

1B – Drowning – Strategy, March 22, 2021

1B.001 MAPPING POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC IMPACTS OF EMBEDDED RESEARCH: A DROWNING PREVENTION CASE-STUDY

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Context Rivers are the leading drowning location in Australia yet, until recently, had attracted limited research, attention or funding for preventative efforts

Process A description of the research, policy and programmatic changes in the field of river drowning prevention, and the degree to which these outputs were influenced by a mixed methods PhD programme of research embedded within Royal Life Saving.

Analysis The study presents changes in knowledge (11 academic articles, 684 people surveyed and breathalysed, 13,326 river interactions observed) awareness (campaigns, media and PR interventions) and practice (Federal, State and Local Government), as well as medium-term drowning prevention outcomes during the 2015–2019 period. It aims to identify key insights arising from the model of embedded research.

Outcomes Results show; policy impacts including the prioritisation in government funding mechanisms and inputs into local water safety plans (Wagga Wagga City Council Inland Water Safety Management Plan); identifiable changes in awareness programs including Government interventions in boating safety (Transport NSW Old4New lifejacket exchange program) and weather warnings (Bureau of Meteorology), river safety publicity campaigns and media coverage reaching an audience of 5 million people. There was an 18% reduction in fatal river drowning during the period.

Learning Outcomes A programme of research co-designed by PhD student, supervisors and partner organisation can result in increased focus on real-world gaps in knowledge and yield tangible impacts on drowning prevention policy and programs. A PhD by publication model allowed for timely translation of findings and an increase in stakeholder and media interest in the research.

1B.002 REDUCING DROWNING IN AUSTRALIA: ANALYSING PROGRESS AGAINST THE AUSTRALIAN WATER SAFETY STRATEGY

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Background Drowning is a leading cause of injury-related mortality and morbidity in Australia. In accordance with the Australian Water Safety Strategy (AWSS), advocacy efforts have been directed towards areas of high risk, underlined by an aspirational goal of a 50% reduction in drowning by 2020.

Methods A total population analysis of unintentional, fatal drowning was conducted using the Royal Life Saving National Fatal Drowning Database. The study baseline (three-year

average from 2004/05–2006/07) was compared to current figures (three-year average from 2016/17–2018/19), aligning with the beginning and end of the AWSS aspirational goal.

Results Between 2004/05–2006/07 and 2016/17–2018/19, the overall drowning rate reduced by 20.5%. Substantial decreases were recorded against AWSS Goal 1 children 0–4 years (49.2% decrease) and 5–9 years (55.5% decrease), with negligible decreases or increases among people aged 75 years and over (Goal 4). The location-specific drowning rate at rivers decreased by 24.0% (Goal 5) and beaches by 5.5% (Goal 6) but increased at rocks by 35.3%. Seven of Australia's eight States and Territories recorded reductions in the rate.

Conclusion Australia's drowning rate has reduced over the course of the AWSS, with significant progress made in children (Goal 1) but little to no success in reducing drowning among older people (Goal 4). Future iterations of the AWSS should prioritise areas of limited progress by developing and implementing targeted drowning prevention strategies.

Learning Outcomes Future drowning prevention efforts should be directed towards areas of limited progress, while consideration needs to be given to changing demographic trends and emerging issues.

1B.003 GETTING IT RIGHT – WSNZ MĀORI STRATEGY REFRESH

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Context Māori are over-represented in New Zealand's drowning statistics. Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) has had a several iterations of a strategy to guide targeted water safety interventions for Māori. The results of these strategies has been mixed.

Process In May 2018 WSNZ bought together key Māori water safety experts and practitioners to discuss a refresh of WSNZ's Māori strategy. WSNZ indicated it wanted to improve its capability to work with Māori. Hui participants noted they had 'been here before' but agreed to work in partnership with WSNZ as an advisory group on the Māori strategy refresh. This included formalising their relationship with WSNZ through a Memorandum of Understanding for a 12-month trial period with a set of objectives and activities that could be realistically achieved.

Analysis The Māori strategy refresh project focused on what could be done to improve WSNZ's performance for Māori, not develop a water safety sector Māori strategy per se. However it enabled a wider discussion about WSNZ's desired drowning prevention outcomes for Māori and how these could be achieved.

Outcomes Towards the end of 2019 a series of workstreams for WSNZ were agreed with the Māori advisory group around: WSNZ's internal capability in Te Ao Māori; WSNZ's relationships with Māori; and drowning prevention initiatives for Māori.

Learning Outcomes The key learnings for WSNZ have been about getting the process right; taking the time required to get agreement; being honest about your capability (or lack of it); and the necessity of showing commitment to working together.