

2008 NATIONAL COASTAL SAFETY REPORT

SUPPORTED BY WESTPAC

An overview of lifesaving activities
and coastal drowning deaths in
Australia during 2007-08



 **estpac**

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Who
- ▶ Where
- ▶ When
- ▶ What
- ▶ How
- ▶ Contacts

Overview: introduction

Our mission – saving lives in the water

For more than 100 years, surf lifesavers have been saving lives around our coastline. In that time, Surf Life Saving has evolved to become a multi-faceted organisation, made up of more than 400 different entities, ranging from our surf life saving clubs on every patrolled beach in the country, to our Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopters, jetboats, rescue watercraft and other support operations. We also operate the country's largest network of paid lifeguards, who are contracted to local government and other land managers.

All of this is backed by our unparalleled research, training and communications networks and international linkages. And yet, despite this huge network devoted to saving lives, unacceptable numbers of people still die by drowning around the coastline, to say nothing of the thousands of others who suffer serious injuries or incapacitation.

The National Coastal Safety Report is an important part of our effort to save lives. It is part of our evidence-based decision making process – the trends and 'blackspots' identified here are addressed via the allocation of additional resources where possible. As you will see, rips continue to be the biggest cause of drowning death around our coast. I urge anyone involved in coastal public safety to review the findings contained in this report and to contact us to discuss any implications they may have in your area.

Ron Rankin AM
President, Surf Life Saving Australia

- Overview
- Who
- Where
- When
- What
- How
- Contacts

Overview: introduction

Introduction by Grant Hackett

As a professional swimmer and former volunteer surf lifesaver, I have seen firsthand the dangers of our coastal waters and that's why I am passionate about promoting surf safety.

The 2008 National Coastal Safety Report, supported by Westpac, reveals some concerning figures when it comes to coastal drowning deaths in Australia and provides an overview of some of the strategies that Surf Life Saving Australia has in place to reduce this number. One such initiative is an educational campaign with partner of thirty five years, Westpac, which will use the branch environment, statements and online to help spread the surf safety message.

I'm proud to be supporting the Westpac Surf Safety Campaign and hope that this will help save lives in the surf this summer.



- Overview
- Who
- Where
- When
- What
- How
- Contacts

Overview: introduction

About the National Coastal Safety Report

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) first produced the National Surf Safety Report in 2001.

In 2007, the report was renamed the National Coastal Safety Report, reflecting the broader scope of data analysed. This broader scope is consistent with SLSA's enhanced data analysis capabilities, a priority identified in the organisation's strategic management plan 'Saving Lives in the Water' and the International Life Saving Federation's (ILS) 'World Drowning Report 2007'.

Methodology

Surf Life Saving records coastal deaths and coastal drowning deaths in its own central database (SurfGuard) in instances where surf lifesavers, Australian Lifeguard Service employees or SLSA support operations* were involved. This data is cross-referenced with media monitoring reports and a detailed search of the National Coroners Information System (NCIS). The data described in this report is correct as at 1 November 2008, however the detailed data may change further, pending the outcome of ongoing coronial investigations.

** See glossary on page 33 for full description of terms used in this report.*

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Who
- ▶ Where
- ▶ When
- ▶ What
- ▶ How
- ▶ Contacts

Overview: definitions

Term	Definitions
Coastal drowning death	A fatality arising from the process of respiratory impairment as a result of submersion/immersion in liquid where the location of the drowning is on the coast or in the ocean up to 1nM offshore.
Ocean drowning death	A fatality arising from of the process of respiratory impairment as a result of submersion/immersion in liquid where the location of the drowning is in the ocean greater than 1nM offshore, but no greater than 12nM (the Australian territorial waters limit).
Coastal death	A fatality arising from various circumstances occurring (e.g. heart attack, suicide, boat collision) where the location of the death is coastal or in the ocean up to 1nM offshore.
Ocean death	A fatality arising from various circumstances occurring (e.g. heart attack, suicide, boat collision) where the location of the death is in the ocean greater than 1nM offshore, but no greater than 12nM (the Australian territorial waters limit).
Coast	Land (which includes any territory under Australian Government jurisdiction) bordering an ocean (beach/headland) or large body of water (inlet/bay/harbour).
Beach	A geological landform that is affected by ocean wave and/or ocean current movement that deposits and reworks sand/sediments.
Headland	An area of land adjacent to ocean and/or a large body of water on three sides.
Inlet	A stream or bay leading inland, as from the ocean, usually an estuary.
Bay	A body of water partially enclosed by land but with a wide mouth, affording access to the sea.
Harbour	Can be man-made or natural with a man-made harbour having sea walls or breakwaters and a natural harbor being surrounded on most sides by land.

Please see page 33 for glossary

Overview: introduction

Image 1: Geographic locations of coastal drowning deaths in 2007-08



SLSA's database maps coastal drowning deaths in order to identify geographic 'black spots'.

At this scale, not all incidents are shown due to their geographical proximity.

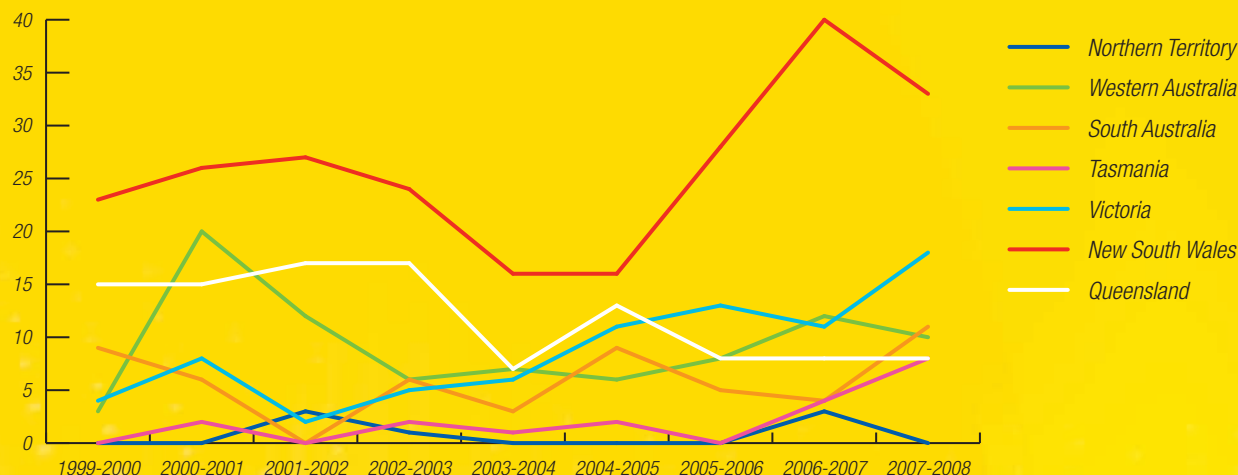
- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Who
- ▶ Where
- ▶ When
- ▶ What
- ▶ How
- ▶ Contacts

Overview: Key findings

How many drowning fatalities were there around the coast?

- During the 2007-08 season, 88 coastal drowning deaths occurred. This is an increase of six on the previous season.
- The annual total of 88 coastal drowning deaths is higher than the five year average of 82.

Graph 1: Coastal drowning death trends – by state



The definition of 'coastal drowning death' was modified in 2006-07 and this change is only reflected in data back to 2003-04.

Who were they?

- Males continue to dominate the coastal drowning death figure, representing 78 of 88 drowning fatalities (89%).
- For the first time in recent years, the 20 to 29 years age bracket has the highest representation at 24%. In the 2006-07 season, most coastal drowning deaths occurred in the 30 to 39 age bracket.
- 18 drowning deaths (20%) have been confirmed to have either a foreign nationality or birthplace, up from 11 (or 14%) in the previous season.

Overview: Key findings

Where did the drowning deaths occur?

- 33 coastal drowning deaths occurred in New South Wales, 18 in Victoria, 11 in South Australia, 10 in Western Australia with eight in both Queensland and Tasmania. The Northern Territory had no coastal drowning deaths.
- 36 (41%) coastal drowning deaths occurred less than 1km from a lifesaving service and just over 30 (34%) occurred more than 5km from a lifesaving service.

When did the drowning deaths occur?

- In the 2007-08 season the most fatal time of the day was between midday and 1pm with nine (10%) coastal drowning deaths, and 22 (25%) occurred between 6pm and 8am.
- Saturday was the deadliest day of the week with 22 (25%) drowning deaths. 55 (63%) drowning deaths occurred during the week.
- 18 coastal drowning deaths occurred during March, showing an irregular late season peak.
- During the period December to March, 53 coastal drowning deaths occurred. **This equates to an average of one every two to three days.**

What were the people doing when the drowning deaths occurred?

- Around the coastline, 38 (43%) of all those who died by drowning were swimming or wading at the time.
- 16 (18%) coastal drowning deaths involved a rock or cliff related activity.

Other deaths around the coast

- 25 coastal deaths occurred during 2007-08 many involving some variant of heart complication.
- In eight ocean drowning deaths and one ocean death, the person was involved in diving, snorkelling or boating.

Overview: How and why do people drown?

The 'drowning chain' and prevention strategies

Deaths by accidental drowning can usually be accounted for through a sequence of several factors known as the 'drowning chain'. These are:

1. Lack of knowledge, disregard or misjudgment of a hazard.
2. Uninformed, unprotected or unrestricted access to a hazard.
3. Lack of supervision or surveillance at a hazard.
4. An inability to cope once in difficulty at a hazard.

The prevention strategies that have been identified to address each of the four aspects of the 'drowning chain' include:

1. Education and information.
2. Denial of access, improvement of infrastructure and/or provision of warnings.
3. Provision of supervision.
4. Acquisition of survival skills.

Overview: How and why do people drown?

Image 2: The drowning prevention chain



Surf Life Saving seeks to save lives in the water by addressing all four elements of the 'drowning chain'

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Who
- ▶ Where
- ▶ When
- ▶ What
- ▶ How
- ▶ Contacts

Overview: How and why do people drown?

Table 1: The drowning and drowning prevention chain

The Sequence	Countermeasure	Control Measures	Applications
Factor One: Lack of knowledge, disregard or misjudgement of the danger	Education and information	Community education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School education • Electronic and digital media • Leaflets/brochures • Awareness programmes
		Arrival information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information signage
		On-site Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public address systems • Face-to-face
Factor Two: Uninformed, unprotected or unrestricted access to the hazard	Denial of access and/or provision of warnings	Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access barriers • Booms • Buoy lines
		Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information signage • Warning signage • Prohibition signage • Flags
		Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal regulatory arrangements • Improvement of infrastructure • Recognition of Lifesaving services
		Activity management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club/group registration • Self regulation programs • Permit systems
Factor three: Lack of Supervision or surveillance	Provision of supervision	Trained observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained activity supervisors • Coaches and instructors
		Parental/carers supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of importance of parental/carers supervision of children in all aquatic environments

Overview: How and why do people drown?

Table 1: The drowning and drowning prevention chain (cont.)

The Sequence	Countermeasure	Control Measures	Applications
Factor three: Lack of Supervision or surveillance <i>(continued)</i>		First aid facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable first aid kits • Permanent/fixed facilities
		Lifeguard services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International assistance initiatives • Paid lifeguards • Volunteer systems • Intermittent (roving) • Surveillance • Full service (between the flags or open beach) • After hours call-out • Operational support
		Activity restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning • Beach/water closure
Factor four: Inability to cope once in difficulty	Acquisition of survival skills	Community education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survival skills • Self rescue skills • Rescue skills
		Emergency communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public telephone • Outpost alarms • Dedicated emergency telephone • Radio
		Public rescue equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifebuoys • Throw lines • Other extraction equipment and fixtures
		Floatation devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal floatation devices

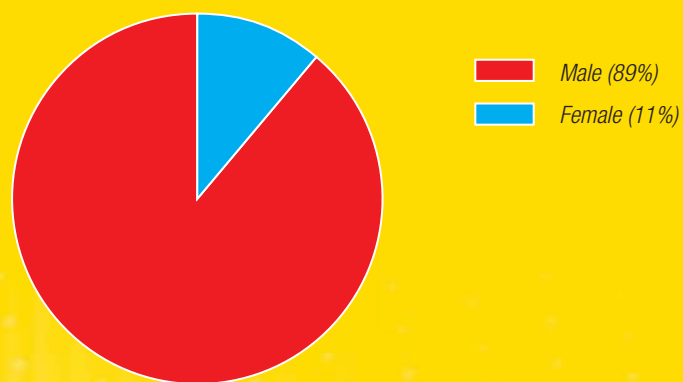
Who?

Gender

Males continue to dominate the coastal drowning death figure, representing 78 of 88 fatalities (89%). This is consistent with prior years and can generally be attributed to:

- Males taking more risks or over-rating their swimming ability.
- More males being involved in water orientated occupations or recreational activity.

Graph 2: 2007-08 Coastal drowning deaths – by gender



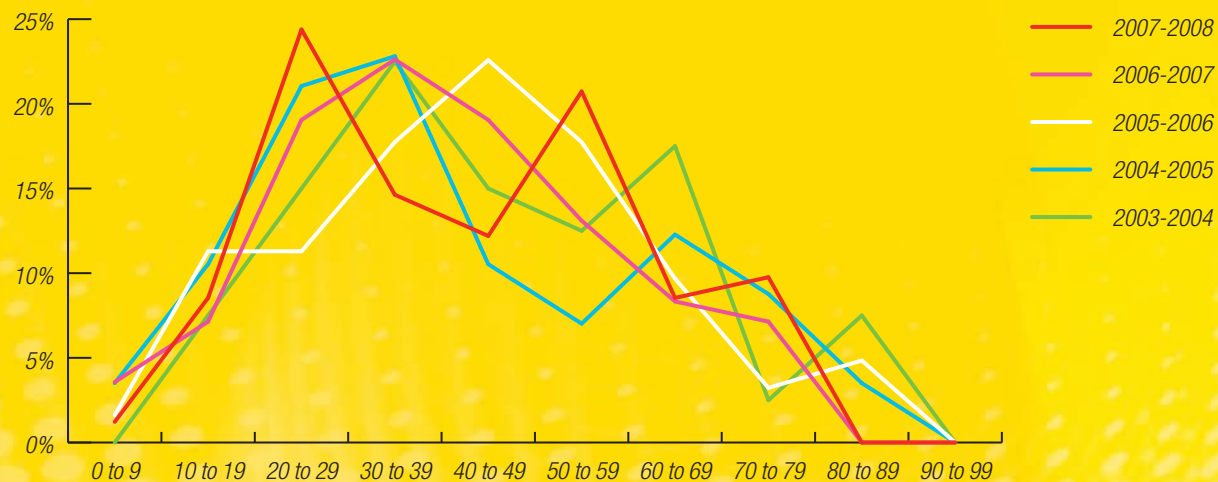
Males continue to make up the majority of coastal drowning deaths.

Who?

Age

- The age distribution of coastal drowning deaths is relatively consistent with previous years. However, one noticeable difference is the peak in the 20 to 29 years age bracket which has the highest representation in 2007-08, with 20 fatalities (24%).
- There have been falls in the number of coastal drowning deaths in the 30 to 39 years (15%) and 40 to 49 (12%) age brackets but an increase in the 50 to 59 years bracket (21%).
- The trend of comparatively very low infant and child coastal drowning deaths continues (1%).

Graph 3: 2007-08 Coastal drowning deaths – by age



The age distribution of coastal drowning deaths is relatively consistent with previous years.

Who?

Place of residence

- 19 (22%) people who drowned lived less than 10km away from the coast. 12 (14%) lived 10-50 km away, 12 (14%) were international visitors and 1 (1%) lived more than 50km away, with place of residence unknown in 44 (50%) cases. The high percentage of unknowns is due to a high number of ongoing coronial inquiries.
- The findings are consistent with the data from previous years. Generally speaking, people who live close to the coast have greater access and visit the beach more frequently. They may also overestimate their abilities in the surf, with sometimes fatal consequences.
- The number of coastal drowning deaths of people who lived more than 50km away from the coast has declined over the past years, suggesting that educational activities such as the Telstra Beach to Bush program may be having some impact.
- Nevertheless, given relative population sizes, people who live more than 50km away from the coast continue to be over-represented in drowning fatality data.
- In 2007-08, 12 people (14%) from overseas were drowning victims. In total, 18 fatalities had a foreign nationality or birthplace. International tourists or immigrants typically arrive in Australia with the desire to experience the Australian beach lifestyle. However, many are unfamiliar with water and sea conditions commonly found along the coastline.

Table 2: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – by distance of place of residence to coastline

Distance of place of residence to coastline	Coastal drowning	Percentage (%)
Less than 10km	19	22
10km - 50km	12	14
Greater than 50km	1	1
International tourist	12	14
Unknown	44	50
Grand total	88	101*

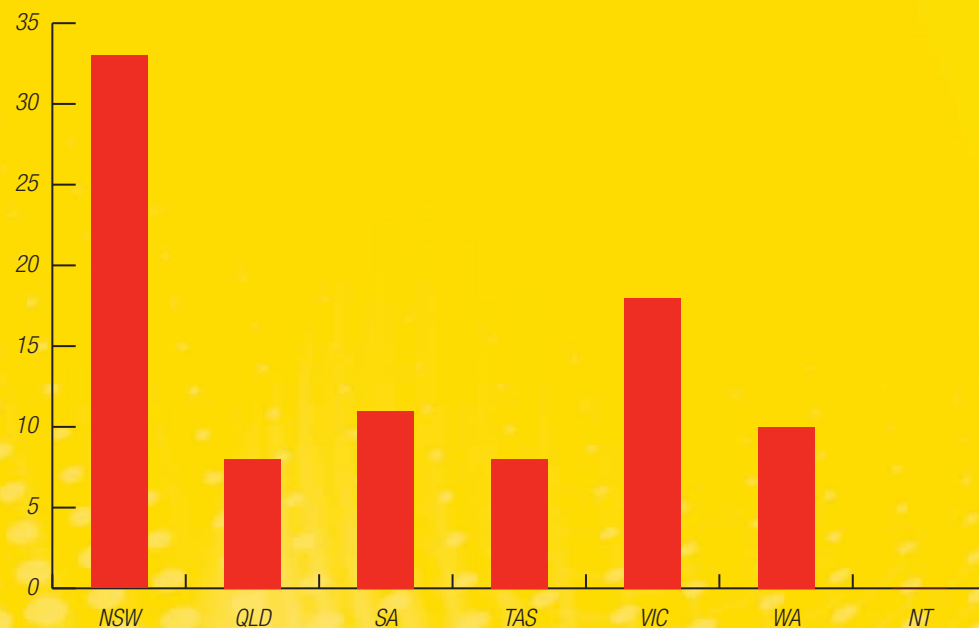
* Rounding percentages results in total percentage more than 100%

Where

Location by state

- 33 coastal drowning deaths took place in New South Wales (down from last season's 40), eight in Queensland (equivalent to last season), 18 in Victoria (up from 11), eight in Tasmania (double the previous season), 11 in South Australia and ten in Western Australia (both down by two). The Northern Territory had no coastal drowning deaths this year.

Graph 4: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – by location of fatality



NSW continues to have the highest number of coastal drowning deaths.

Where

Table 3: Crude all-age drowning rate per 100,000

State	2007-08 Coastal Drowning Deaths	%	'000*	Crude All-Age Drowning Rate per 100,000 p.a.	5 Year Average
Northern Territory	0	0%	217.4	0.00	0.28
Queensland	8	9%	4253.2	0.19	0.22
Victoria	18	20%	5274.4	0.34	0.23
Western Australia	10	11%	2149.1	0.47	0.42
New South Wales	33	38%	6947	0.48	0.39
South Australia	11	13%	1598	0.69	0.41
Tasmania	8	9%	497.3	1.61	0.61
TOTAL	88	100%	20,936.4	0.42	0.36

- Relative to their population, Tasmania has had an increasing upward trend over the past 2 seasons and South Australia has experienced a small spike from 2007.
- New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia have remained relatively stable. The large spike for the Northern Territory displays the significant impact of a small number of coastal drowning deaths can have due to its small population.

Where

Graph 5: Crude all-age drowning rate per 100,000 – trends by state

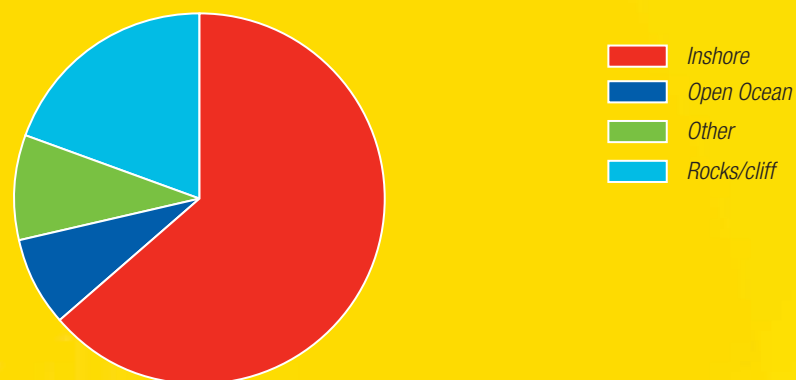


Where

Geographic location

- 56 (64%) coastal drowning deaths occurred off an ocean beach, coastal inlet, bay or harbour.
- 17 (19%) occurred in a rock/cliff related area and eight (9%) incidents occurred on the open ocean, but were deemed not far enough offshore to be considered an ocean drowning (*see definitions page 5*).

Graph 6: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – by geographic location



The majority of coastal drowning deaths occurred off an ocean beach, coastal inlet, bay or harbour.

Local Government Area – Table 3: 2007-08 coastal drowning death by LGA (where known)

New South Wales	No.	Queensland	No.	South Australia	No.
Randwick	5	Gold Coast	2	Adelaide Enfield	3
Byron	4	Sunshine Coast	2	Holdfast Bay	3
Nambucca	3				
Victoria	No.	Tasmania	No.	Western Australia	No.
Mornington Peninsula	7	Break O' Day	2	Augusta Margaret River	2
		Clarence	2	Fremantle	2

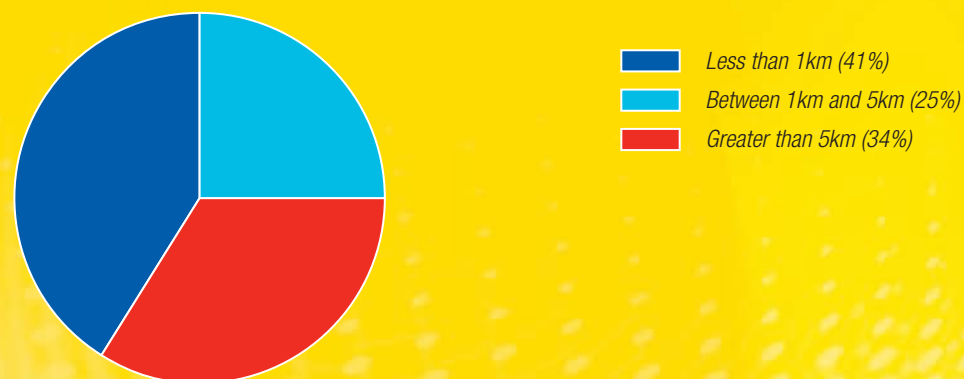
Where

Distance from a lifesaving service

- 36 coastal drowning deaths (41%) occurred less than 1 km from a lifesaving service and of these, 21 (58%) occurred during normal patrol season and hours*.
- 22 coastal drowning deaths (25%) occurred 1km to 5km from a lifesaving service. Of these, 12 (14%) took place during normal patrol season and hours*.
- 30 coastal drowning deaths (34%) occurred more than 5km from a lifesaving service, but only nine (10%) occurred during normal patrol season and hours*.

* Although patrol season and hours vary from state to state, for the purposes of this report they are taken as 8am to 6pm for the months of October to April.

Graph 7: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – distance from location of fatality to nearest lifesaving service



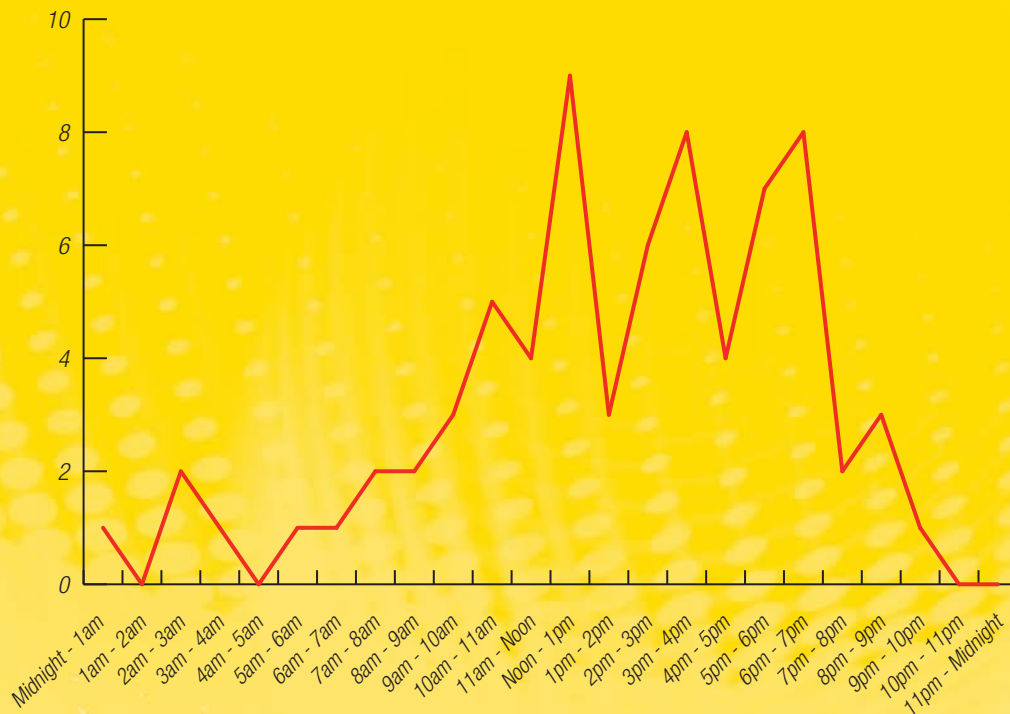
The majority of coastal drowning deaths occurred less than 1km from a lifesaving service.

When

Time

- Nine coastal drowning deaths occurred between noon and 1pm in the 2007-08.
- Eight coastal drowning deaths occurred between 3pm-4pm and seven between 5pm-6pm, meaning that 41 (47%) coastal drowning deaths occurred over the noon to 6pm period.
- 22 (25%) of drowning deaths occurred between 6pm and 8am with eight occurring between 6pm and 7pm, suggesting the ongoing need to for lifesaving services to review their hours of operation and to possibly extend their capability for emergency call outs.

Graph 8: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – by time of day



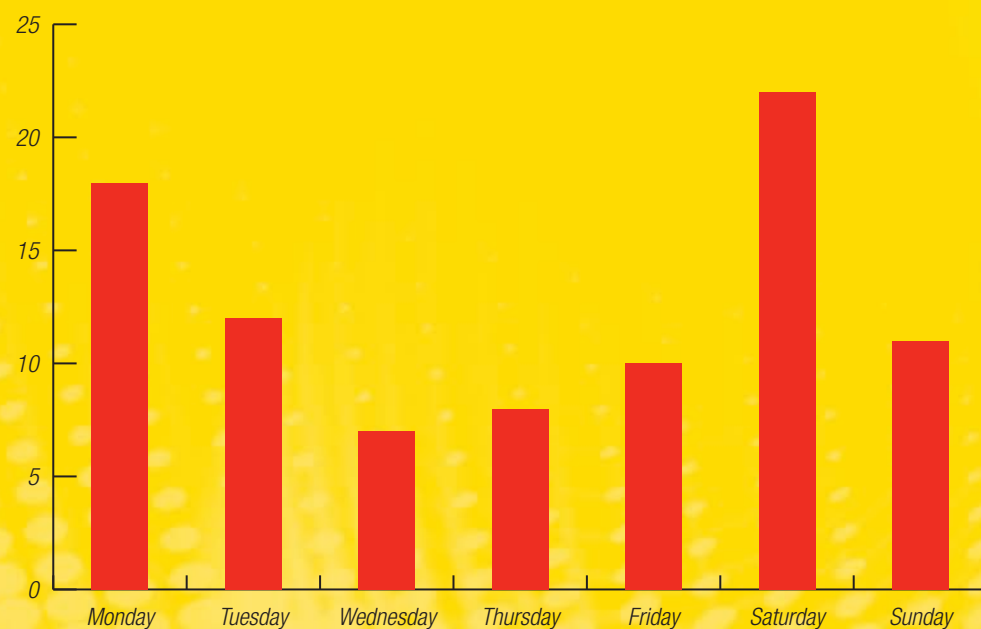
41 (47%) coastal drowning deaths occurred over the noon to 6pm period.

When

Day of the week

- Cumulatively, the weekend continues to be the most dangerous period of the week with 33 coastal drowning deaths (38%), the majority of which (22 or 25%) occurred on Saturday. However, not far behind was Monday on which 18 (21%) coastal drowning deaths occurred, highlighting the importance of public holiday services.
- It also highlights the increasing need for weekday services to be expanded with 55 (63%) coastal drowning deaths occurring during the Monday to Friday period.

Graph 9: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – by day of the week



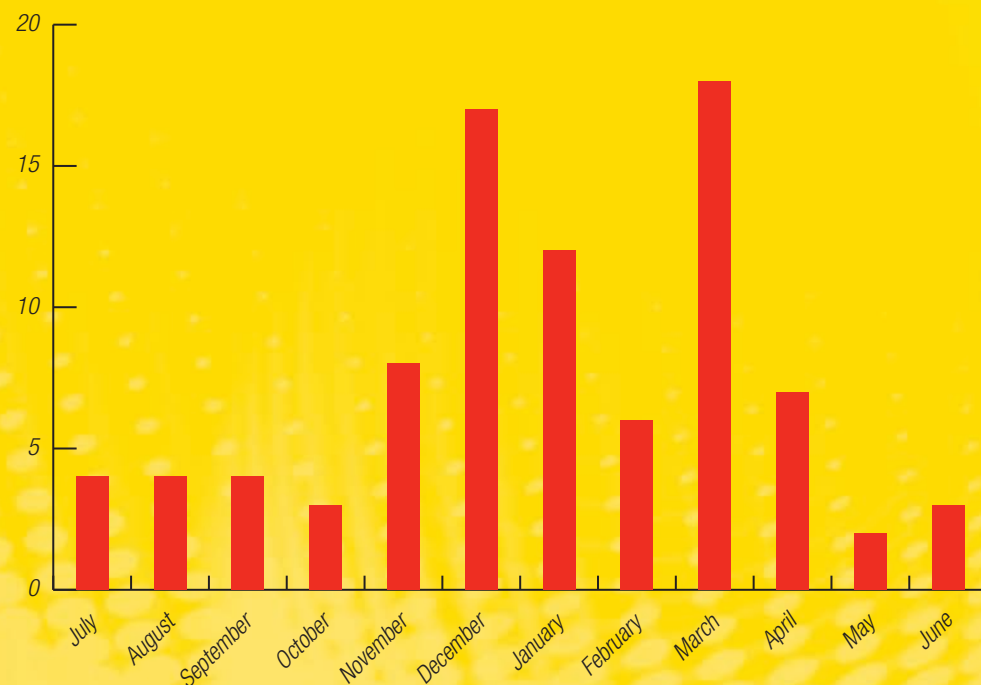
The weekend continues to be the most dangerous period for coastal drowning deaths.

When

Month

- There was a steady increase in coastal drowning deaths into December during which a near peak of 17 (19%) coastal drowning deaths occurred. Contrary to previous years there was a sharp fall of drowning deaths until March when coastal drowning deaths peaked at 18 (21%).
- This highlights the importance of SLSAs service provision during the December to March period during which 53 (60%) coastal drowning deaths occurred.

Graph 10: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – by month



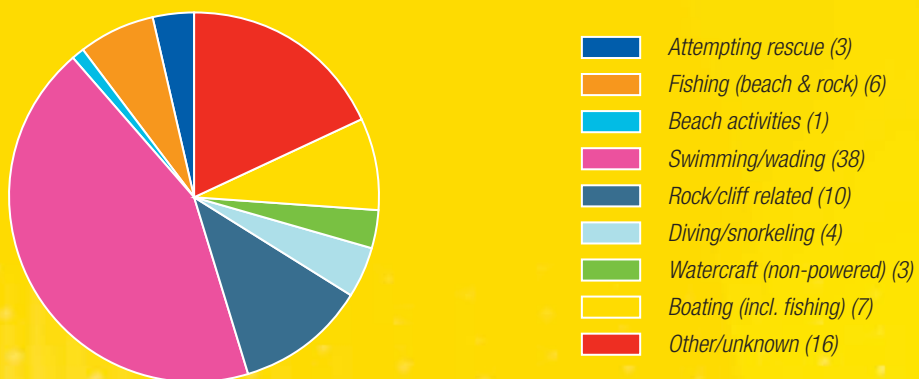
The worst month for coastal drowning deaths was March 2008, followed by December 2007.

What

Activity

- Similar to prior years, the activity in which most people were involved at the time of their drowning death was 'swimming' or 'wading'. There were 38 coastal drowning deaths in 2007-08 in this category, just over 43% of all incidents.
- At least 22 (58%) of the 38 swimming and wading related coastal drowning deaths have been confirmed to involve rips.

Graph 11: 2007-08 coastal drowning deaths – by activity



Rips continue to be a significant danger along the Australian coastline.

What

Other key data

Ocean drowning deaths

- Eight ocean drowning deaths* occurred during 2007-08 involving a variety of activities such as diving/snorkelling and boating. * See definitions page 5

Coastal and ocean deaths

- 25 coastal deaths and 1 ocean death* occurred during 2007-08. Many involved some variant of heart complications and there was one fatal shark attack recorded.
- Activities in which the victims were involved at the time of their death covered a wide spectrum including swimming, diving/snorkelling and watercraft related activities (including boating). * See definitions page 5

What: Identifying key trends

Trend 1: Swimming, wading and rips

As noted earlier, 'swimming' and 'wading' are the most dangerous activities around the coast. This is unsurprising given typical usage patterns of beaches and coastal areas. An overwhelming majority of the rescue and preventative actions performed by volunteer surf lifesavers and paid lifeguards occur at ocean beaches with up to 89% of these actions relating to rips.¹

It is generally accepted in Australia that the safest place to swim is between the flags. This is the basis of SLSA's core safety message of 'swim between the flags'. This message has strong recall among the Australian population with market research indicating that 98% of all respondents know that swimming between the flags is important². Alarming, in a 2007 survey, 42% of respondents admit to sometimes swimming outside the flags, up from 35% in 2004³.

Rip currents can be extremely dangerous, dragging swimmers away from the beach or shoreline and leading to death by drowning when the swimmer attempts to fight the current and becomes exhausted.

Although a much rarer event, rip currents can be deadly for non-swimmers as well - a person standing waist deep in water can be dragged out into deeper waters, where they can drown if they are unable to swim and are not wearing a flotation device. Some beaches are more likely to have strong rip currents than others, and a few are particularly well known for them, the overall topography of the area being the main factor.

The more complex issues surrounding rips, which may explain why people continue to drown because of them, is that despite extensive education campaigns and warning signs, rips never look the same. SLSA's market research suggests that the public is generally aware of the dangers of rips but can't necessarily identify them. Further, many people appear to know how to get out of a rip, but often lack the swimming ability or are impaired by panic⁴.

Trend 2: Foreign nationals

One of the findings of the 2008 National Coastal Safety Report is that a high proportion of international tourists and Australian residents with a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background continue to drown around the Australian coastline.

Of 462 drowning deaths examined over the 2004-08 period, 86 (19%) were determined to have been born outside of Australia and 60 (13%) had foreign nationality. Spikes in tourist drowning deaths predominately occur around the major tourist destinations, however the data also suggests that CALD populations will face increasing risk as they become more geographically widespread throughout the country.

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Who
- ▶ Where
- ▶ When
- ▶ What
- ▶ How
- ▶ Contacts

What: Identifying key trends (cont.)

An example of the foreign national issue can be found in a recent coronial inquest into the drowning of four people in NSW. This inquest confirms through evidence that overseas students are not routinely given beach safety information as part of their orientation to living in Australia. International students are a good barometer of the general level of surf safety knowledge held by overseas tourists – this level of knowledge is not very high. A study of 176 university students (30 per cent overseas students) by Ballantyne, Carr and Hughes reported that most Australian students surveyed (79 per cent) stated they knew what a rip was while the majority of international students (77 per cent) did not ⁵.

Trend 3: Rock Fishing

Rock fishing has been called 'the most dangerous sport in Australia'. According to the 'Safewaters' report into the NSW coronial files for rock fishing deaths between 1992 and 2003 ⁶, not only does this pastime have the highest fatality rate of any sport in NSW, but it has also carried significant social burdens such as the constant drain on the medical system, loss of income and productivity and the high cost of search and rescue.

Rock fishing fatalities have increased regardless of various intervention measures tried over the past four decades. While some states have improved these figures in recent years, nationally there has not been great improvement. Of 462 drowning deaths analysed over the 2004-08 period, 40 (9%) of those have been linked to rock fishing. It is suspected a number of others in the rock/cliff related category could also be attributed to the sport. Further, in NSW alone for the period 1969-2000, approximately 218 persons lost their lives while rock fishing.

The accessibility of the highest risk groups is also an ongoing issue. Foreign nationals, primarily from Asian countries including China, Korea and Vietnam are over represented in the data. The methods of accessing and presenting safety messages to these target audiences are challenging.

These issues are a high priority and will be addressed in the SLSA Total Service Plan 2009-11.

¹ 'Rip currents and beach hazards: Their impact on public safety and implications for coastal management.' AD Short and CL Hogan, Journal of Coastal Research Special Issue No 12: Coastal Hazards pp 179-209.

² 'Surf Safety Study', Newspoll Market Research on behalf of Surf Life Saving Australia, November 2004

³ Science of the Surf Study, Dr R Brander et al, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, UNSW, Sydney, NSW, 2007

⁴ Ibid

⁵ 'Between the Flags: An Assessment of Domestic and International University Students' Knowledge of Beach Safety in Australia' Ballantyne, Carr & Hughes, UQld, No Date

⁶ 'Investigation into the coronial files of rock fishing fatalities that have occurred in NSW between 1992 and 2000', Matthew Jones NSW Water Safety Taskforce, Standards Sub Committee, Safewaters, September 2003

How is Surf Life Saving Australia going to reduce coastal drowning deaths?

Overview of current activities

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) is Australia's major water safety and rescue authority. We are the largest volunteer organisation of our kind in the country. Our core activities are:

- Lifesaving and water safety
- Surf sport
- Member and organisational development.

Our history

Australia's first volunteer surf life saving clubs appeared on Sydney's ocean beaches in 1907. By-laws which had banned bathing in daylight hours since the 1830s were repealed between 1902 and 1905, in response to the increasing popularity of surf-bathing, and a growing conviction that bathing in appropriate clothing was not an immoral act. The impact these changes had on local beach culture was swift: beachgoers entered the surf in rapidly escalating numbers. The surf was new to most surf-bathers and many could not swim, so with its increasing popularity, came more drowning and consequent attempts at rescue.

By the summer of 1906-07, the population of Sydney was obsessed with the question of the safety of the surf. It was in this environment that surf life saving clubs first emerged, their regular patrols a welcome relief to the concerns of the local authorities and nervous bathers alike. On 18 October 1907 representatives from these clubs, together with members of other interested groups, met to form the Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales, the organisation now known as Surf Life Saving Australia.

Our mission

Our mission is to provide a safe beach and aquatic environment throughout Australia. Our driving force is to save lives in the water.

How we fulfil our mission

The majority of our services are provided by surf lifesavers who complete surf patrols in their own time – usually a half-day patrol every three to four weeks. Our total membership of more than 140,000 is spread across 306 affiliated surf life saving clubs, as well as 45 'support operations' – (motorised units of RWCs, RIBs, JRBs and ORBs – see glossary). Of our 140,000 members, around 40,000 actively patrol our beaches and 52,000 are 'nippers' (junior surf lifesavers aged from 5 to 13). In the 2007-08 season, our volunteer patrol members were involved in 12,500 rescues, while our paid lifeguards rescued 1,100 more, taking to more than 540,000 the total number of lives saved since 1907.

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Who
- ▶ Where
- ▶ When
- ▶ What
- ▶ How
- ▶ Contacts

Strategic directions: Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008–11

The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008–11 sets the foundation to achieve a 50% reduction in drowning deaths by 2020. The strategy contains four priority areas with 14 goals:

Priority Area One: Adopt a Life Stages Approach

Adopting a life stages approach is the first key driver of the strategy and provides the framework for its first key priority area. Epidemiologically, life stages are used to differentiate between the complex drowning risk factors and exposure to hazards based on age. These vary naturally throughout a person's life, along with physical, emotional and social developmental stages. The three key life stages targeted in the strategy are: children under five, men and alcohol, and older people.



Priority Area Two: Address High Risk Locations

The second key driver of the strategy is the consideration of high drowning locations. An analysis of drowning data results in the identification of three key locations resulting in high rates of drowning: rural and remote locations, surf beaches and home pools.



- Overview
- Who
- Where
- When
- What
- How
- Contacts

Priority Area Three: Meet Key Drowning Challenges

Meeting key drowning challenges will require a range of different drowning prevention strategies dependent upon the background of the participant and the activities being undertaken prior to drowning. Priority Area Three highlights the need to consider people's cultural backgrounds and life experiences when developing these strategies. The goals within this priority area specifically address the need to reduce drowning deaths that can be attributed to: high risk recreational activities, high risk populations and extreme weather and the impact of climate change.



Priority Area Four: Strengthen Drowning Prevention Pillars

Reducing drowning deaths by 50% by 2020 will require a strong, collaborative and evidence based approach across all areas of the strategy. Previous drowning prevention success has been attributed to a combination of drowning prevention pillars. The achievements made in reducing drowning in Australia by the water safety community are support for the effectiveness of these pillars. However maintenance of these pillars is continually required to ensure future success. The drowning prevention pillars of the strategy are: safe venues, lifesaving people, legislation and policy, collaboration and research.



Tactical priorities – SLSA's Total Service Plan

To achieve the goals outlined above, SLSA will draw on its own strategic plan 'Saving Lives in the Water 2007-11'. Specific tactics include:

Facilitating 'smart' lifesaving services and systems

- Developing and maintaining national and state/territory total lifesaving plans
- Facilitating effective coordination and delivery systems

Extending lifesaving services

- Identifying and prioritising areas and times requiring improved and/or extra lifesaving services
- Improving and/or increasing services to meet needs

Preventing deaths and injuries via proactive education

- Facilitating ongoing beach safety education to the community
- Identifying, developing and delivering special targeted education programs to 'high risk' groups



The SLSA Total Service Plan 2009-11 will encompass all of the above. It includes an analysis of the organisation today and current incident data including:

- SLSA's and Australia's current coastal lifesaving and marine emergency response capability
- Four year coastal drowning figures 2004-08 (based on the annual National Coastal Safety Report data)
- Population characteristics and trends including tourism
- Current education programs and national initiatives

The analysis identifies national blackspots, hotspots and service gaps across the spectrums of beach safety, population trends and growth. This will form the basis for the extension of SLSA lifesaving services and programs at a national, state and local government level.

Glossary of terms used

Like any organisation, SLSA has its own usages, terminologies and acronyms. These have developed over the past one hundred years, to the point they are sometimes confusing to our own members, let alone to others outside the movement. This simple glossary contains acronyms used and simple definitions of word used in this annual report.

Term	Simple definition
ACPSG	SLSA Australian Coastal Public Safety Guidelines
ALA	SLSA Australian Lifesaving Academy
ALS	SLSA Australian Lifeguard Services
ARC	Australian Resuscitation Council
AWSC	Australian Water Safety Council – also Australian Water Safety Conference
CPR	Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation
HRS	Helicopter rescue service
ILS	International Life Saving Federation
IRB	Inflatable Rescue Boat or ‘rubber duckies’
JRB	Jet Rescue Boat
Lifeguard	A paid lifesaver, employed by councils or other authorities, tourist resorts etc.
NCIS	National Coroners Information System
ORB	Offshore Rescue Boat
RIB	Rigid Inflatable Boat
RWC	Rescue Water Craft sometimes called a Personal Water Craft
SLSF	Surf Life Saving Foundation – the national fundraising entity
Support Operations	Motorised, rapid response rescue units, not tied to any one club
Surf lifesaver	Trained volunteer who patrols on weekends and public holidays in the surfing season
Surf lifesaving	Refers to the activity of surf lifesaving. e.g. “Surf lifesaving techniques developed in Australia in the late 1890s...” Always one word, except when referring to the organisation (e.g. Surf Life Saving Australia Ltd), or registered business names (e.g. Australian Surf Life Saving Championships, Life Saver Rescue Helicopter etc). <i>See below for further explanation.</i>
Surf Life Saving	Refers to the organisation, including SLSA, state centres, branches, support services and clubs. e.g. “ <i>The economic and social value of Surf Life Saving in Australia has been conservatively estimated at \$1.4 billion each year.</i> ”

Contact: Surf Life Saving in Australia



Australian Government

Surf Life Saving Australia

02 9300 4000 or www.slsa.com.au

Surf Life Saving New South Wales

02 9984 7188 or www.surflifesaving.com.au

Surf Life Saving Northern Territory

08 8985 6588 or www.lifesavingnt.com.au

Surf Life Saving Queensland

07 3846 8000 or www.lifesaving.com.au

Surf Life Saving South Australia

08 8354 6900 or www.surfrescue.com.au

Surf Life Saving Tasmania

03 6223 5555 or www.slst.asn.au

Life Saving Victoria

03 9676 6900 or www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au

Surf Life Saving Western Australia

08 9243 9444 or www.mybeach.com.au