

**NATIONAL
SWIMMING AND
WATER SAFETY
EDUCATION
SYMPOSIUM
SUMMARY REPORT**

PARKROYAL HOTEL, SYDNEY
19-20 APRIL 2017



ABOUT ROYAL LIFE SAVING

Royal Life Saving is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable, evidence based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships; quality programs, products and services; underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

Royal Life Saving is a public benevolent institution (PBI) dedicated to reducing drowning and turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers. We achieve this through: advocacy, education, training, health promotion, aquatic risk management, community development, research, sport, leadership and participation and international networks.

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Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

The drowning prevention research of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia is proudly supported by the Australian Government.



Australian Government



FOREWORD

Royal Life Saving, in one way or another, has been committed to swimming and water safety education since it was formed in Australia in 1894.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Justin Scarr
Chief Executive Officer
Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

NATIONAL 'SWIMMING' and WATER SAFETY

Education Symposium



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SETTING THE SCENE

The first session set the scene by providing thought-provoking keynote presentations that probably asked more questions than were answered!

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

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Insights in Recently Published Research Drowning deaths between 1861 and 2000 in Victoria, Australia
Professor Joan Ozanne-Smith, Department of Forensic Medicine, Monash University
REF: Staines, C., & Ozanne-Smith, J., Bull World Health Organisation 2017; 95:174-181
2. Swimming and Water Safety Education - Things we know, stuff we don't and what this means for a nation of swimmers...
Associate Professor Richard Franklin, College of Public Health, Vet and Medical Sciences, James Cook University

QUESTIONS RAISED:

- What impact do key initiatives and interventions have on an individual's level of protection across their lifespan?

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

Historical perspective:

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

Recent perspective:

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

BRAINSTORMING - BARRIERS, ISSUES AND CONCERNS

OBJECTIVES:

- To get to know each other in an interactive, thought bubbled manner
- To explore individual and group perceptions of the problem
- To explore individual and group perceptions of barriers and concerns

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

"Retaining children in programs"

"The prioritisation of survival skills and water safety knowledge in learn to swim programs"

KEY BARRIERS:

The main barriers identified were:

- The affordability and accessibility of swimming lessons, including who pays
- Distance to facilities
- Parental expectations
- The importance of children learning water safety skills not just learning to swim.

MAIN ISSUES:

In addition to increased accessibility, issues included:

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

CONCERNS:

The top concerns raised included:

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

"Educating ALL Australians about this life skill"

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

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

"What is the most efficient and effective method for learning swimming and survival skills - what age, time with fewer \$?"

EXPLORING STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

State and Territory Governments have a long history in the provision of swimming and water safety programs, predominately for primary school children.

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Aqua Safe Water Safety and Awareness Program
Jason Borton, Director Learning and Teaching, Education Directorate, ACT Government
2. DECD Water Safety Education
Peter Roberts, Manager Sport, Swimming and Aquatics, Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia
3. School Swimming and Water Safety Program
Lucette King, Metropolitan Manager & Peter Tomlin, School Sport Policy Advisor, NSW Department of Education
4. Overview of Australia's oldest swimming program? Interm Swimming and VacSwim
Fran Wood, Manager Swimming and Water Safety, Department of Education, Western Australia
5. Tasmanian Department of Education Swimming and Water Safety Program
Wendy Cracknell, Principal Education Officer, Tasmanian Department of Education

QUESTIONS RAISED:

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

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS:

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

Note: the above information is drawn from Department of Education programs in ACT, NSW, SA, TAS and WA.

EXPLORING STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

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

Note:

The above table represents information presented at the Symposium.

Other Government initiatives and programs have not been included.

Percentage of student participation was not available for all States due to varying school years participating.



BENCHMARKING CHILDREN'S SWIMMING & WATER SAFETY SKILLS

AMY PEDEN

ASSESSING ACHIEVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT SWS PROGRAMS & factors that INFLUENCE SUCCESS

WHO IS SWIMMING THROUGH THE GAPS?

SOME DON'T MEET THE BENCHMARK

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

SKILLS and KNOWLEDGE

PROGRAM fatigue

MEETING BENCHMARKS:

- ✓ females
- ✓ PRIVATE SCHOOLS
- ✓ POOL AT HOME

INDIGENOUS and those BORN OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA are LESS LIKELY to MEET BENCHMARKS

WHO IS REALLY AT RISK?

Socio-economic DISADVANTAGED UNDERREPRESENTED

COST

TIME

TRANSPORT

CROWDED CURRICULUM

ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT

DATA

STACEY PIDGEON

IS THE BENCHMARK REALISTIC?

THE BENCHMARK is the YEAR 4 STANDARD

- FRONTSTROKE, BEATSTROKE
- SCULLING, TREADING
- RESCUE
- SURVIVAL BACKSTROKE

AVE \$16.50 COST PER LESSON

1 x 30 min LESSON per week

60% ARE MEETING benchmark

AVE AGE 6

5 to 15 to 25 M

HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT TO TEACH?

10-12 DEEP OFF-COMPETING WITH OTHER SPORTS

WE STILL HAVE LIMITED info

SHOULD we focus on SKILLS OR DISTANCE?

WE STILL DON'T HAVE A COMPLETE PICTURE

LET'S INCREASE the SKILLS!

SNAPSHOT: NOT LONGITUDINAL

PENNY LARSEN

WHAT is the PURPOSE of the NSW SF?

1999 FRAMEWORK WAS DEVELOPED

WELL BALANCED WATER SAFETY and SKILLS

SWIM and SURVIVE

DATA INCONSISTENCIES

WHY do we need a FRAMEWORK?

COMPARING SYSTEMS over time

FINDING GAPS and ANALYSIS

CONTINUOUS improvement!

ALIGNING PROGRAMS with FRAMEWORK

EVIDENCE BASE

ALISON MAHONY

SOCIAL CONTEXT a national survey of PARENTS & CARERS

WHO do parents THINK SHOULD PAY for LESSONS?

KEY reason PARENTS were MOTIVATED to enrol KIDS in LESSONS

LANGUAGE SPEAKERS at HOME had SIMILAR participation rates!

AGG CONFIDENCE

COST

DIFFICULTY

TIME

IT'S A TEAM EFFORT

PARENTS

SCHOOLS

FEDERAL GOV

LOCAL GOV

Questions from you

WHAT is the SOCIAL COST of a FATAL DROWNING?

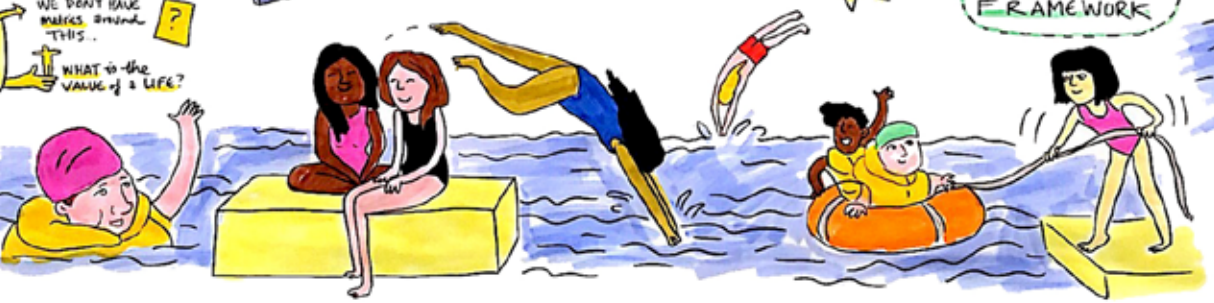
WHAT is the VALUE of a LIFE?

WE DON'T HAVE metrics around THIS.

WHY IS BIRTHDAY IN THERE?

IT IS A CLEAR EXTENSION SKILL

BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE PUSHED FOR IT!



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BENCHMARKING CHILDREN'S SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS

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

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

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

81.3% of Primary School children are learning freestyle, yet only 6.2% are learning sidestroke.

The average age of achieving 50 metres freestyle is 9.2 years, which is in line with current National Benchmark.

Over 50% of 11 & 12 year olds meet the Benchmark of swimming 50 metres of freestyle and 25 metres of a survival stroke but only 30% could achieve the water safety skills.

61.7% of children participated in lessons for 1 to 4 years.

OBJECTIVES:

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

PRESENTATIONS:

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

QUESTIONS RAISED:

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

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS:

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

EXPLORING key BARRIERS to UNIVERSAL SWIMMING and WATER SAFETY education

JENNY BUTVICH INSIGHTS in PREVENTING ADOLESCENT DROWNING

CAN YOU SWIM?

WHAT are the **ACTUAL** Competencies?

WE CAME up with **15**

ISSUES

- OVER ESTIMATE Proficiency
- UNDERESTIMATE POTENTIAL danger
- YOUTH & MALES are RISK 8 TIMES more LIKELY to DROWN

NEED:

- SKILLS
- KNOWLEDGE
- ATTITUDES
- BEHAVIOURS

TESTING UNIVERSITY Students

UNDERESTIMATED their CAPACITY

females PERCEIVED MORE RISK

we need to think about the personal and environmental

BEFORE → POOR KNOWLEDGE

AFTER → VASTLY IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE and COMPETENCES

MALES risky ACTIONS to IMPRESS on SOCIAL media, friends, girls, eg # CLIFFJUMPING

We want a RESEARCH AGENDA

- WHERE are the POOL DESERTS?
- MORE ACCURATE figures!
- MAP the DATA OVERLAPS
- # SWAG
- # POOLDESERTS

TERESA STANLEY PERSPECTIVES from AUCKLAND

AUCKLAND has 1/3 POPULATION NOT BORN HERE!

NOT JUST SWIMMING

SKILLS for LIFE

MULTI LAYERED

- COMMUNITY
- EDUCATION
- WORKPLACE

KEY age group where MEN are DROWNING

help!

SCHOOL POOLS!

TEACH the TEACHERS

LIFE JACKET HUBS

ALLOW CLOTHING for those with BODY ISSUES!

NO GOV FUNDING in NZ

UNDER 16 FREE ENTRY to COUNCIL POOLS!

CHILDREN who MISS OUT... HOW TO CATCH them?

INCLUSION

WORKING WITH Community by COMMUNITY

INTEGRATED

Wearing life JACKETS

OPEN WATER?

CHANGING environments

How do we decide minimum SKILLS and KNOWLEDGE?

WADDA WE WANT? EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH WHEN DO WE WANT IT? AFTER PEER REVIEW

TRENT HOTCHKIN WA INITIATIVES to increase access & equity

31% OF WA POPULATION BORN OVERSEAS

1.3 CALD Communities TIMES more likely TO DROWN

HEART BEAT first aid training

CULTURALLY appropriate TRAINERS

FIT for AUDIENCE eg HOME SAFETY for NEW MUMS

SWIM and SURVIVE ACCESS and EQUITY PROGRAM

24 UNANNOUNCED

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

SUCCESSFUL MENS and WOMENS PROGRAMS

AFTER hours CALD access

FACE TO FACE

SUCCESSFUL SWIMWEAR guide

SOCIAL MEDIA they USE

BECOME advocates for children

MANY became TRAINERS

COMMUNITY advocates

PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS

COMMUNITY advocates

OPTION A

OPTION B

OPTION C

OPTION D

OPTION E

OPTION F

DR PAUL BARNESLEY PHD THE SIZE and ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION of the AUSTRALIAN aquatic INDUSTRY

MEASURING:

- POOL OPERATOR
- SWIMMING TEACHER
- SWIMMING SCHOOL

ATO

INDUSTRY estimated

SPIRAL DATA

INDUSTRY DATABASES

549 PROVIDERS

690-2,534 is MORE LIKE it!

1077 Swimming Schools (median)

21

40

13

VERY healthy growth!

10.4% growth!

600 MET mins

one pool visit will CHANGE THIS!!

THE AQUATIC industry GENERATES way more VALUE to the PUBLIC than it COSTS!

40% OF AUSTRALIANS are CLASSIFIED as INACTIVE!

5% BURDEN of INACTIVITY

MASSIVE health cost

INCREASED activity

BETTER LIFE

\$26.39 benefit EACH POOL VISIT!

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER

Royal Life Saving

ROYAL LIFESAVING SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

www.sarah-the-fifth.com

EXPLORING KEY BARRIERS TO UNIVERSAL SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY EDUCATION

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

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

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

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Insights from preventing adolescent drowning: Understanding water safety knowledge, attitudes and swimming ability. The effect of a short water safety intervention
Associate Professor Jenny Blitvich, School of Health Sciences and Psychology, Federation University
REF: Petrass, L.A., & Blitvich, J.D., Accid Anal Prev. 2014 Sep;70:188-94.
2. Perspectives from Auckland, New Zealand
Teresa Stanley, WaterSafe Auckland
3. WA initiatives to increase access and equity
Trent Hotchkin, Royal Life Saving - Western Australia
4. The size and economic contribution of the Australian aquatic industry
Dr Paul Barnsley PhD, Senior Economist, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

QUESTIONS RAISED:

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

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS:

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

SYMPOSIUM STATEMENTS

A key outcome of the symposium was to draft a collective statement aimed at increasing children's swimming and water safety skills and reducing barriers that prevent or limit participation. The Symposium Statements would culminate in high level calls to action in the following areas:

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

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

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

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



SCHOOL AND VACATION BASED PROGRAMS

STATEMENT

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

ACTIONS

1. Map State and Territory Government programs and promote their values.

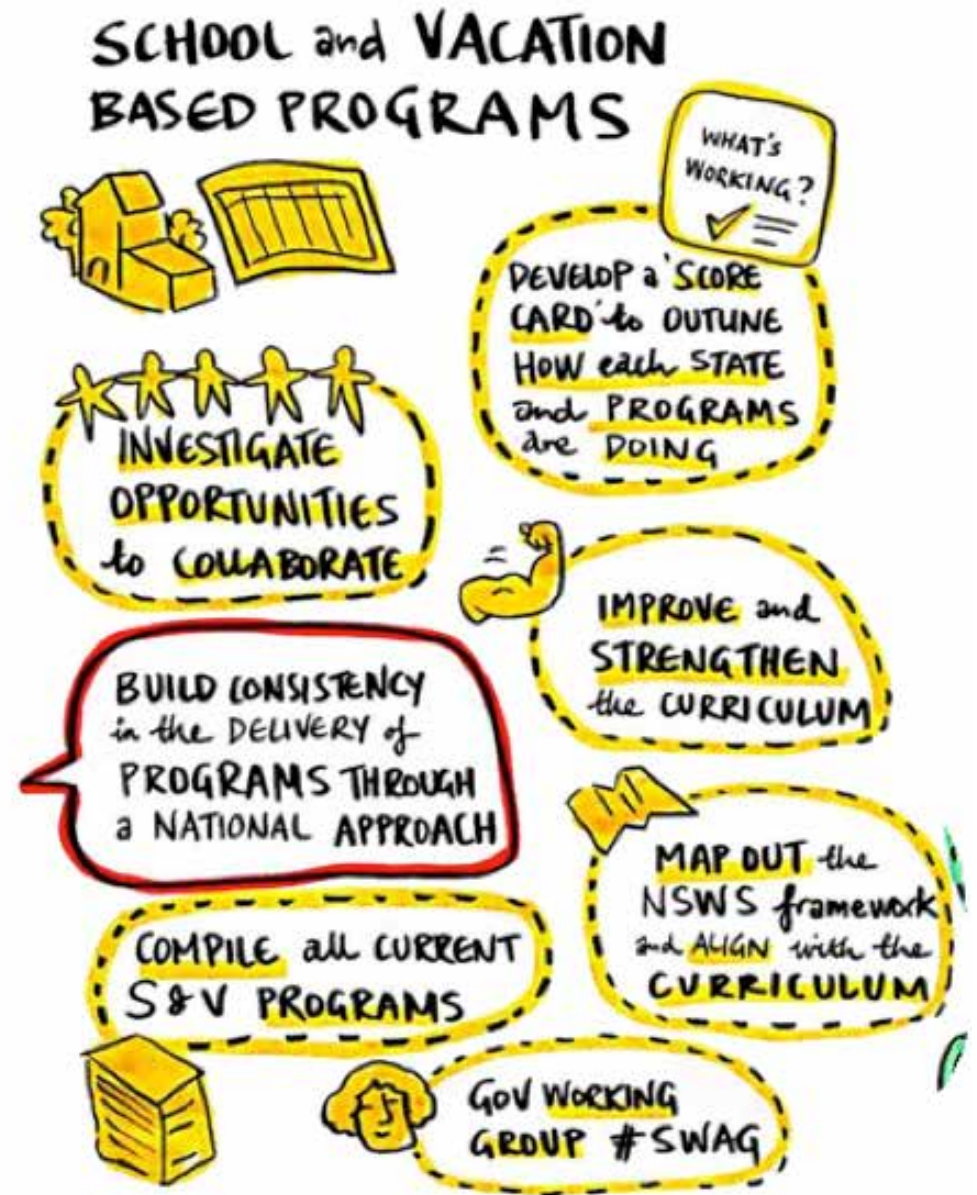
Profiling government-run school and vacation programs will provide a representation of what is being offered, the reach, achievement outcomes, and government investment of these programs. This would identify gaps or opportunities for improvement. State Government programs have a long history of provision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

2. Align efforts to the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

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

3. Strengthen collaboration to improve swimming and water safety programs.

A steering group with government participation would provide opportunities to collaborate on items such as funding models, reducing costs, communication and reporting to parents.



NATIONAL SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY FRAMEWORK

STATEMENT

Revise the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

ACTIONS

1. Provide opportunities for shared ownership and collaboration.

Collaboration and consultation will increase awareness, encourage adoption and alignment of programs to the Framework. Identifying a collective vision, the purpose and the target audience will then guide the structure, language and supporting resources.

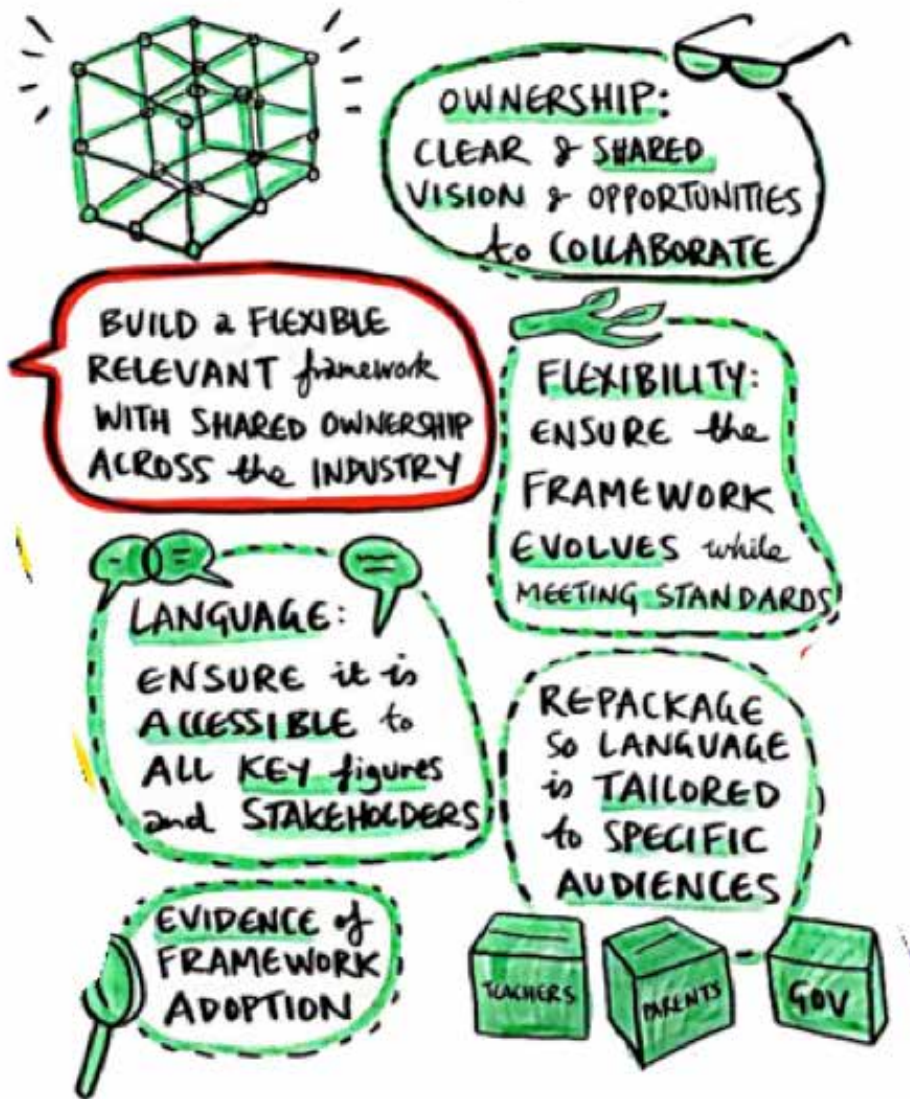
2. Refine the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

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

3. Simplify language to increase accessibility and use by all key stakeholders.

Identification of the target audience will aid in language and terminology selection for the Framework and enhance communication of the Framework to key stakeholders including industry, government, teachers and parents. Resources should be tailored to specific audiences to maximise the promotion and understanding of the Framework.

NATIONAL SWIMMING and WATER SAFETY FRAMEWORK



BENCHMARKING, TRACKING AND REPORTING

STATEMENT

Set and report progress against a National Benchmark.

ACTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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



KIDS THAT MISS OUT

STATEMENT

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

ACTION

1. Strengthen community partnerships to increase engagement and participation of 'at risk' populations.

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

2. Develop a communication strategy for:

a) 'At risk' populations

Provide parents and communities with tailored information explaining the importance of learning swimming and water safety skills in the Australian environment, with the aim to increase their understanding of what is involved and how to access programs.

b) Facilities and agencies

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

3. Investigate nationwide programs and initiatives specifically targeting children and communities who miss out.

A better understanding of what programs are being delivered, who is participating and how they are being delivered will provide an insight to the scope and impact of these programs. Using this information will enable identification of best practice models to share learnings, advocate for those most in need and provide advice on optimum investment to maximise reach.



ADDRESS POOL BASED BARRIERS

STATEMENT

Improve availability and access to aquatic facilities.

ACTION

1. Conduct an audit of available aquatic facilities in Australia.

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

2. Promote the economic and health benefits of aquatic facilities to influence decision makers.

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

3. Advocate for sustainable funding of aquatic infrastructure.

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



SWIMMING AND LIFESAVING BEYOND PRIMARY SCHOOL

STATEMENT

Increase the swimming and lifesaving skills of Secondary School students.

ACTION

1. Establish a research agenda to address the swimming competency and water safety knowledge of teenagers and adults.

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

2. Develop a broad water safety program aligned to the secondary school curriculum.

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

3. Develop and promote vocational/career pathways into the aquatic industry.

Promotion of swimming and lifesaving as lifelong skills, gaining qualifications that can lead to employment and a career may aid in increasing participation among the older age groups.



ACTION STATEMENT SUMMARY

SCHOOL AND VACATION BASED PROGRAMS

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

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

NATIONAL SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY FRAMEWORK

Revise the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

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

BENCHMARKING, TRACKING AND REPORTING

Set and report progress against a National Benchmark.

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

KIDS THAT MISS OUT

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

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

ADDRESS POOL BASED BARRIERS

Improve availability and access to aquatic facilities.

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

SWIMMING AND LIFESAVING BEYOND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Increase the swimming and lifesaving skills of Secondary School students.

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

SYMPOSIUM *Wrap up*



How can we BUILD in MORE FUN TO ENGAGE KIDS?

PRIVATE PROGRAMS CONTACT SCHOOLS

DO YOU HAVE SOME KIDS STRUGGLING to swim?

Go! THINK OUTSIDE the BOX

THE MOST important ISSUE?

THE MOST important ACTION?

DEVELOP Next STEPS

KEEP MOMENTUM and KEEP building CONNECTIONS

IDENTIFYING the GAPS and Collaborating TO SOLVE ISSUES

COMMUNICATE SKILLS for LIFE

Cross pollinate

SHARE WORK online too #NOCHILDSHOULDMISSOUT

CAN WE MAKE it COOL?

STILL NEED to MAKE SURE the FUNDAMENTAL SKILL are THERE!!

PEOPLE don't LIKE BEING the DORK!

ASK THEM WHAT'S STOPPING them?

OVERCOMING barriers that STOP US FROM COLLABORATING

SHARING info and DATA

PULLING it all TOGETHER

SHARE with STATE, COUNCIL all STAKEHOLDERS

WORK towards POSITIVE, EVIDENCE BASED solutions

INTEGRATE and KEEP thinking DIFFERENTLY

PERSONAL REFLECTION...

LOVED all the DATA and DIVERSE approaches

CELEBRATING our great work



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APPENDIX

AUSTRALIAN WATER SAFETY COUNCIL (AWSC)

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

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

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

Members

[Royal Life Saving Society - Australia \(RLSSA\)](#)

[Surf Life Saving Australia \(SLSA\)](#)

[Australasian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety \(AUSTSWIM\)](#)

[Australian Leisure Facilities Association \(ALFA\)](#)

[Australian National Sports Fishing Association \(ANSFA\)](#)

[Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group \(ANZSBEG\)](#)

[Australian Swimming Coaches & Teachers Association \(ASCTA\)](#)

[Divers Alert Network \(DAN\) Asia-Pacific](#)

[Surfing Australia](#)

[Swimming Australia Limited \(SAL\)](#)

[The Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia \(Kidsafe\)](#)

NATIONAL BENCHMARK

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

Year 4 Standard of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework

Entry and exit	Compact jump Safely perform a compact jump, a fall in entry and exit from deep water.
Sculling and body orientation	Scull – Feet First Demonstrate sculling feet first on the back. Body Rotation Demonstrate rotation of the tucked body, keeping the face above the surface of the water.
Movement and swimming strokes	Swim Swim continuously: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 metres of stroke(s) with above-water arm recovery and • 25 metres of stroke(s) with underwater arm recovery. Recognised stroke techniques must be used.
Survival and lifejacket skills	Survival Skills Dressed in swimwear, shorts and T-shirt, demonstrate the following as a continuous sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sculling, floating or treading water for 2 minutes • swim slowly for 3 minutes using the actions which resemble three recognised survival strokes, changing after each minute to another stroke. Float with a Buoyant Aid Float for 1 minute using an open-ended flotation aid thrown to the candidate.
Underwater skills	Underwater Search Demonstrate a surface dive, swim underwater, search for and recover an object from water of depth equivalent to the candidate's height.
Rescue skills	Throw Rescue Throw a rescue flotation aid to a partner at 5 metres distance and instruct the partner to kick to the edge.
Water safety knowledge	Answer questions about dangers in the aquatic environment.
Extension skills	Butterfly Demonstrate introductory butterfly arm action for a distance of 5 metres.

SYMPOSIUM ATTENDEES

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, Symposium Project Team

Name	Role
Alison Mahony	Senior Project Officer Research and Policy
Amy Peden	National Manager Research and Policy
Craig Roberts	National Manager Aquatic Industry
Justin Scarr	Chief Executive Officer
Paul Barnsley	Senior Health Economist
Penny Larsen	National Manager Education
Stacey Pidgeon	Senior Project Officer Research and Policy

Government Representatives

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

Aquatic Industry Representatives

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

Academia

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Prof Joan Ozanne-Smith AO	Department of Forensic Medicine, Monash University
Assoc Prof Richard Franklin	College of Public Health, Vet and Medical Sciences, James Cook University
Assoc Prof Jenny Blitvich	Deputy Head, School of Health Sciences and Psychology, Federation University
Prof Dawn Penney	Professor of Physical Education and Sport School of Education, Edith Cowan University
Keith McElroy	Senior Research Fellow, Federation University

Royal Life Saving Society – State and Territory Member Organisations

Name	Role and Organisation
Bernadette Matthews	Principal Research Associate, Life Saving Victoria
Cherry Bailey	Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Society – ACT
Denise Power	Operations Manager, Royal Life Saving Society – SA
Floss Roberts	Executive Director, Royal Life Saving Society – NT
Kate Simpson	General Manager – Education Services, Life Saving Victoria
Michael Ilinsky	Operations Manager, Royal Life Saving Society – NSW
Peter Leaversuch	Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Society – WA
Tony Taylor	Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Society – SA
Trent Hotchkiss	Senior Manager Swimming and Water Safety Education, Royal Life Saving Society – WA

Graphic Recorder

Name	Organisation
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SYMPOSIUM ATTENDEES



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