

LIFE SAVING VICTORIA
**VICTORIAN
DROWNING
REPORT
2013/2014**



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DROWNING DEATHS IN VICTORIA FROM 1 JULY 2013 TO 30 JUNE 2014, AN INCREASE OF 6 DEATHS COMPARED TO 2012/2013.



METHODS

This report includes unintentional fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents reported in Victoria, Australia. An overview of fatal drowning for 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 is provided and compared with non-fatal drowning incidents for the same time period. Comparisons between the latest financial year and five or 10 year averages were calculated from fatal and non-fatal drowning data in Victoria from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2013.

Drowning is defined as the process of experiencing respiratory impairment in which a victim is prevented from breathing air following submersion/immersion in liquid. Drowning outcomes are classified as death, morbidity and no morbidity (van Beeck, 2005). In this report the drowning statistical data is subclassified as fatal (mortality) and non-fatal (morbidity and no morbidity) in accordance with the Utstein reporting system.

FATAL INCIDENTS

Information on fatal drowning incidents was collected from the Coroners Court of Victoria, and the National Coroners Information System (NCIS). Deaths due to natural causes, suicide, or homicide are excluded from this report.

Coronial information relates to both open and closed cases. While all care is taken to ensure that the results are as accurate as possible, these figures are provisional only as coronial investigations and findings relating to open cases may alter the reported drowning figures.

At the time of compilation 98% of suspected unintentional drowning cases in 2013/2014 remained open on the NCIS.

NON-FATAL INCIDENTS

Information on non-fatal drowning in 2013/2014 was provided by Ambulance Victoria (AV). Cases of non-fatal and immersion related injuries attended by AV paramedics were extracted from the VACIS® clinical information system. Potential drowning data for this report were identified via a database search for all drowning related dispatch codes identified at the emergency call-taker level, as well as cases in which paramedics reported a final assessment of 'post immersion'. Only patients reported as suffering respiratory compromise or vomiting as a result of immersion were included in analyses. Hospital discharge data from the Victorian Ambulance Cardiac Arrest Registry (VACAR), a registry capturing all out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) cases attended by ambulance paramedics in Victoria, was utilised to ensure complete identification of non-fatal drowning.

Information on non-fatal drowning from 2003 to 2013 was provided by the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit (VISU). Data included non-fatal and immersion related injuries extracted from the Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD) and Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset (VAED) for the period 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2013.

The VEMD is a dataset containing records of emergency department presentations in 398 Victorian hospitals with 24-hour emergency services. Data were selected if the cause of injury was 'drowning/near drowning' or the terms 'drown', 'submerged', 'immersion' and their variations were

included in the "description" variable.

All injuries coded to drowning or immersion were also selected, as well as any injury coded to a drowning or non-fatal drowning cause code with the mention of 'decompression illness' in the description. Due to inconsistencies in the coding, these cases were then manually screened to ensure that they were submersion or non-fatal drowning cases.

The VAED is a record of all hospital admissions in the state of Victoria. Data were extracted if the cause of injury was a non-fatal drowning (including water transport), or if the cause of injury was accident to water craft causing drowning; submersion or water transport related drowning; or submersion without accident to watercraft.

Drowning deaths from either AV or VISU data were excluded to avoid an overlap with Life Saving Victoria (LSV) fatal drowning data.

EXCESS RISK MAPS

Excess risk maps were created to illustrate the degree to which observed drowning risk at a given location is greater than or less than the expected drowning risk at that location. The maps were created using postcode based frequency counts, which were then smoothed to create a continuous surface map. These maps do not provide information about whether excess rates are statistically significant or not.

OUR PERFORMANCE

Every day, visitors to Victoria's 811 kilometres of ocean beaches, 259 kilometres of bay beaches, 85,000 kilometres of rivers, 13,000 natural wetlands and 450 public and commercial swimming pools, engage in a wide variety of recreational aquatic activities (Short, 1996; DSE, 2011; VAIC, 2001). Our prevention efforts span this setting.



REDUCE DROWNING

Reduce Victorian drowning rate



Drowning deaths in Victoria in 2013/2014, an increase of 6 deaths compared to 2012/2013.



Crude fatal drowning rate per 100,000 persons in Victoria in 2013/2014; a 23% increase compared to the 5 year average (2008-2013).



Non-fatal drowning incidents in Victoria in 2013/2014.



Decrease in the fatal drowning rate in Victoria since the start of the Play it Safe by the Water (PISBTW) campaign in 1998.



Direct cost to society of lives lost (where the value of a statistical life is estimated at \$3.75 million; Office of Best Practice Regulation, 2008).

SERVICES

Expand to meet public need/ sustainability/ membership development, growth and support



Rescues by lifesavers and lifeguards on patrolled beaches on average per year from 2003-2013.



Rescues per 100,000 beachgoers on average per year from 2003-2013.



First aid assistance by lifesavers and lifeguards on patrolled beaches on average per year from 2003-2013.



Volunteer members, patrolling our beaches and providing education and training in lifesaving activities, to ensure the safety of the Victoria's waterway users.



Total value of coastal services in Victoria estimated per year (PWC, 2011).

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Continue development to ensure efficiency and expansion of delivery



Participants took part in water safety education state-wide in 2013/2014; a 5% increase compared to the 5 year average (2008-2013).



Culturally and linguistically diverse participants took part in LSV programs in 2012/2013, a 60% increase compared to the 5 year average (2008-2013).



People trained in CPR or other First Aid related courses; a 53% increase compared to the 5 year average (2008-2013).



Pool Lifeguard participants in LSV courses in 2013/2014; a 32% increase compared to the 5 year average (2008-2013).



Public aquatic facilities are registered Watch Around Water facilities in 2013/2014. This represents approximately 50% of public aquatic facilities in Victoria.

AQUATIC RISK & RESEARCH

Striving for excellence through evidence based practice



Of Grey Medallion participants rated their aquatic skills and knowledge as excellent or good upon course completion, a 67% increase compared to before they began the course.



Of rock fishers and acquaintances agreed that wearing a life jacket while rock fishing could save a life. Communications activities over the 2014/2015 year aims to translate this understanding into practice.



Of beachgoers surveyed reported observing any signage at selected Victorian beaches (Matthews et al, 2014).



Aquatic facility safety assessments conducted to audit aquatic locations against the best practice standards.



Of aquatic facilities have not completed an aquatic facility safety assessment in the past five years. These assessments are not mandatory in Victoria.

PROGRESS

Progress against drowning prevention priority areas in the Victorian Water Safety Master Plan and Australian Water Safety Strategy, 2012-2015.

KEY LIFE STAGES	BASELINE 3 YEAR AVERAGE (2004-2007)	FOLLOW-UP 3 YEAR AVERAGE (2011-2014)	PROGRESS
Children 0-4 years	3	3	Work needed
Children 5-14 years	4	1	On track
Young people 15-24 years	5	6	Urgent work needed
People aged over 55 years	13	17	Urgent work needed

HIGH RISK LOCATIONS	BASELINE 3 YEAR AVERAGE (2004-2007)	FOLLOW-UP 3 YEAR AVERAGE (2011-2014)	PROGRESS
Rural and remote	23	20	Work needed
Inland waterways	15	17	Work needed
Coastal waterways	14	16	Work needed

HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES/ COMMUNITIES	BASELINE 3 YEAR AVERAGE (2004-2007)	FOLLOW-UP 3 YEAR AVERAGE (2011-2014)	PROGRESS
Alcohol related	9*	10	Work needed
CALD Communities	6	6	Work needed

* Average from 2000-2008

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TOTAL DROWNING INCIDENTS (FATAL AND NON-FATAL)

CEO'S REPORT

Sadly, we have seen a further increase in the Victorian drowning toll this year, with 47 lives lost in 2013/14. This is the highest number of drowning deaths in the past 10 years and a worrying increase considering Victoria was at its lowest drowning toll on record just three years ago in 2010/11.

While it is Life Saving Victoria's mission to continue working with our Community/Government partnership to address this alarming trend, these findings also serve as a reminder that all Victorians need to take personal responsibility for their own safety and the safety of those in their care when around water.

A core foundation for drowning prevention is the development of swimming and water safety skills. Life Saving Victoria advocates that these skills should be taught as part of primary school education, being the ideal place and time for fundamental learning of such vital life skills.

This year's report again provides a more detailed picture of drowning trends with the inclusion of non-fatal drowning statistics from Ambulance Victoria, together with statistics from the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit over the previous 10 years. This data combined with fatal drowning data gives us the "bigger picture" of drowning incidents in Victoria. The trend over the previous 10 years (2003-2013) is that for every drowning death there are on average another three people hospitalised due to drowning. For 2013/14, the bigger picture is a total of 107 fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents, while there have been more than 1500 fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents in Victoria from 2003-2013.

Delving further into the statistics, a number of concerning increases emerge across specific age groups, locations and activities, including:

- A 52% increase in the drowning rate of those aged 15-24 years and a 49% increase in the drowning rate of those aged over 60 years, compared to the average over the previous 10 years (2003-2013).
- A dramatic increase in drowning in inland waterways – 22 drowning deaths, or a 62% increase compared to the 10-year average – following the decrease observed for this location in 2012/2013.
- A worrying increase in boating drowning fatalities, with seven this year compared to the average of four per year since the introduction of legislation requiring mandatory wearing of lifejackets in 2005. Sadly, in all known cases this year, victims were not wearing lifejackets at the time of the incident.

KEY ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS YEAR'S REPORT INCLUDE: 52% INCREASE IN THE DROWNING RATE OF THOSE AGED 15-24 YEARS AND A 49% INCREASE IN THE DROWNING RATE OF THOSE AGED OVER 60

- Alcohol continues to be an issue in 2013/14, with 12 drowning deaths in which alcohol was reportedly consumed by the individual prior to drowning. Alcohol-related deaths represent one in four drowning deaths in Victoria over the past decade.

LSV will work together with Government and the community to develop strategies to address these emerging issues in the coming year, while also seeking funding to support new drowning prevention initiatives.

In development of new and future initiatives, we can take assurance in the progress we have made to address recent issues across a range of areas, in some cases with limited resources.

These include:

- A significant reduction in fatal drowning deaths in the 5-14 year age group, when compared to the 10-year average. A key initiative of Life Saving Victoria to address this area has been the 'Sink or Swim' program, which has had great success in engaging young Victorians through targeted school incursion programs and providing a range of online resources for Victorian teachers to use in their classroom lessons. Collective work by a range of aquatic agencies, including Surfing Victoria, Swimming Victoria, Yachting Victoria and Aquatics and Recreation Victoria, in delivering water safety as part of their programs and activities has also contributed to increasing awareness across the age group.
- Reducing the increase in toddler drowning with the "20 seconds is all it takes for a toddler to drown" advertising campaign. Following a spike in toddler drowning in 2009/2010, a new public awareness campaign

was developed to address the lack of knowledge of how quickly and silently drowning in young children can occur. Programs led by Kidsafe Victoria, including the "Closing the gate on backyard pool drowning" campaign, and distribution of toy "duck families" at 12 month maternal child health visits have also worked to raise awareness of the greatest risk for 0-4 drowning deaths being around the home. While the decrease in drowning deaths in the 0-4 year age group since the "20 seconds" campaign is encouraging, the non-fatal drowning rate continues to be one of the highest. With this continued risk it is important that public information and intervention through media campaigns is ongoing and refreshed based on evaluation outcomes.

- Updating public awareness messaging following a dramatic increase in the number of drowning deaths in coastal waterways in 2012/13. Communication and education activities over the past year have been focussed around the message of "being aware and prepared" for the conditions across all water environments and it is pleasing to see that this message is getting across.

On this note, I present Life Saving Victoria's Drowning Report for 2013/14 as a summary of the current issues and a focus point for industry, Government and community conversations in working to address new and continuing risks.



Nigel Taylor
Chief Executive Officer,
Life Saving Victoria



**52% INCREASE
IN THE FATAL DROWNING
RATE OF YOUNG ADULTS
15-24 YEARS OF AGE,
COMPARED TO THE
10 YEAR AVERAGE.**

WHO IS DROWNING?

There were a total of 107 drowning incidents in Victoria in 2013/2014, including 47 fatal and 60 non-fatal incidents. Over the previous decade (2003-2013) there were 1,571 drowning incidents, an average of 157 each year. This equates to an additional three non-fatal drowning incidents for every drowning death. The crude fatal drowning rate was 0.72 per 100,000 persons and the crude hospitalisation rate was 2.23 per 100,000 persons.

GENDER

Males are consistently overrepresented in drowning statistics. Of the 47 drowning deaths in Victoria in 2013/14, 37 (79%) were male. The gender difference was similar for non-fatal drowning with 44 (73%) males hospitalised in 2013/2014 and on average 82 (69%) hospitalised per year from 2003-2013.

OF THE 47 DROWNING DEATHS IN VICTORIA IN 2013/14, 37 (79%) WERE MALE.

AGE

This year four children aged 0-4 years and 14 adults aged over 60 years drowned in Victoria. Adults aged over 60 years had the highest age-specific fatal drowning rate in 2013/2014 (1.23 per 100,000 population), followed by children aged 0-4 years (1.08 per 100,000 population) and young adults aged 15-24 years (1.04 per 100,000 population).

There was an increase in the fatal drowning rate per 100,000 persons in most age groups in 2013/2014 compared with the 10 year average (2003-2013). The highest increases were in the 15-24 year and 60+ year age groups, which increased by 52% and 49% respectively. However, there was a decrease in the fatal drowning rate in the 5-14 year and 35-59 year age groups this year compared to the previous decade.

Once again there was a high non-fatal drowning rate in children 0-4 years (8.13 per 100,000 population) in 2013/2014, and the rate generally decreased with age across age-specific groups.

Children aged 0-4 years remain at greatest overall risk of drowning with the highest age-specific rate of fatal and non-fatal drowning of 12.88 per 100,000 population (2003-2013), followed by 3.06 for 15-24 year olds and 2.74 for 5-14 year olds.

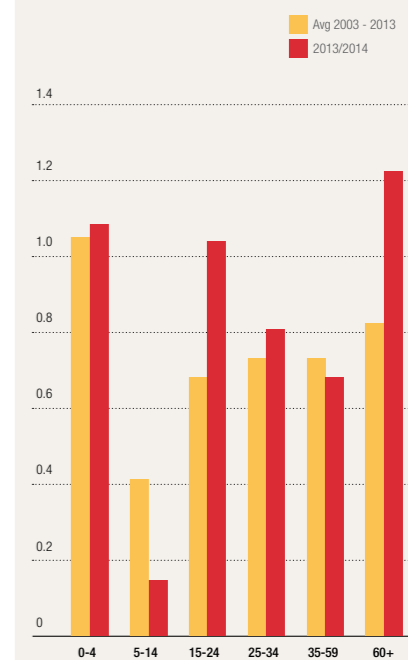
CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

This year three (6%) drowning victims were reported as being from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. This is the lowest proportion reported since 2003/2004. However, these figures may be higher as from 2003-2013 it is estimated that country of birth or ethnicity were unknown in three out of four drowning deaths. In addition, country of birth was unable to be determined for non-fatal drowning incidents.

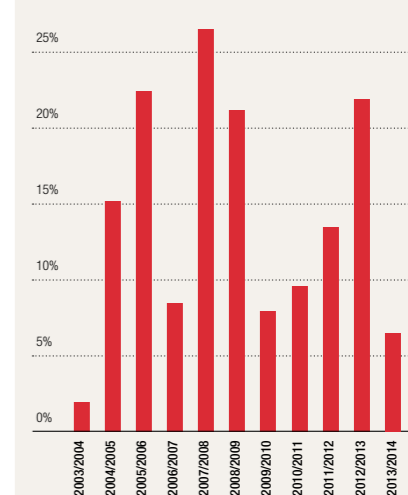
More work is needed to improve collection of information regarding cultural and linguistic diversity of drowning victims.

Individuals from a CALD background are recognised as those who identify as 'having a specific cultural or linguistic affiliation by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry, ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, language(s) spoken at home, or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.' (DHMSU, 2002)

FATAL DROWNING RATE (PER 100,000 PERSONS) IN VICTORIA BY AGE 2003-2014



PERCENTAGE OF DROWNING DEATHS IN VICTORIA BY OVERSEAS COUNTRY OF BIRTH* 2003-2014



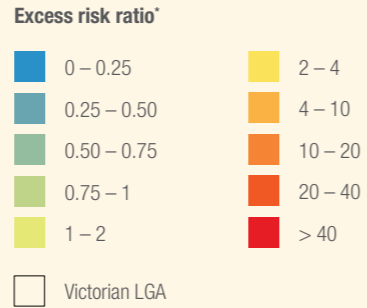
*Where country of birth of drowning victim was known

WHEN, WHERE, WHAT

Maps can be accessed online at:
<http://www.lsv-from-anywhere.com.au/maps>

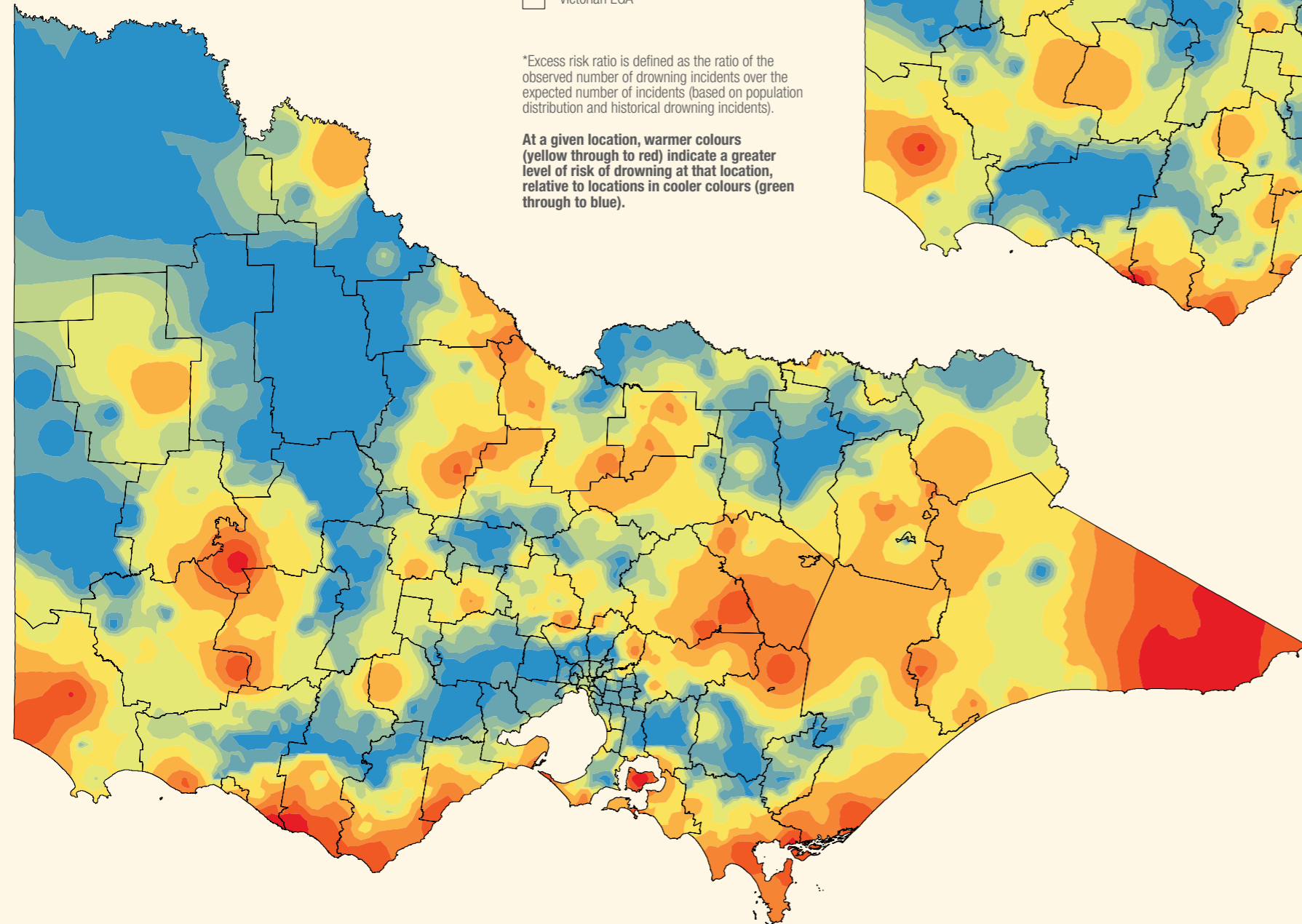


DROWNING RISK BY INCIDENT LOCATION FROM 2000-2014

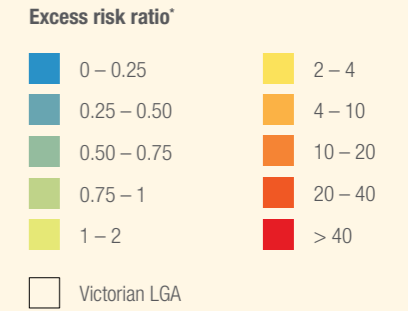


*Excess risk ratio is defined as the ratio of the observed number of drowning incidents over the expected number of incidents (based on population distribution and historical drowning incidents).

At a given location, warmer colours (yellow through to red) indicate a greater level of risk of drowning at that location, relative to locations in cooler colours (green through to blue).

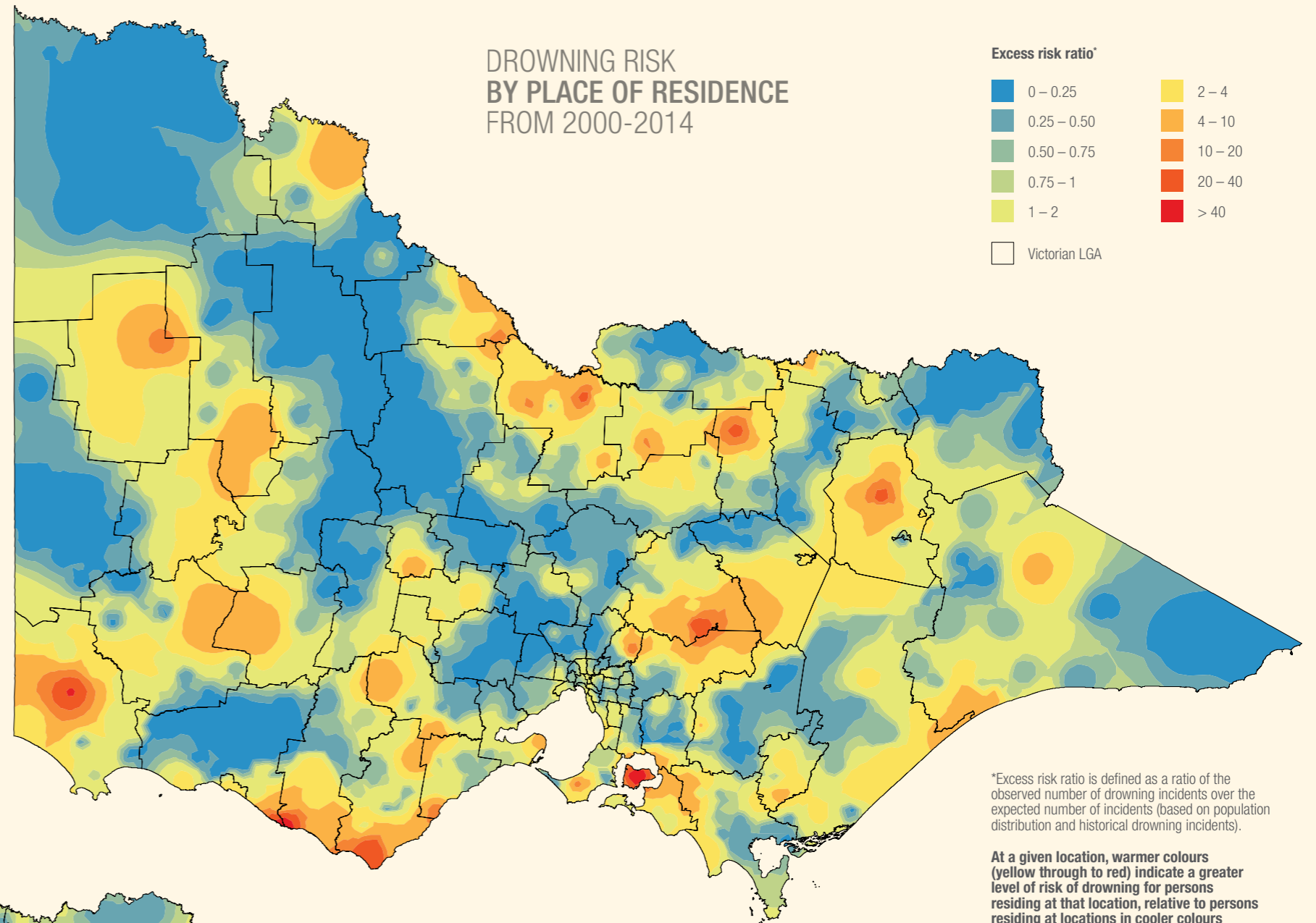


DROWNING RISK BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE FROM 2000-2014



*Excess risk ratio is defined as a ratio of the observed number of drowning incidents over the expected number of incidents (based on population distribution and historical drowning incidents).

At a given location, warmer colours (yellow through to red) indicate a greater level of risk of drowning for persons residing at that location, relative to persons residing at locations in cooler colours (green through to blue).



PEOPLE IN REGIONAL AREAS
REMAIN ALMOST **TWICE**
AS LIKELY TO DROWN
AS THOSE IN MAJOR CITIES.

WHEN, WHERE, WHAT



**62% INCREASE
IN DROWNING DEATHS
IN INLAND WATERWAYS
COMPARED TO THE
10 YEAR AVERAGE.**

WHEN DID THEY DROWN?

Month and Season

Greater numbers of drowning deaths occurred from January through to April 2013/2014, representing 47% of all drowning deaths for the year. These figures likely reflect warmer than average temperatures, with Victoria experiencing its third hottest summer for maximum and overall temperatures (Bureau of Meteorology, 2014b) as well as a prolonged autumn (Bureau of Meteorology, 2014a).

In the previous decade (2003-2013) the majority of drowning incidents occurred in summer (36%), followed by spring (23%), autumn (22%) and winter (19%). Summer was also the peak season for non-fatal drowning incidents in 2013/2014 (42, 70%). However fatal drowning incidents in 2013/2014 did not differ per season with 26% in each of summer, autumn and spring, and 23% in winter.

WHERE DID THEY DROWN?

Region - Place of occurrence

Half (24, 51%) of the drowning fatalities in 2013/2014 occurred in regional Victoria. This is similar to the more recent trend for drowning incidents to be evenly divided between metropolitan and regional Victoria (52% versus 48% respectively, 2008-2013). However this differs from the previous five year period where the majority of incidents occurred in regional Victoria (58%, 2003-2008).

Region - Place of residence

Two thirds (64%) of those who drowned in Victoria in 2013/2014 resided in major cities in Victoria. However, when accounting for the differences in the distribution of the population, the drowning rate per 100,000 persons was greater for those residing in regional Victoria. While the drowning rate in regional Victoria has decreased over the years (average 1.15 from 2003-2008 to average 0.82 from 2008-2013), those in regional and remote areas remain almost twice as likely to drown as those in major cities.

Note: Remoteness zones are as specified in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ABS 2006, 2011). Major cities include capital cities, as well as major urban areas such as Geelong. The Regional Victoria category combines Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote zones.

Waterways

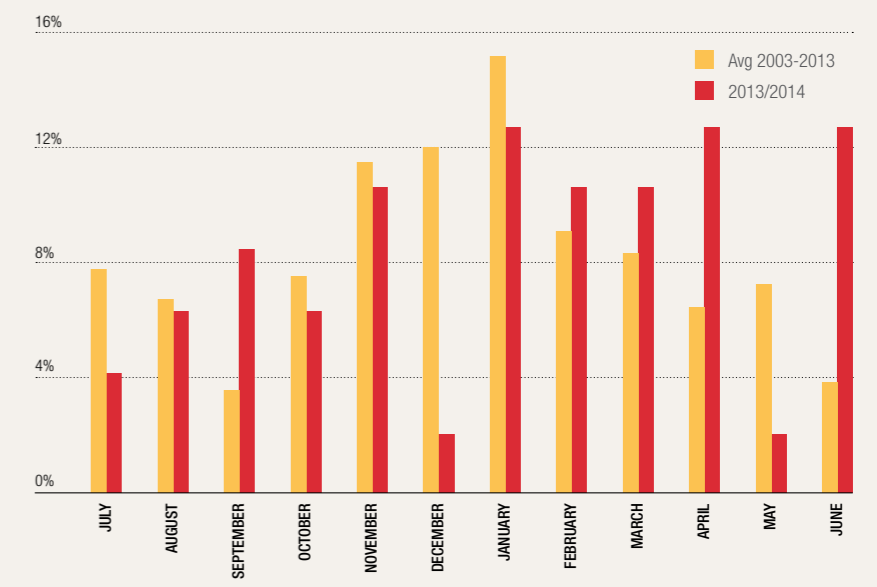
The majority of drowning deaths in 2013/2014 occurred in inland waterways (22, 47%). This represents a 62% increase in drowning deaths in inland waterways compared with the average over the previous decade (14, 36% from 2003-2013).

Similar to previous years, the most common locations for non-fatal drowning in 2013/2014 were in swimming pools (38%), in particular,

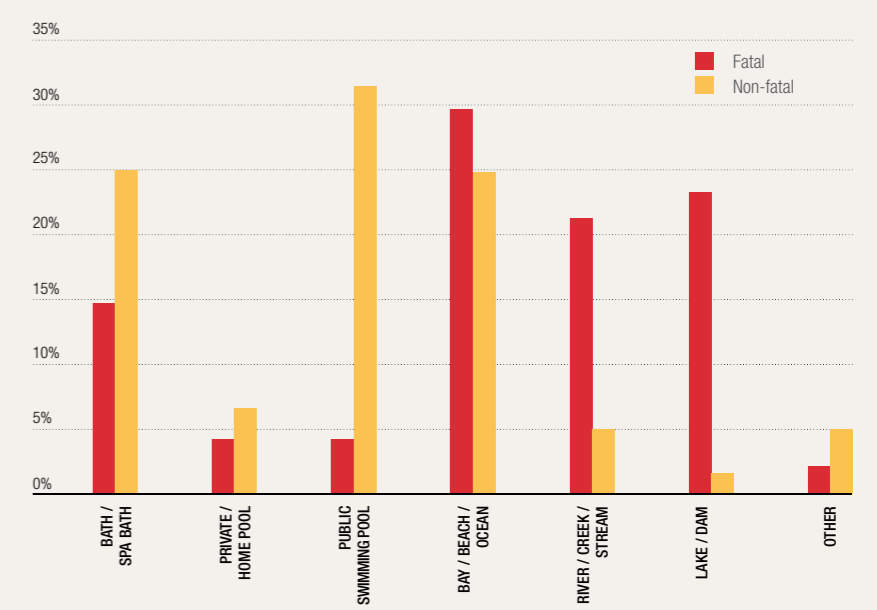
public pools (19, 32%). Non-fatal incidents in open waterways in 2013/2014 were more likely to occur in coastal environments (15, 25%) compared to inland waterways (4, 7%).

The differences in locations of fatal and non-fatal drowning may reflect the presence of lifesaving services at public pools and beaches. Further research is required to determine the factors involved in drowning outcomes.

PERCENTAGE OF DROWNING DEATHS BY MONTH 2003-2014



PERCENTAGE OF FATAL AND NON-FATAL DROWNING BY BODY OF WATER 2013-2014





70% OF PEOPLE WERE ALONE WHEN THEY DROWNED IN 2013/2014.

WHEN, WHERE, WHAT CONT.

WHAT WERE THEY DOING?

Activity

Various recreational activities were being undertaken immediately prior to fatal drowning incidents in 2013/2014. Of particular concern is that the majority of persons (33, 70%) were alone at the time the drowning incident occurred.

The most common activity immediately prior to the drowning was general leisure/play (13, 28%). This was followed by seven (15%) people each, either swimming/paddling/wading, boating, or bathing. Other activities included, surfing, driving a motor vehicle, fishing, attempting a rescue, rock walking and snorkelling.

The number of fatal boating -related drowning incidents this year (7) is the highest since 2004/2005, which was prior to the introduction of mandatory wearing of lifejackets (personal flotation devices, PFDs) for recreational boaters in December 2005.

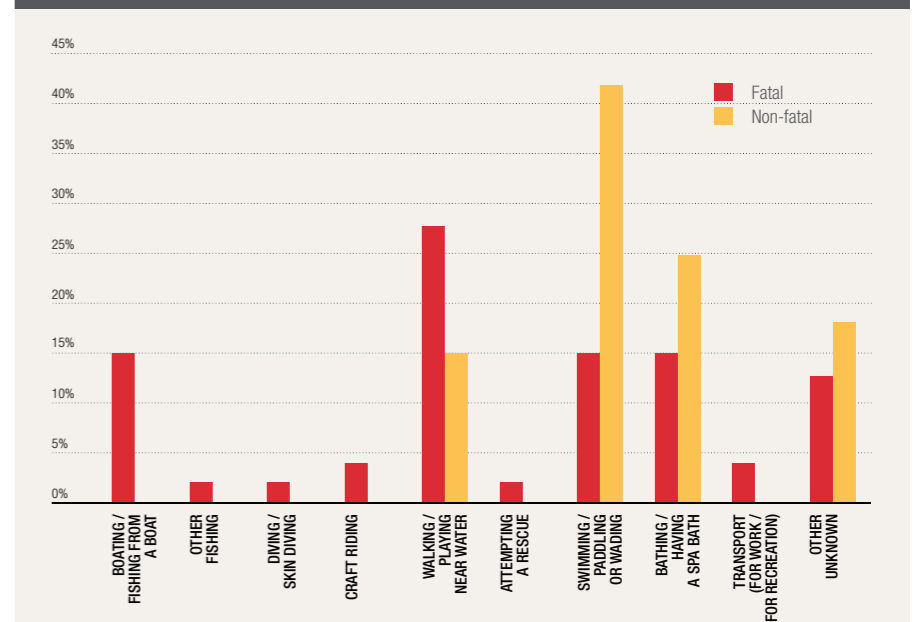
Unintentional water entry (slips/trips/falls) accounted for over a third (17, 36%) of fatal drowning incidents. This is similar to the past decade with 39% of drowning deaths occurring as the result of unintentional water entry from 2003-2013.

The majority (43%) of non-fatal drowning incidents in 2013/2014 occurred when the individual was swimming, followed by bathing (15, 26%), and general leisure or play (9, 15%).

In just over half of the hospital admissions from 2003-2013, the specific activity prior to the incident occurring was known (478, 55%). Of these 478 incidents, a similar pattern to fatal drowning was found, with swimming and general leisure/play being the most common activities accounting for 16% and 11% of hospital admissions respectively. Other common activities included individual water sports/craft riding (9%), boating (7%) and activities of daily living such as bathing (7%).

43% OF NON-FATAL DROWNING INCIDENTS IN 2013/2014 OCCURRED WHEN THE INDIVIDUAL WAS SWIMMING, FOLLOWED BY BATHING (26%), AND GENERAL LEISURE OR PLAY (15%)

PERCENTAGE OF FATAL AND NON-FATAL DROWNING BY ACTIVITY 2013-2014



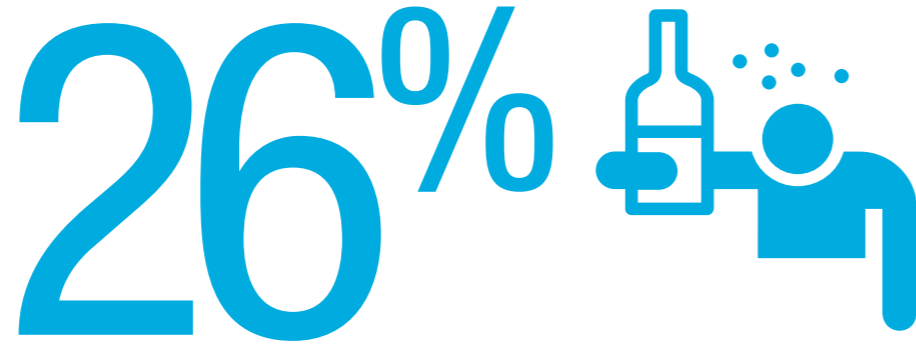
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

ALCOHOL-RELATED DROWNING DEATHS

Alcohol is a common factor in drowning, representing an average of one in four drowning deaths in Victoria. Another 12 lives were lost in 2013/2014 when an individual reportedly consumed alcohol prior to drowning, representing 26% of the total drowning toll. This is three more deaths involving alcohol than the average of nine over the past decade (2003-2013).

Similar to previous years, the majority of alcohol related drowning deaths involved males (11, 92%). However, the age groups differed compared to previous years in that similar numbers of people drowned within each age group from the 15-24 year age group through to the 65+ age group. In previous years the majority of incidents involved those aged 25 to 59 years.

Three out of four incidents in 2013/2014 occurred in inland waterways, in particular, rivers, creeks and lakes, while the other incidents occurred in coastal waterways, followed by the home environment. The most common activity immediately prior to alcohol related drowning was walking near water with a suspected fall into water. Other activities included swimming, boating, fishing and attempting a rescue.



26% OF LIVES WERE LOST WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTEDLY CONSUMED ALCOHOL PRIOR TO DROWNING

LACK OF LIFEJACKET USE

In five of the seven drowning deaths involving boating in 2013/2014, the person was not wearing a lifejacket (two are unknown as they remain missing).

The lack of a lifejacket has potentially claimed many lives in Victoria with three out of four people that drowned in boating incidents over the past decade not wearing a lifejacket at the time the incident occurred. Wearing a lifejacket when rock fishing could also have saved another 12 lives over the past decade, with all individuals who drowned while rock fishing not wearing a lifejacket.

Of all drowning deaths from 2003-2013 involving recreational boating or other activities where a lifejacket is required or recommended to be worn (such as rock fishing), 79% (46) of victims were reportedly not wearing one. Many incidents involve unexpected large waves leaving insufficient time to put on a lifejacket. This emphasises the importance of always wearing a lifejacket when boating or rock fishing.

A recent study by Bugeja et al (2014) showed a significant reduction in drowning deaths following the introduction of regulation to make wearing lifejackets compulsory in Victoria in late 2005. Of particular note was the significant decrease in drowning deaths among occupants of small powerboats following the new regulations.



5-IN-7

DROWNING DEATHS INVOLVING BOATING IN 2013/2014, OCCURRED WHEN THE PERSON WAS NOT WEARING A LIFEJACKET

CORONIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of the coroner in Victoria is to investigate reportable deaths, which include drowning, in order to determine the identity of the person who died, the cause of the death and, in some situations, the circumstances surrounding the death. As part of this process the coroner may recommend ways to help prevent similar deaths in the future.

There were nine coronial recommendations made in 2013/2014 relating to drowning deaths. The recommendations related to: home pool legislation, interventions to reduce alcohol-related drowning; promotion of lifejacket or Personal Floatation Device (PFD) use or modification to the Australian Standard for PFDs; research into certain safety equipment used on recreational vessels; and improvements in care to increase the safety of a child with a disability from a CALD background where the family does not speak English as their first language. The following is a summary of a sample of the incidents and the recommendations made by the coroner as contained in the coronial findings. Note, these are not exact replications from the findings; inquest findings with recommendations can be accessed from the Coroners Court of Victoria website:

<http://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/home/case+findings/>



2009

In October 2009, two men drowned while on a fishing trip on a powered recreational vessel in Port Phillip Bay. Despite several Type 1 PFDs being available on board, neither man was wearing a PFD at the time of being located.

Recommendations

That the Maritime Safety Division of Transport Safety Victoria:

1. Research the use of marine radios and Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) in Port Phillip Bay and other designated enclosed waters to explore the merit and feasibility of mandating these devices. This research could include, for example, determining current usage rates among recreational vessels, and the public's view towards a potential requirement to carry these items in certain recreational vessels.
2. Continue to undertake boating education campaigns addressing:
 - a. The importance of going beyond the minimum safety equipment requirements when operating vessels in Victorian waters. In particular, boaters should be encouraged to carry marine radios and EPIRBs when venturing into enclosed waters such as Port Phillip Bay.
 - b. The fundamental steps to take in the event of a marine emergency, including the need to wear a personal flotation device (PFD) and to raise the alarm through whatever means available.
 - c. If using a mobile telephone to raise the alarm, the importance of dialling triple zero (000) in the first instance.

2010

In November 2010, a six year old boy drowned in a neighbour's swimming pool after gaining access by climbing the backyard fence. He was unable to swim.

Recommendation

That the Minister for Planning and the Building Commissioner review the legislative framework for swimming pools with a view to undertake any necessary reforms to ensure that pool barriers for older pools are updated to the most recent standard for pool standards.

CORONIAL RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

2011

In March 2011, a 31 year old man drowned while canoeing with friends at Gough's Bay, Lake Eildon. None of the three occupants were wearing a PFD at the time.

Recommendations

1. To promote the awareness of and compliance with PFD regulations amongst human-powered vessel occupants, I recommend retailers of canoes and kayaks, in consultation with Maritime Safety, consider the distribution of the Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group's Paddle Safe brochure to consumers at point of sale for both online and face-to-face transactions.
2. To promote the awareness of and compliance with PFD regulations amongst human-powered vessel occupants, I recommend that Canoeing Victoria, the Victorian Canoe Association Inc and Victorian Sea Kayaking Club consider the distribution of the Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group's Paddle Safe brochure to their members.

2011

In August 2011, a 24 year old man drowned in the Yarra River in the Melbourne CBD. He had been at a restaurant with friends where he had a meal and consumed some alcohol. He decided to make good a wager he had previously made with friends, that was, if he failed to give up smoking he would swim across the Yarra River. He got into trouble approximately seven metres from the river edge and attempted to turn around and swim back. It is likely that the consumption of alcohol played a part in the death.

The coroner also investigated another death that occurred at the same location.

2012

In February 2012, a 27 year old man drowned in the Yarra River in the Melbourne CBD. He had been at a bar drinking with friends and stated he was bored and would swim across the Yarra River. Despite attempts to dissuade him, he entered the water. A friend joined him and they swam about halfway across the river before he began to struggle and panic. At the time of the incident the river current was described as strong and the water temperature cold. Visibility under water was zero. Too many, predominantly, young men, have lost their lives in similar circumstances.

Recommendations

1. That Life Saving Victoria convene a meeting with the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police to identify targeted drowning prevention interventions to prevent or deter alcohol-affected persons from entering the Yarra River within the City of Melbourne, particularly around Federation Square, Crown Casino and the Docklands, where there appears to be a disproportionately high frequency of drownings.
2. That the Australian Water Safety Council consider whether the stretch of the Yarra River between the Punt Road Bridge and West Gate Bridge is an appropriate location to trial any interventions aimed at reducing alcohol-related unintentional drowning, given that there appears to be a disproportionately high frequency of drownings in this area.

KEY WATER SAFETY AGENCIES & ORGANISATIONS

VICTORIAN WATER SAFETY COUNCIL

- Life Saving Victoria
- Aquatics & Recreation Victoria
- Australian Volunteer Coast Guard – Victoria
- Boating Industry Association of Victoria
- Canoeing Victoria
- Country Fire Authority
- Department of Justice
- Emergency Management Victoria
- Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
- Kidsafe Victoria Inc.
- Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board
- Parks Victoria
- Surfing Victoria
- Swimming Victoria Inc.
- Transport Safety Victoria
- Victoria Police - Water Police/Search & Rescue Squads
- Victorian Recreational Fishers
- Yachting Victoria
- YMCA

OTHER WATER SAFETY AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS

- Central Coastal Board
- Civic Mutual Plus
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Department of Planning and Community Development
- Department of Environment and Primary Industries
- Life Saving Clubs
- Local Government Authorities
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Royal Children's Hospital Safety Centre
- Swimming Pool and Spa Association
- Victorian Coastal Council
- Victorian Managed Insurance Authority
- Victorian Multicultural Commission

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“WHILE IT IS LIFE SAVING VICTORIA’S MISSION TO CONTINUE WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY/ GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP TO ADDRESS THIS ALARMING TREND, THESE FINDINGS ALSO SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT ALL VICTORIANS NEED TO TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF THOSE IN THEIR CARE WHEN AROUND WATER.

Nigel Taylor
Chief Executive Officer,
Life Saving Victoria