

development of health interventions or resources. Challenges with heterogeneity of tenets, time and resources required are tempered by a realistic, functional, evidenced-based resource which meets the needs of older drivers and their social support networks.

## 8B – Drowning – Program and Campaign, March 25, 2021

### 8B.001 BUSH NIPPERS: FEASIBILITY OF AN INLAND LIFESAVING PILOT PROGRAM FOR VICTORIAN CHILDREN

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**Background** In 2018–19, residents in regional Victoria, Australia were almost twice as likely to drown compared to those in metropolitan Melbourne. ‘Nippers’ programs provide lifesaving and water safety knowledge and skills to children aged 5–14 years in coastal locations. However, a 49% increase in inland waterway drowning compared with the 10-year average, highlights the need to provide a similar program to children in inland regions.

**Aim** To determine the feasibility of the Bush Nippers pilot program in inland regions.

**Methods** The existing Nippers program was adapted for inland settings. Three programs delivered content at river and/or pool locations. Evaluation included two age groups; with skills assessed by program instructors, and independent researchers conducting pre-post program quizzes, and parent and instructor surveys.

**Results** This study is nearing completion; with final results presented at the conference. Preliminary results indicate over 400 children participated in Bush Nippers. Participants’ lifesaving and water safety knowledge increased 11% (Under 9, n=26) and 7% (Under 12, n=23); and they attained skills, particularly rescues, survival swimming, lifejackets and rescue boards.

Parents (100%, n=49) and instructors (89%, n=9) would recommend the program and parents (92%) thought their child would participate again.

**Conclusion and Learning Outcomes** Given the high regard and demand for the program, and importance of lifesaving skills, provision of a scalable lifesaving program in inland regions may address the drowning trend and improve aquatic participation. State-wide adoption by schools and other providers is possible. Content, delivery and training should be location-specific, flexible and economically sustainable.

### 8B.002 GETTING LOCAL OWNERSHIP OF THE DROWNING PROBLEM IN THE BAY OF PLENTY

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**Context** The Bay of Plenty (BoP) has one of the highest regional drowning rates in New Zealand. In 2017 Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) embarked on the development of a regional water safety strategy for BoP. This strategy was

focused on reducing drowning deaths and injuries and building a culture of safe enjoyment around water in BoP.

**Process** The development of the BoP regional water safety strategy was underpinned by direct engagement to build a consensus view on water safety interventions for BoP. A Project Leadership Group of representatives from regional organisations with interest in water safety was established to act as the owners of the BoP strategy development process.

**Analysis** Regional water safety strategies seek to identify the priority work streams and investment priorities for water safety. To achieve this WSNZ had to ensure greater community ownership of drowning prevention/water safety activities. This meant facilitating regional ownership of both the development and implementation of regional strategy.

**Outcomes** In June 2019 a BoP water safety strategy document was launched and in September 2019 a strategy manager was recruited to implement the BoP water safety strategy with funding provided by local and national funders. Initiatives that address the priority actions of the strategy were implemented.

**Learning Outcomes** The most important lesson for WSNZ was the importance of ‘hand holding’ - maintaining a regional profile even after the strategy was being locally implemented, and being seen to continue to support the recruitment of funders and identification of initiatives.

### 8B.003 THE VALUE OF DROWNING PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR ‘HIGH-RISK’ POPULATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

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**Context** Drowning is a public health challenge worldwide; however, not everyone has access to prevention programs. In Australia, people from migrant backgrounds have been identified as being at greater risk for drowning with 26% of drowning deaths being people born outside of Australia and 81% male. This study explores adult migrant experiences with targeted swimming and water safety programs in Sydney, Australia.

**Process** A qualitative study using semi-structured focus groups were conducted in November–December 2019 among adults from migrant backgrounds, who had recently completed a subsidised swimming and water safety program. Focus groups were recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed.

**Outcomes** Study participants were female, aged over 25 years, first generation, and living in Australia for  $\geq 10$  years. Most were non-swimmers and were fearful of water prior to the program. Key themes were: perceived benefits of the program (health, well-being, social inclusion), motivation for and barriers to participating, addressing community needs, and attitudes toward drowning and water safety.

**Conclusion** These programs were highly valued by the participants. Recommendations for sustainability and continued participation include: developing policies addressing social determinants (cost, transport, cultural factors); and designing programs specifically for adults with limited swimming experience overcoming a fear of water. Creating mechanisms that enable both women and men from migrant backgrounds to access programs are vital for reducing drowning among this ‘high-risk’ population.