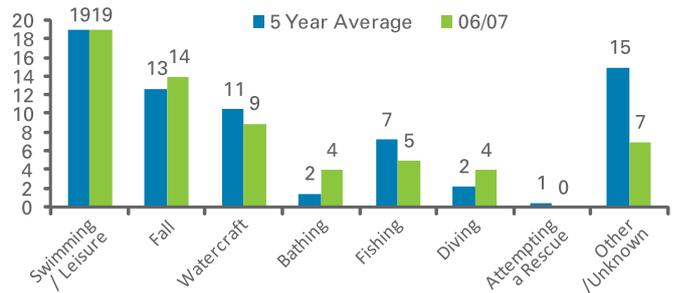
Half of all drowning deaths of people aged over 55 years were at river/ocean/harbours locations (31), which is up by 1 on the 5 year average of 30. Common activities being undertaken at these locations included being on a watercraft (29%), walking or playing near the water (fell-in) (19%), diving and fishing (13% each). The second most common location was the beach (11) of which the majority (82%) were swimming or undertaking leisure activities in the water prior to drowning (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8. Location of Drowning Deaths of Older Australians 55+ years, Australia, 5 Year Average, 2006/07



The most common activity prior to drowning was swimming / leisure activity (31%), followed by falling in while walking or playing near the water (23%).

FIGURE 9. Drowning Deaths by Activity, Older Australians 55+ years, Australia, 5 Year Average, 2006/07



CASE STUDY: NAUIYU NAMBIYU

Indigenous Australians are up to four times more likely to drown than the rest of Australia. Royal Life Saving has been working to combat indigenous drowning and to maximise the health, social and economic benefits of community swimming pools in remote communities.

The Swim for Life project is working with the Nauiyu Nambiyu community in remote Northern Territory to increase the level of physical activity among its population of 500.

Swim for Life uses a local project officer and community partners to target;

- Community involvement
- Programs, events and activities
- Training, employment and skills

All activities are geared towards making everyone more active and supporting a healthy lifestyle. In January 2007 the project was awarded an Australia Day Honour for best community project in the NT.



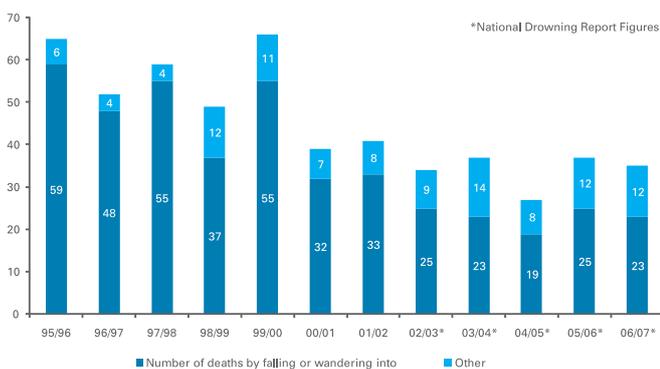
HOW MANY CHILDREN 0-4 YEARS DROWNED?

35 young children drowned in 2006/07 (Figure 5), which is the same as the 5 year average (35) (Figure 3). While 35 deaths are far too many, the good news is that this result represents a reduction of 47% (66 to 35) in drowning deaths from its recent peak in 1999/00.

Drowning deaths of young children continues to be a major issue for drowning prevention in Australia. The message from Royal Life Saving is KEEP WATCH.

- Young children need to be supervised constantly (within arms' reach) whenever they are in, on or near water.
- Restricting a young child's access to water either by putting a barrier around the water or around the child is also effective in preventing drowning deaths.
- Undertaking water familiarisation with your child will help you to become aware of the dangers.
- Learning resuscitation can help if an incident does occur.

FIGURE 5. Drowning Deaths of Young Children 0-4 Years, Australia 1995/96 – 2006/07

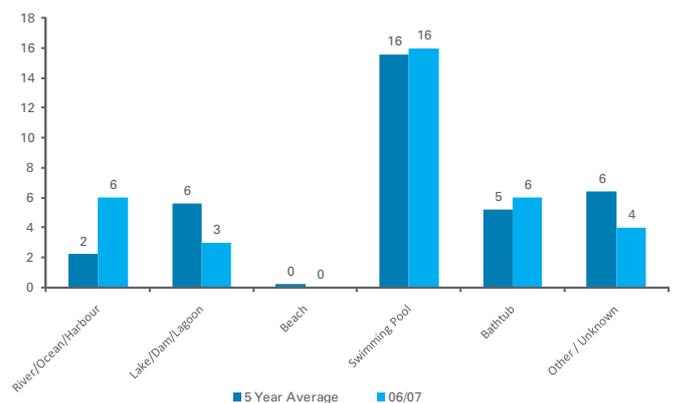


WHERE AND HOW DID THEY DROWN?

The majority of drowning deaths of young children resulted from the child falling or wandering into the water (Figure 5). The swimming pool was the most common location, with the majority of young children falling or wandering into a backyard pool.

Other common locations were river/ocean/harbour and bathtubs. Of the 6 children who drowned in the category river/ocean/harbour all were in rivers, 2 while in a car, 2 fell-in, 1 was undertaking recreational activities in the water and the last one was on a boat immediately prior to drowning.

FIGURE 6. Location of Drowning Deaths, Young Children 0-4 years, Australia, 5 Year Average, 2006/07



For more information about how to keep your child safe around water visit -

www.keepwatch.com.au



CASE STUDY: BATHTUBS

Royal Life Saving believes that all unintentional bathtub drowning deaths could be prevented with a few simple actions:

- Before running a bath have all equipment ready – towels, pyjamas, slippers
- If you have a cordless phone, bring it into the bathroom or even better let the answering machine get the call
- If you need to leave the bathroom take your child with you
- Have a small fold up chair in the bathroom to sit on while the children are bathing
- After bath time ensure the bathtub is drained immediately and keep the bathroom door closed when not in use

THERE WERE 6 CHILDREN WHO DROWNED IN BATHTUBS THIS YEAR

QUICK FACTS

YOUNG CHILDREN 0-4 YEARS

- 35 young children 0-4 years drowned last year (13% of all drowning deaths)
- 19 (54%) were males
- 16 (46%) drowned in swimming pools of which 15 were home pools.
- 6 (17%) drowned in bathtubs
- 23 (66%) fell or wandered into water prior to drowning

CHILDREN 5-14 YEARS

- 21 children 5-14 years drowned last year (8% of all drowning deaths)
- 14 (67%) were males
- 5 (24%) drowned at the beach
- 5 (24%) drowned in a river

PEOPLE 15-34 YEARS

- 66 people 15-34 years drowned last year (24% of all drowning deaths)
- 55 (83%) were males
- 20 (30%) drowned at the beach
- 20 (30%) drowned in a river
- 28 (42%) were swimming or undertaking leisure activities prior to drowning

PEOPLE 35-54 YEARS

- 92 people 35-54 years drowned last year (33% of all drowning deaths)
- 70 (76%) were males
- 54 (59%) drowned in a river/ocean/harbour of which 25 drowned in rivers and 25 drowned in oceans.
- 27 (29%) were swimming or undertaking leisure activities prior to drowning
- 24 (26%) were using watercraft prior to drowning

PEOPLE 55+ YEARS

- 62 people aged 55 years drowned last year (22% of all drowning deaths)
- 43 (69%) were males
- 31 (50%) drowned in a river/ocean/harbour of which 15 were in the ocean and 12 were in rivers
- 11 (18%) drowned at the beach
- 19 (31%) were swimming or undertaking leisure activities prior to drowning
- 14 (23%) were walking or playing near water prior to drowning

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Royal Life Saving Society Australia
National Branch on 02 8217 3111

ACT	02 6260 5800	NSW	02 9634 3700
NT	08 8981 5036	QLD	07 3823 2823
SA	08 8234 9244	TAS	03 6243 7558
VIC	03 9676 6900	WA	08 9383 8200

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Royal Life Saving acknowledges the following organisations for their assistance:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit
- The National Coroners Information System
- State and Territory Coroners
- Media Monitors
- Surf Life Saving Australia

www.royallifesaving.com.au

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER



Royal Life Saving

THE ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY AUSTRALIA