

**DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF CAMPAIGNS TO REDUCE RIP CURRENT-RELATED BEACH DROWNING IN AUSTRALIA**

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<sup>1</sup>J Hatfield, <sup>1</sup>A Williamson, <sup>2</sup>R Brander, <sup>3</sup>S Sherker, <sup>4</sup>A Hayen, <sup>1</sup>N Dunn. <sup>1</sup>*Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research Centre, University of NSW, Australia;* <sup>2</sup>*School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of NSW, Australia;* <sup>3</sup>*Surf Life Saving Australia, Australia;* <sup>4</sup>*School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of NSW, Australia*

**Background** Rip currents are involved in a high proportion of beach drowning and rescue incidents. The most common type of rips in Australia is a fixed rip that appears as a darker, calmer area between regions of breaking waves. People who swim in unpatrolled areas may be endangered by a lack of knowledge about rips – for example choosing to swim in a rip because it looked calm and safe.

**Aims** This research aimed to develop and evaluate the ‘Don’t get sucked in by the rip’ campaign to improve beachgoer knowledge and recognition of calm-looking rip currents, and to reduce intentions to swim in such rips.

**Methods** In Study 1, beachgoers were interviewed in an intervention and a control area 1 year before, immediately after, and approximately 6 months after, print-based campaign materials were distributed in the intervention area. Study 2 compared i-pad presentations featuring photographs versus videos of calm-looking rips, using pre- and post-surveys with beachgoers.

**Results/Outcome** Study 1 demonstrated reasonable penetration and resulted in improved knowledge and behaviours related to rip currents. These improvements were maintained at follow-up. Study 2 indicates whether video-based campaigns improve on the impacts of picture-based campaigns.

**Significance** It appears to be common that people drown when they choose to swim in rips inadvertently because the rip looks calm and a safe place to swim. Such drowning might be avoided by relatively simple campaigns designed to improve knowledge and recognition of commonly occurring fixed rip currents.