



Safe Places to Swim

The state of safety at
Australian aquatic facilities



ROYAL LIFE SAVING
AUSTRALIA

Royal Life Saving is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable, evidence-based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships; quality programs, products and services; underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

Royal Life Saving is a public benevolent institution (PBI) dedicated to reducing drowning and turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers. We achieve this through: advocacy, education, training, health promotion, aquatic risk management, community development, research, sport, leadership and participation and international networks.

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Australian Government

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Royal Life Saving Society - Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians and Elders past and present across Australia, with particular acknowledgment to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional owners of the lands where our offices are located. We pay our respects to Australia's First Nations cultural and spiritual connections to water, and acknowledge the land where we work, live and play always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



Justin Scarr
Chief Executive Officer
Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

For almost every Australian community, there is no greater place for fun, social connection, recreation and relaxation than the local public swimming pool. The health, social and economic benefits are now well-reported by Royal Life Saving Society - Australia.

While every Australian should have access to a safe public pool, our research shows there are risks. Every summer, tragically, we know that an average of six people fatally drown in public pools. We also know there are thousands of rescues and near misses.

Peer-reviewed Royal Life Saving Australia research shows that each individual drowning death costs the economy \$4.3 million. More importantly, each drowning represents the loss of a father, mother, sister, brother, child or grandparent and has a significant detrimental impact on families, friends, community groups, the health and emergency services, the economy and the social fabric of a community.

While every drowning is a tragedy, they are all almost always preventable.

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, with the support of the Australian Government, is committed to:

- reducing the incidence of water-related injury and death in Australia.
- enhancing the safety of aquatic environments in Australia, including aquatic facilities.
- strengthening systems, which improved the behaviour of people in, on, and around the water and in aquatic facilities.
- addressing priority areas guiding principles and goals articulated in the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2023.

The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2023 outlines a range of strategies developed by the Australian Water Safety Council that will help improve safety in aquatic facilities. Some of the key strategies include:

- ensuring all venues conduct and implement regular safety assessments.
- ensuring that risk is factored into the safe design of aquatic facilities.
- installing public safety and emergency equipment at communal swimming pools.
- ensuring facilities are available and accessible to people of all backgrounds and abilities.
- promoting and reviewing best practice industry guidelines.
- ensuring all venues conduct and implement regular safety assessments.

This State of National Aquatic Industry Report is intended to measure and report on how well the Australian aquatic industry is progressing against these objectives. This report has been compiled to provide a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of the aquatic sector and highlight areas of focus so the sector can collectively continue to reduce community drowning and improve the standard of safety delivered at Australian aquatic facilities.

Justin Scarr



> SAFER PUBLIC POOLS

AIM

This State of the Aquatic Industry Report aims to provide a snapshot of the public and public-access pool industry covering developments, achievements, challenges and opportunities for the sector.

Critically, the report serves to inform stakeholders of the need to invest in the ongoing safety, sustainability and viability of the industry, which provides significant benefits to the Australian community.

OBJECTIVES

The Australian aquatic industry plays a pivotal role in shaping the health and vitality of the nation, and this report aims to report on the pertinent aspects of the industry which contribute to safer communities and improved safety at aquatic facilities, including:

> Industry Size, Scope, and Social Value

To provide insights into the expansive reach of the aquatic industry, understanding its economic value and the crucial role it plays in the well-being of Australians from coast to coast.

> Industry Safety Performance and Trends

To present an analysis of safety practices and trends within the industry, emphasising our commitment to ensuring the well-being of all those who engage with aquatic facilities.

> Key Safety Initiatives, Projects, Research, and Programs

To outline innovative projects, cutting-edge research, and transformative initiatives that shape the trajectory of the aquatic sector in Australia, paving the way for a safer, sustainable and progressive future.

> Facility Developments or Re-developments

To highlight noteworthy developments and re-developments in aquatic facilities, showcasing the industry's dedication to providing state-of-the-art spaces for recreation and community engagement.



Image: Scarborough Beach Aquatic Centre

National summary

Local pools play a significant role as a place where Australians recreate, learn, have fun and enjoy fitness, and the aquatic sector holds significance in fostering a wealthier, healthier, and more inclusive Australia. However, there remains work to be done to enhance the industry's worth and impact on the Australian community, especially as it undergoes reconstruction in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The significance of the aquatic industry goes beyond geographical boundaries, reaching communities across Australia and offering economic, health, and social advantages in cities, regional centres, and rural and remote locations.

A total of 1,216 aquatic facilities are located in regional areas, compared to the 897 in capital cities, generating valuable economic value throughout regional Australia. Aquatic facilities in rural and remote Australia also play a pivotal role by addressing social infrastructure gaps and offering additional benefits to communities where such resources may be limited.²

While all communities should have access to a safe place to swim, as well as access to swimming and water safety education, the 1.77 per cent increase in the drowning rate of those living in regional, remote and very remote locations highlights the importance of providing safe aquatic facilities in these areas.

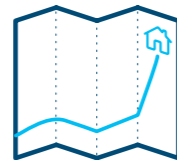
2,119

PUBLIC, COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC ACCESS POOLS

1,305 public-owned / 814 public-accessible



333 million visitations to swimming pools each year



89% of the Australian population lives within a 20-minute drive of a swimming pool²



65,000 people work in the aquatic industry

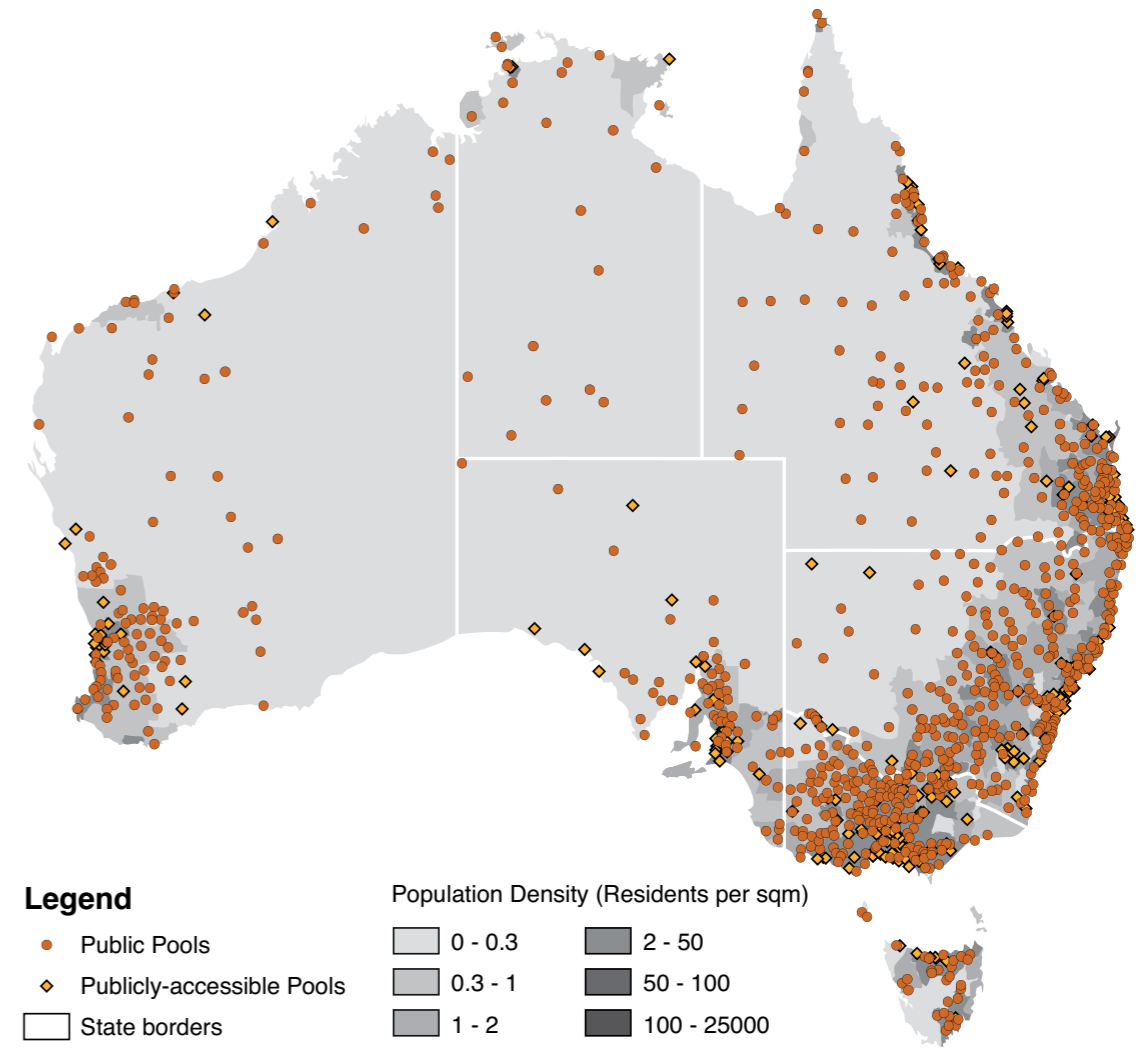


8 billion is needed to replace 500 aging pools



9.1 billion of value in social, health and economic benefits provided by aquatic industry²

Aquatic facilities around Australia



Aquatic facilities: State and Territory breakdown

State	Total number of pools	Public-owned pools	Public-accessible pools
Queensland	453	285	168
New South Wales	658	445	213
Victoria	570	290	280
Western Australia	208	129	79
South Australia	120	76	44
Australian Capital Territory	29	10	19
Northern Territory	31	28	3
Tasmania	50	42	8

> AQUATIC INDUSTRY SAFETY PERFORMANCE

Public swimming pools remain statistically the safest places to swim, with the least recorded drowning deaths each year compared to other aquatic locations. However, every drowning death is a tragedy and entirely preventable. As regulated workplaces under state and territory work health and safety and public health regulations, no one should drown in a publicly-accessible swimming pool.

Incident and Safety Data

Drowning in Pools 2022-23

- 29** drowning deaths in swimming pools (total)
- 12** occurred in private residential pools
- 8** occurred in a communal pool (these include hotels, motels, apartment complexes)
- 6** occurred in a public pool
- > **83%** were males
- > **33%** were aged 55-64 years (highest age group)
- > **67%** occurred less than 10km from home
- > **83%** were swimming and recreating prior to drowning
- > **50%** had an underlying medical condition
- > **33%** occurred in summer and in autumn

Rescue/Near Miss Data

- 7,879** aquatic rescues and near misses in public pools
- > **30%** of reported rescues/near misses involved persons over the age of 13
- > **70%** of reported rescues/near misses involved children
- > **40%** of reported rescues/near misses involved children under the age of 6
- > **22%** of reported rescues/near misses involved children aged 6-10

*In the context of this report, a near miss is when a weak or non-swimmer is in distress and rescued by the intervention of a lifeguard.

In 2023, 85.5 per cent of aquatic facilities nationally did not undergo a Royal Life Saving aquatic facility safety assessment.

In 1996, Royal Life Saving introduced the Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment (AFSA), which provides an expert and comprehensive assessment of the operations of an aquatic facility against the provisions of the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (GSPO), Australian Standards and relevant state and territory legislation.

The AFSA is the easiest and most effective way to gain a true assessment of the level of safety and compliance within an aquatic facility and for pool owners and operators to ensure that their facility is being managed in line with current expectations and standards.

Eligibility

All aquatic facilities and communal pools (apartments, hotels, caravan parks) are eligible to undertake an assessment.

AFSA benefits

- > Benchmark current performance against industry standards and best practice.
- > Gain independent and expert information and advice.
- > Encourage continual improvement at your aquatic facility.
- > Support the training and educational needs of key facility representatives.
- > Stay current with regulatory changes.
- > Reduce the likelihood and consequence of aquatic-related injury and death in your facility.
- > Demonstrate the use of a formal risk management process.
- > Maintain a working relationship with the peak industry body.
- > Achieve recognition for safety practices.
- > Reduce legal risk.

“No one should drown in a public pool.”

**Coroner McNamara,
WaterMarc Coronial Inquest 2015**

> POOL SAFETY ASSESSMENT DATA

Key statistics



360

no. of facilities that underwent a Royal Life Saving Safety Assessment in 2023



14.5%

national percentage of facilities that underwent an assessment



79%

average safety assessment score

Table 1: Number of Publicly accessible pools assessed

State/Territory	WA	SA	NT	QLD	NSW	ACT	VIC	TAS
No. Aquatic Facilities	208	120	31	453	658	29	570	50
No. of Safety Assessments Completed (2023)	35	16	5	37	93	5	168	1
Percentage (%) of facilities assessed	17%	13%	16%	8%	14%	17%	29%	2%
Average score	95%	66%	58%	70%	88%	89%	84%	83%
No. of facilities recognised/endorsed	NA	0	0	10	65	4	160	0

Percentage of facilities assessed

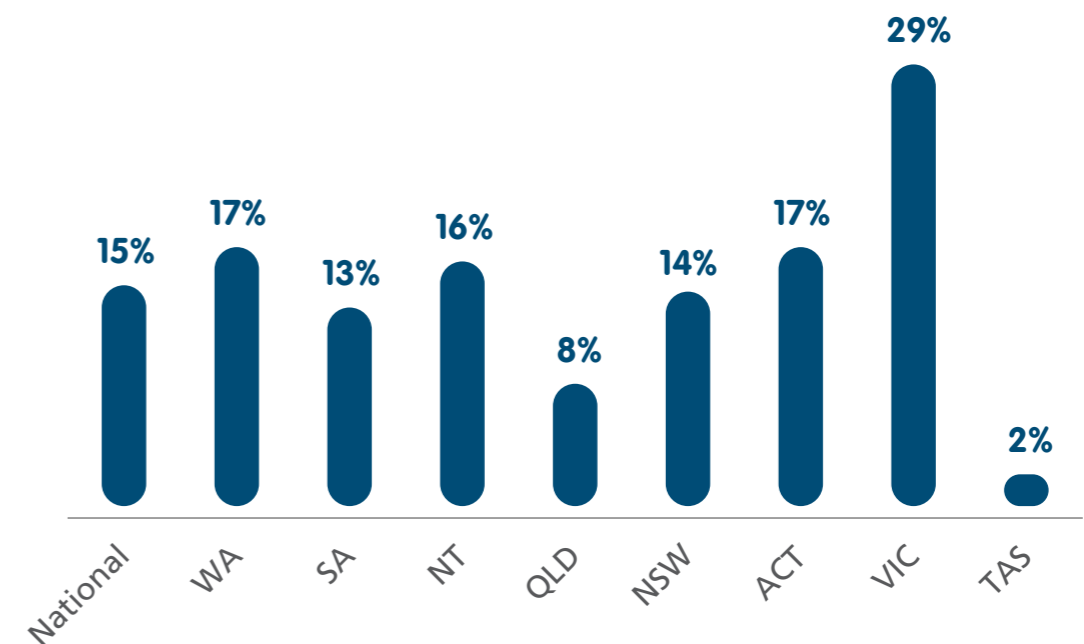
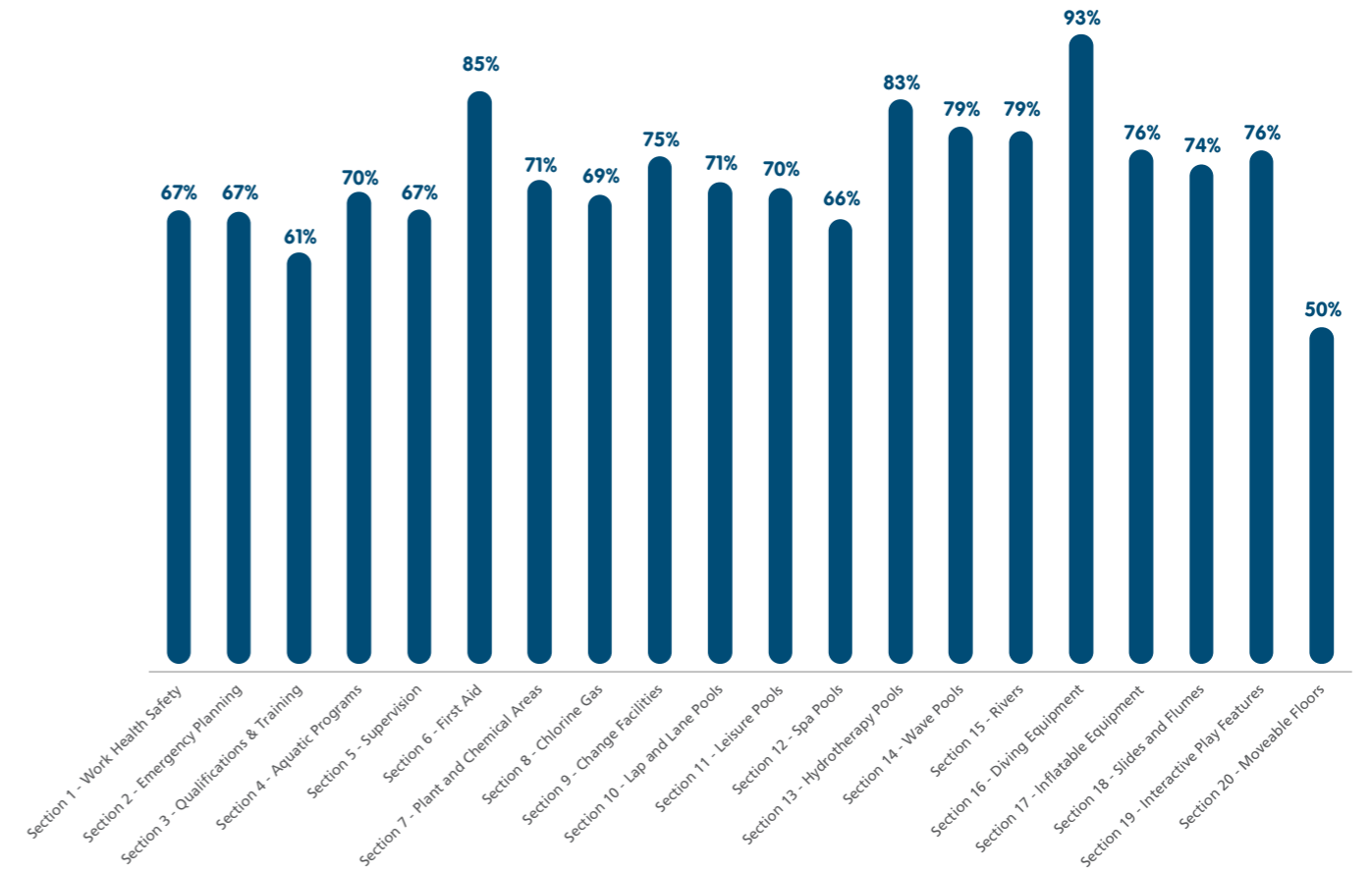


Table 2: Average Safety Assessment Performance by Section*

*Blank sections may indicate data unavailability, either as a result of local contextual factors, including pool type not assessed in 2023.

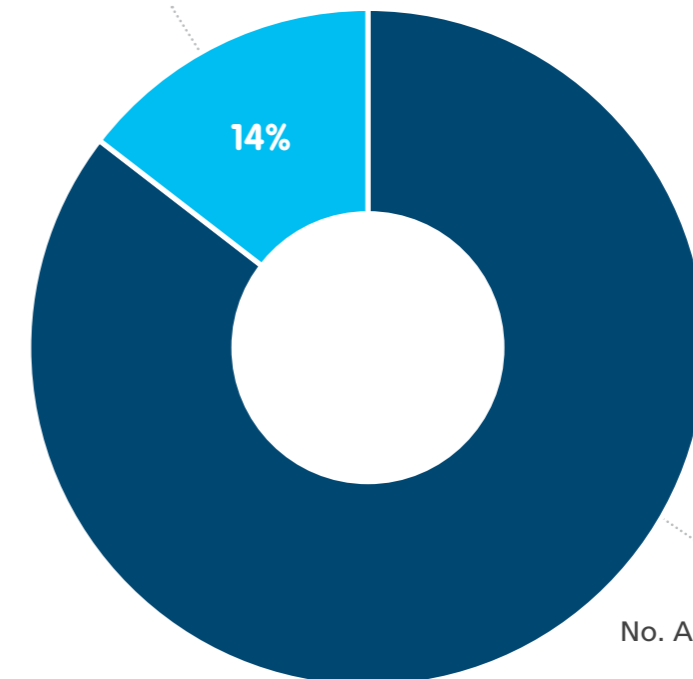
Name	National average	SA	NT	VIC	QLD	WA	NSW	ACT	TAS
Section 1 - Work Health Safety	67.3	60.83	53.08	87.88	67.41	96.05	74.9	87.12	66.13
Section 2 - Emergency Planning	67.06	61.96	54.17	88.28	63.85				
Section 3 - Qualifications & Training	61.12	64.36	43.37	80.02	56.74	94			
Section 4 - Aquatic Programs	70.03	85.38	37.35	75.66	81.73		91.12	87.16	95.22
Section 5 - Supervision	67.4	69.34	50.72	88.84	60.7		84.16	86.22	90.12
Section 6 - First Aid	85.02	80.15	89.19	92.09	78.67		96.31	94.16	79.24
Section 7 - Plant and Chemical Areas	71.83	61.16	72.66	83.76	69.74	96.32	85.12	90.16	69.12
Section 8 - Chlorine Gas	69.62	80.36		58.89		93	63.12		
Section 9 - Change Facilities	75.38	68.91	67.19	90.01	75.44	93			
Section 10 - Lap and Lane Pools	71.51	66	53.77	89.88	76.39	94	93.22	96.22	93.12
Section 11 - Leisure Pools	70.61	61.51	59.13	92.42	69.38	92	91.12	94.22	91.24
Section 12 - Spa Pools	66.06	40.51		97.12	60.56		97.22	93.16	83.25
Section 13 - Hydrotherapy Pools	83.84	71.03		96.65			90.22	92.13	-
Section 14 - Wave Pools	79.73	61.38		98.08			94.31		
Section 15 - Rivers	79.12						79.12		
Section 16 - Diving Equipment	93.42			93.34	93.51		72.16		
Section 17 - Inflatable Equipment	76.35			81.77	70.94		41.22	-	37.11
Section 18 - Slides and Flumes	74.15			82.56	65.74	0.8462	91.66	81.14	
Section 19 - Interactive Play Features	76.19			91.22	61.16	0.9539	89.14	63.24	65.22
Section 20 - Moveable Floors	50			50			99.18		

Average Safety Assessment Performance by Section



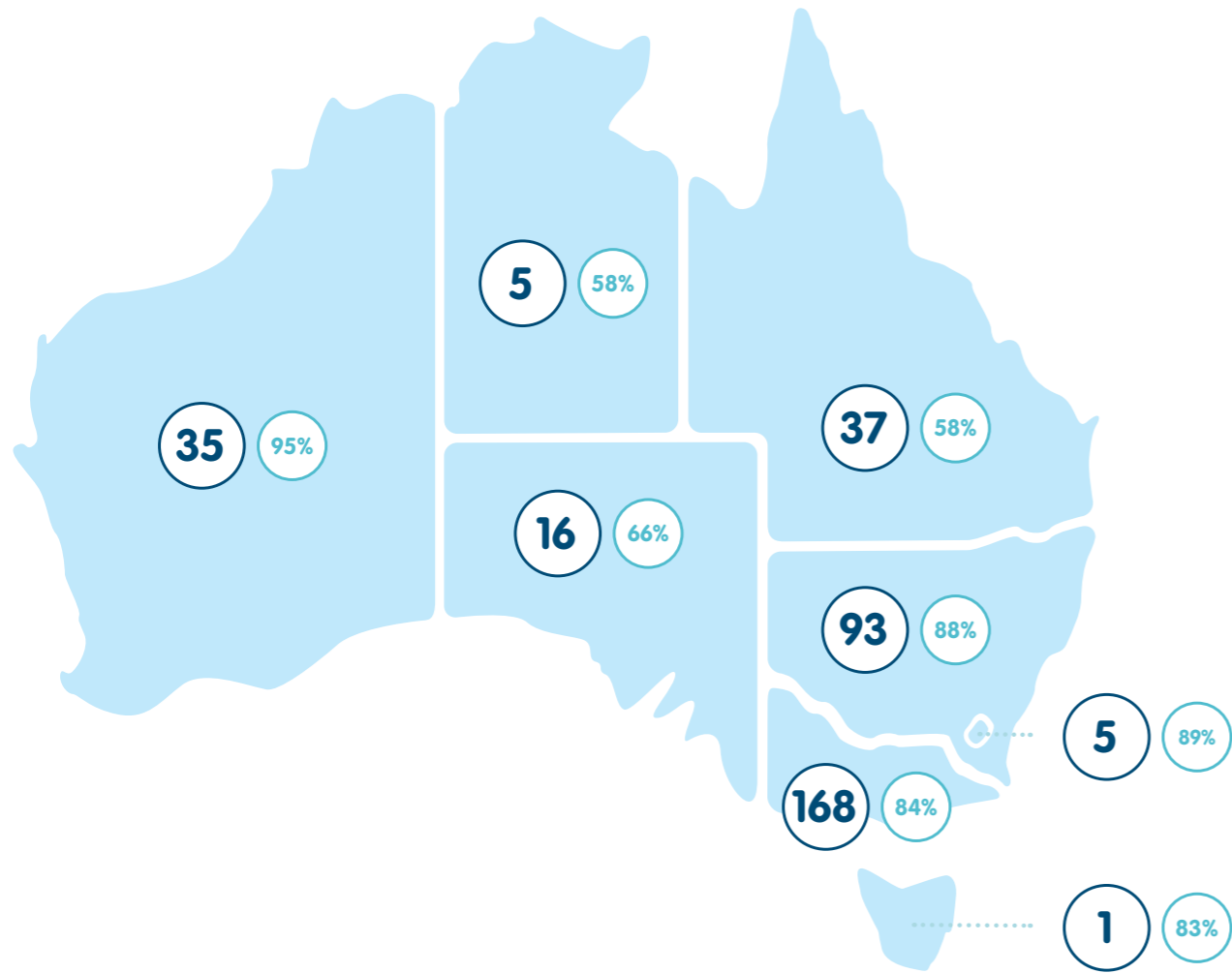
Total number of facilities assessed 2023

360
No. of facilities assessed

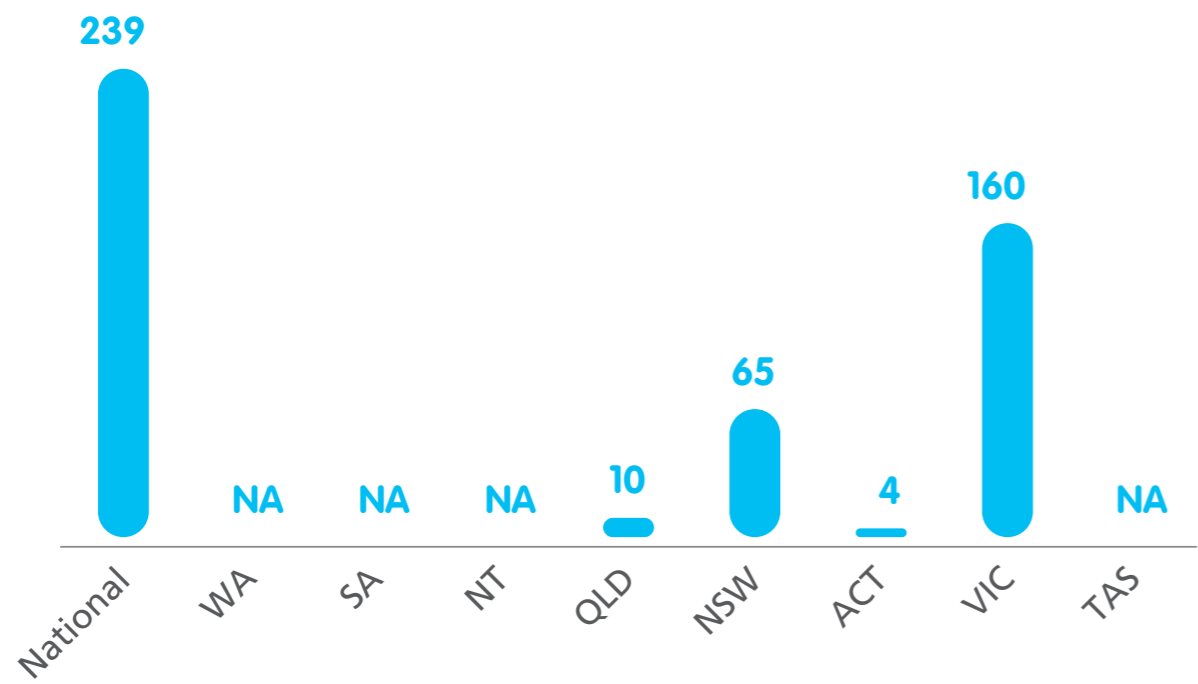


2119
No. Aquatic Facilities

No. of facilities assessed and average score in 2023



No. of safety endorsements issued as a result of high performance on safety assessment results



> TOP PERFORMING AREAS



Work health and safety

This section of the safety assessment assesses an aquatic facility's adherence to regulatory requirements relating to work health and safety policies, procedures and plans, including contractor management and fire safety.



Lap pools

This section of the safety assessment assesses the level of physical compliance against building codes, Australian Standards, FINA guidelines and the GSPO, specific to lap pools.



Leisure pools

This section of the safety assessment assesses the level of physical compliance against building codes, Australian Standards, FINA guidelines and the GSPO, specific to leisure pools.

> LOW PERFORMING AREAS



Training and qualifications

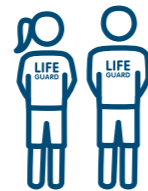
This section of the safety assessment assesses the level of a facility's adherence to guidelines and regulations relating to the initial training, onboarding and ongoing in-service training and accreditation of the employees working at the facility.

Of concern is that aquatic facility operators do not ensure sufficient levels of in-service training of lifeguards and swimming and water safety teachers as against the requirements of the GSPO. It is critical that competencies in water rescue and resuscitation remain current and able to be called upon instantly at any moment.



Emergency management

This section of the safety assessment assesses the level of a facility's adherence to guidelines and the Australian Standard for emergency planning at facilities. Despite AS3745-2010 being more than 14 years old, many aquatic facilities do not have a compliant Emergency Management Plan and sufficient arrangements in place for their local Emergency Planning Committee. It is recommended that councils integrate the emergency planning of the facility within broader muni



Aquatic supervision

This section of the safety assessment assesses the level of a facility's adherence to the Aquatic Supervision section of the GSPO, which has been developed and improved over 30 years to be responsive to coronial recommendations and advancements in supervision science driven by research. Too many pools still do not have a sufficient Supervision Plan in place that recognises and adapts to the various user groups, activities and inherent design risks at the facility. Mystery guest visits by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia accredited mystery shoppers remain a great way to improve a facility's supervision planning arrangements.

The Impact of Professional Supervision, Safe Design and Safety Management

Open waterways represent the highest risk environments, with public swimming pools the least so. The presence of professional lifeguards and safety management systems results in around 8,000 saved lives at these venues every year.

The current low rates of drowning in public pools are not a marker for inaction but rather a testament to the effectiveness of safe design, professional lifeguards and a 30-year-long emphasis on safety management systems through voluntary industry adoption of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia GSPO.

Lifeguards are often the last line of defence against potential drownings, and their presence is non-negotiable.

The adherence to the GSPO and maintenance of professional certifications with relevant peak authorities have proven instrumental in the effort to reduce fatal and non-fatal incidents.

With drowning rates in public pools never zero and the concerning high number of near-misses and rescues, we can underscore the value of lifeguards and robust safety management systems but also recognise we have a long way to go to strengthen systems, audit their compliance and drive innovations in safety management and culture across the industry.

Case Study: Victorian Government's Safer Public Pools Program

Since 2018, the Victorian Government has supported Life Saving Victoria to deliver the Safer Public Pools Initiative, following a spate of public pool drownings between 2014-16.

The Safer Public Pools Program has provided more than \$400,000 annually to Life Saving Victoria in order to:

1. develop a register of public pools in the state and publicly profile the level of safety and compliance being achieved by public pools.
2. develop a state-specific industry code of practice, which endorses the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations and recommends aquatic facility safety assessments at routine intervals (depending on risk exposure).
3. provide a subsidy for public pools to undertake an assessment.
4. deliver an annual state of sector report in partnership with industry.
5. deliver two community issue-based working groups dedicated to advancing safety in public pools: the Platinum Pool - Steering Committee and the Learn to Swim - Steering Committee.
6. provide an annual Industry Safety Summit and Pool Lifeguard Challenge targeted at professional development for pool operators and lifeguards, specifically in relation to safety.
7. provide support for the delivery of water safety programs such as Watch Around Water and SwimSafe in public pools statewide.

It is undoubtedly the result of this funding that sees an overall higher uptake of safety programs, guideline subscription and safety assessment completion in Victoria when compared to other states and territories.

All governments are encouraged to develop similar programs in partnership with Royal Life Saving state or territory member organisations to increase the level of safety and compliance in their state or territory's public swimming pools.

> GUIDELINES FOR SAFE POOL OPERATIONS

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia has maintained and developed the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (GSPO) since 1992. The GSPO is a set of detailed specifications and recommendations establishing best practice design and operations of aquatic locations nationwide.

Although published by Royal Life Saving Society - Australia, the GSPO represents the collective expertise of the aquatic industry across Australia through the development process and oversight of the National Aquatic Industry Committee (NAIC). The Guidelines are systematically reviewed by the NAIC under the guidance of RLSSA.

Serving as the national industry standard, the GSPO delineates and recommends the minimum safety benchmarks for the design, ownership, and operation of aquatic facilities. This ensures a universally recognised standard of care in the specified domains of design and/or operations within the Australian aquatic sector.

New Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations

In December 2023, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia released two new sets of GSPOs, which are intended to simplify and contextualise existing regulatory frameworks into practical guidance for aquatic facility owners and operators. It took more than 12 months to develop the new guidelines, and work included widespread consultation with aquatic facility owners, operators and industry groups.

Child Safety

This section provides practical guidance for owners or operators of aquatic facilities in relation to measures needed to protect children and young people from abuse and/or related harm relating to aquatic facility operations. The child safety guidelines contextualise the National Child Safe Principles to aquatic facilities and are intended to assist pool owners and operators in complying with regulatory frameworks.

Training and Qualifications

This section provides practical guidance for owners or operators of aquatic facilities in relation to the qualifications, skills and training needed for staff for entry into employment in the aquatic industry. The Training and Qualifications guidelines bring together the changes to vocational training packages, overseen by the now disbanded Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) working on behalf of the federal government, that impacted a variety of aquatic industry roles.

The new guidelines are available in the [GSPO subscriber area](#) of the Royal Life Saving Society - Australia website. It is strongly recommended that aquatic facility designers, owners, and operators understand the GSPO to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the health and safety legislation of their respective states or territories.



Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations Subscriptions

All aquatic facility designers, owners and operators are strongly recommended to access and have an understanding of the GSPO in order to meet their obligations under the respective state and/or territory health and safety legislation.

Currently, only 37% of aquatic facilities have a subscription to the GSPO

State/Territory	Total Active Subscribers (as at Mar 2024)	Percentage of aquatic facilities subscribed
Australia	796	37%
ACT	7	24%
NSW	170	25%
NT	7	22%
QLD	167	36%
SA	42	35%
TAS	13	26%
VIC	199	35%
WA	50	24%
International/national entity	140	NA



Case Study: WaterMarc Aquatic Centre

Coronial Inquest⁷

Background

On 2 February 2014, a 23-year-old male Indian national was found on the bottom of the 50-metre pool at WaterMarc Aquatic Leisure Centre, Greensborough and died six days later in hospital after he was removed from life support. His partner was also found floating face down in the pool at the same time but made a full recovery in the weeks following the incident.

Findings

The male died from hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy caused by drowning. There was no dedicated lifeguard/s dedicated to supervising that particular pool at the time as they were distracted by the difficulties they were experiencing seating home the boom at the deep end of the pool.

While the coroner was unable to make definitive findings about the exact circumstances of the drowning due to the lack of witnesses, there was clear and cogent evidence to make findings based on the balance of probabilities, which included:

- The man was an inexperienced swimmer and was swimming in the water in the vicinity of the drop-off zone when the boom separating the deep and shallow ends of the pool was being removed.
- The drop-off zone created a sudden and significant change in water depths between the shallow and deep ends of the pool and immediately placed the man in a situation where he was out of his depth.
- When the lifeguards were alerted, they responded professionally and in accordance with their training.
- Signage that depicted the drop-off zone was installed around the 50-metre pool, but it was found that the signage did not deter the man and his partner from swimming in that area.
- Preventative measures require a dedicated lifeguard to supervise the drop-off zone during any movement of the boom and the placement of extra barriers around the exact position of the drop-off zone any time the boom is moved.
- In response to the incident, the operator implemented appropriate changes to boom movement procedures and to the location of the defibrillator, purchased materials to create a dry environment on the pool deck for defibrillator use, overhauled training, and ensured an additional lifeguard as a 'runner' was rostered.
- The general lack of central oversight and regulation of public swimming pools in Victoria at that time was concerning.
- Due to the clear and cogent evidence, the male's death could have been prevented.

Recommendations

Three recommendations were made in connection with the death:

1. The operator to implement new signage requesting all patrons to inform staff members of the vulnerabilities before entering the water.
2. The operator and owner to explore options on how to best communicate with patrons whose first language is not English about their vulnerabilities before they enter the water. For example, visual imagery and multi-lingual written material.
3. The Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet works with the appropriate areas in the Victoria government to establish a central oversight and regulatory body for public swimming pool operation in the state so that safety standards are applied and upheld consistently across the industry.

Case Study: Ascot Vale Leisure Centre

Coronial Inquest⁸

Background

On 16 July 2014, a 54-year-old male was found floating face-down in the hydro pool at the Ascot Vale Leisure Centre (AVLC) and died three days later in hospital. The male was diagnosed with motor neurone disease and, at the time required carers, was no longer able to stand unaided and required hoisting for transfers.

Findings

Circumstances preceding the incident mean no one was acting as his carer at the time of the incident, and lifeguards were unaware of the need for, or the absence of, a carer. As there were no witnesses to the incident, the cause of death was found to be accidental drowning, as it was consistent with drowning and advanced motor neuron disease. The drowning was likely caused by muscle weakness in his legs and arms, which prevented him from recovering his position.

The Lifeguard on duty only became aware of the incident when alerted by a patron as the supervising lifeguard was distracted finding a bum bag (a bag that contains lifesaving equipment and is a requirement for lifeguards to have on them), but should have been watching the water at the time of the drowning.

Since the incident, the operator has extensively reviewed and improved practices concerning aquatic safety before and after the drowning and was actively engaged with industry associations, including Royal Life Saving Society – Australia and Life Saving Victoria.

Recommendations

Four recommendations were made in connection with the death, which included the operator reviewing its:

1. training and procedures to ensure that the duties of lifeguards are clear when conducting supervisory and non-supervisory roles,
2. pool Operations Manual to clarify the role and duties of lifeguards,
3. training and procedures and continuing to engage with Life Saving Victoria guidelines and recommendations to ensure staff are trained sufficiently in the need to identify and adequately supervise patrons in need of closer supervision and are in practice doing this, and
4. procedures to ensure safety equipment, in particular bum bags, are ready and available to lifeguards before their shift commences.

Case Study: Runcorn Lesiure Centre

Non-inquest findings into the death of E⁹

Background

On 16 November 2019, a five-year-old male (E) was visiting the Runcorn Leisure Centre with his parents and three siblings. E entered the main pool unobserved and could not swim. He went under the water to the bottom of the pool and was retrieved and resuscitated before being taken to hospital. On 24 November 2019, he died in hospital from hypoxic encephalopathy caused by non-fatal drowning.

Findings

- E was a five-year-old who could not swim.
- E was unsupervised by his parents, who were in the immediate vicinity of the pool.
- E's mother and father spoke little English despite having been in Australia for eight and 20 years, respectively. They largely relied on the language skills of their 10-year-old daughter. This was a factor in the circumstances.
- They did not understand the "KEEP WATCH POLICY" signage or the pictorial sign that headed "LIFEGUARDS ARE NOT BABYSITTERS".
- Neither parent could swim and assumed the lifeguards had the responsibility for their children's safety.
- Preventing a similar death of a child from a migrant family requires resourcing to develop English language skills and how to swim.
- Programs that cover English, as well as information about swimming and beach safety, are available for migrants online.
- The facts of E's death were clear, and an inquest was not required.

Note: The following legal cases are ongoing within the legal system.

Case Study: Whitlam Leisure Centre Coronial inquest – not publicly accessible¹⁰

Background

On March 20 2016, a 13-year-old boy fatally drowned at the Whitlam Leisure Centre in western Sydney. He fell into a 1.8-metre-deep pool and struggled, bobbing and waving his arms for two minutes, trying to get to the edge of the pool. He then went under the water for seven minutes while lifeguards spoke among themselves. While the boy was rescued and resuscitated, he did not survive due to brain damage.

Findings:

- The outdoor swimming pool was not subject to adequate or proper supervision by lifeguards.

Recommended policies for the owner / operator:

- Improvement of lifeguard supervision.
- Weak swimmers wear wristbands to make it easier to know who needs to be watched.
- Conduct Royal Life Saving ‘mystery guest visits’ to ensure lifeguards are doing their job correctly.

The owner / operator has since introduced the mystery guest visit program along with other needed changes.

Case Study: Belfast Aquatic Centre

On 21 May 2021, an eight-year-old boy drowned at the Belfast Aquatic Centre, Port Fairy, while on a school camping trip.¹¹

After a two-year investigation, WorkSafe charged the Victorian Department of Education and the operators of the facility in May 2023.

The operator was charged with six breaches of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which included allegedly failing to properly assess the swimming ability of the student before allowing them to use an inflatable obstacle course, failing to have qualified lifeguards on duty or them be instructed on how to use the course in a safe manner, and failing to ensure persons other than employees were not exposed to health and safety risks.

WorkSafe also alleged that the Department failed to inform the pool operators of the children’s swimming abilities or to ensure the students’ abilities were tested.

The case is ongoing.

Case Study: Airlie Beach Lagoon

On 28 October 2018, a 30-year-old man and his five-year-old son were found unconscious at the Airlie Beach Lagoon, Whitsundays, and later both died in hospital.¹²

WorkSafe charged the operator of the lagoon, Whitsunday Regional Council, with two breaches of failing to comply with its primary duty of care under the Work Health and Safety Act. It’s alleged the council did not have the minimum number of lifeguards on duty and failed to carry out a risk assessment and inspection of the contractor engaged in providing lifeguarding and maintenance services. Ellmill Enterprises Pty Ltd, who the council holds responsible, were initially employed to oversee security but then agreed to provide a lifeguard service.

Criminal proceedings brought by Workplace Health and Safety against the Whitsunday Regional Council are ongoing.

In April 2023, the widow and mother of the victims reached a multi-million dollar out-of-court settlement with the Whitsunday Regional Council after claiming the deaths of her husband and son were caused by the negligence of the Council.





> RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING INDUSTRY SAFETY

1. Identifying risk and benchmarking safety conformance:

Owners and operators of publicly accessible aquatic facilities (including swim schools and communal pools such as hotel, resorts and caravan parks) should undertake routine safety assessments to identify and mitigate risks. Additionally, this can enable local, regional, state and national benchmarking of the implementation of safety standards and guidelines and improve safety practices at these facilities.

2. Incentivising safety improvements:

State and territory governments should develop and implement programs which incentivise pool owners and operators to undertake assessments, with the Victorian funding-model proposed as a good benchmark for other states and territories.

3. Ensuring safety best practice:

To ensure local government venues are being managed in accordance with national lifesaving guidelines and industry best practice, local governments should ensure that their facilities undertake routine assessments and build this requirement into annual budgets and management contracts (where applicable).

4. Ensuring safe design from the outset:

Once a pool is designed and built, it is in place for over 50 years. Key decisions involved in the design can have a large bearing on the safety and efficiency of the operations, such as lifeguard deployment. To ensure aquatic facilities are designed in line with guidelines and standards, pool designers and architects should ensure Royal Life Saving Design (Safety) Assessments are undertaken early in the pool design and prior to construction to ensure venues have safe design at the centre from the outset.

5. Preventative education programs:

Swimming and water safety lessons are vital in equipping individuals with the skills they need to be safe in and around water. These must be expanded at all levels and in all communities, particularly targeting vulnerabilities and those who miss out.

6. Parent / guardian supervision programs:

A concerted effort is needed to ensure that parents and guardians understand their critical role in supervising their children at public pools, in accordance with programs such as Keep Watch @ Public Pools. All publicly-accessible pools should adopt a recognised industry program for child supervision and ensure consistency of messages nationally.

7. Staff training and professionalisation:

An industry-wide system which supports enhancements across the aquatic workforce in safety capability, ongoing professional development and assurance is recommended.

8. Public awareness campaigns:

Stakeholders should work to align public awareness campaigns to reduce clutter and reinforce the importance of nationally consistent water safety messages and the role of the community in the prevention of drowning and aquatic injury

> KEY INDUSTRY SAFETY INITIATIVES

National Aquatic Industry Committee

The National Aquatic Industry Committee (NAIC) is tasked with the goal of strengthening the health, safety and viability of aquatic facility ownership and operations across Australia.

To achieve this, the committee fulfils various roles, including the development, review, and authorisation of the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO). It also serves as a platform for facilitating discussions and advocating for the future direction and support of the aquatic industry nationwide.

Additionally, the NAIC is responsible for formulating and maintaining the National Aquatic Industry Strategy and making recommendations to Industry Skills bodies on behalf of the aquatic industry. The committee actively communicates and advocates the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations as industry standards developed by and for the industry.

The NAIC achieves its objectives by enhancing the standing and reputation of the aquatic industry through the establishment and enforcement of universal and minimum standards for safe and sustainable aquatic facility operations. It also strives to improve the understanding within the aquatic industry through effective coordination, communication, and consultation with peak bodies and maintains a robust evidence base for risk management in aquatic facilities through ongoing research and evaluation efforts.

The NAIC plays a pivotal role in developing frameworks and resources that enhance the capabilities of the aquatic industry. Regular coordination and communication with the industry are key components of the NAIC's approach to fulfilling its goals.

Key Advocacy Initiatives

In 2023, the NAIC convened twice to work through key industry advocacy initiatives and updates to the GSPO. The committee resolved to take action in key areas on behalf of the national aquatic industry and identified industry challenges, which include:

- Workforce — staffing shortages, consistency and quality of staff, young workers at entry level, loss of quality/expertise at management levels, increasing diversity.
- Rising costs of business — increased utility costs, aging infrastructure.
- Contemporary safety challenges — psychosocial safety, child safety, safety culture, occupational violence and aggression.

National Symposium

Supported by the NAIC, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia hosted the National Aquatic Symposium, which took place on 9-10 March 2023. Details and outcomes of the Symposium can be found on page 39 of this report.

Child Safety Guidelines

The Child Safety Guidelines, initiated in September 2022, underwent legal and child safety expert reviews before being workshopped and discussed at the March 2023 NAIC meeting. After incorporating NAIC feedback, the third draft was open for industry consultation for three months. With 1,000 visits to the feedback page, no major feedback was received. In June 2023, the NAIC unopposedly passed a motion to publish the guidelines with an effective date of July 1, 2024.

Managing Psychosocial Risk

The committee received a draft guideline on Managing Mental Health and Wellbeing for the Aquatic Facility's Workforce in March 2023, discussed it at the June 2023 meeting, and found no consensus on its efficacy. The decision to further review and research the matter was made, leading to engagement with an expert psychologist working with Aquatics and Recreation Victoria (ARV) for peer review. While some members support a GSPO in this space, there is currently no consensus, and the committee plans to explore potential resources or projects related to psychosocial risk management in 2023-24.

Single Guidelines for Aquatic Industry Training and Qualifications

After revising training packages and deciding in June 2022 to establish a unified framework for training and qualification guidelines, three draft versions were submitted to the NAIC for feedback sessions in 2022-23. The final draft was submitted to the NAIC for approval before the commencement of the 2023-24 summer season, with the guideline coming into effect from July 1, 2024.

Updates to GSPOs

After several requests for minor changes to the GSPO were tabled, working groups were established to review and update guidance on diving, teaching platform design, pool lighting specifications and lifeguard use of wearables. These recommendations will be discussed in the 2023-24 NAIC sessions.

National Workforce Report 2023

On behalf of the NAIC, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia prepared the National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report 2023. Details of this report can be found on page 28 of this report.

NAIC Members

Matthew Simpson

Project Manager – National Programs, Swimming Australia

Gary Toner

Executive Officer, Australian Swim Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA)

Wayne Pollock

President, Australian Swim Schools Association (ASSA)

Kathy Parton

Chief Executive Officer, Aquatics and Recreation (ARV)

Stan Wall

Board Member, Aquatic Recreation Institute (ARI)

Steve Good

Executive Officer, Leisure Institute of Western Australia - Aquatics (LIWA)

Lindsay McGrath

Chief Executive Officer, Swimming Pool and Spa Association Australia (SPASA)

Amanda Locke

Manager Leisure and Recreation Services, City of Greater Geelong

Brad Page

Venues & Events Manager, Logan City Council

Matt Howes

Team Leader - Aquatic & Lifeguard Contracts, Sunshine Coast Council

Liam O'Brien

Regional Operations Manager, Aligned Leisure

Joel Perricone

State Manager - South Australia, BlueFit Group

Liz Van Deventer

Group Health & Safety Manager, Belgravia Group

Alek Olszewski

Manager - Aquatic Industry Services, Life Saving Victoria

Nicky Sloan

President, Royal Life Saving Society - Queensland

Craig Roberts

General Manager - Drowning Prevention & Education, Royal Life Saving Society - New South Wales

Bec Gawne

Training Manager, Royal Life Saving Society and AUSTRALSWIM - Northern Territory

RJ Houston (Chair)

General Manager - Capability & Industry, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia

STAY UP TO DATE NAIC

<https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/Aquatic-Risk-and-Guidelines/Engagement-Events-and-Forums/national-aquatic-industry-committee>



Aquatic Facility Safety Endorsement Programs

Aquatic facility safety endorsement programs have been introduced in some states and territories to highlight aquatic facilities achieving the highest standards in the provision of aquatic safety and risk management. Program typically include a systematic 12-monthly cyclical review of standards and safety provisions at the facility, with endorsements / accreditation recognised as a sign of excellence in safety conformance within the aquatic industry. Below are examples of two key programs:

Platinum Pool Program (VIC & QLD)

Royal Life Saving has introduced an Aquatic Facility Safety Endorsement program in Queensland to highlight aquatic facilities achieving the highest standards in aquatic safety and risk management, with accreditation recognised as a sign of excellence within the National Aquatic Industry. The program involves the completion of a combination of assessment processes every 12 months.

Stakeholders, including facility patrons, ratepayers and local councils, are able to identify a facility as having an emphasis on safety by its achievement of an Endorsement.

Five-Star Aquatic Facilities (NSW & ACT)

Royal Life Saving - New South Wales Five-Star Water Safety Partner program is currently available in the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. Partners commit to an annual Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment undertaken by Royal Life Saving, which includes a rigorous 40-point aquatic safety check and demonstration of a strong commitment to aquatic safety standards. Achievement of 5-star status is a recognised sign of excellence in safety conformance within the aquatic industry.

Mystery guest visits

The mystery guest visit tests the effectiveness of a facility's aquatic supervision plan as delivered by the lifeguard/s and is an ideal analysis of operational practices and staff and lifeguard behaviour. Routine, independent and confidential mystery guest visits provide owners and operators of swimming pools with expert assessment of the facility's delivery of supervision and are an essential component of continual improvement and risk mitigation.

Child Supervision & Adult Swimmer Programs / Campaigns

Child supervision programs / campaigns have been introduced to eliminate all drowning deaths and reduce the number of non-fatal drowning incidents at public pools. The programs aim to increase the understanding, awareness and level of parent / carer supervision of children at public pools and reduce over-reliance on lifeguards, encouraging a partnership approach for child supervision between pool staff and parents / carers. Below are examples of two key programs:

Keep Watch at Public Pools (NT, QLD, NSW, ACT & TAS)

In 1996, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia developed a program called Keep Watch at Public Pools. With a lack of direct supervision by a parent or guardian believed to be a contributing factor in 70% of all drowning deaths at public pools, the Keep Watch at Public Pools program aims to eliminate all drowning deaths and reduce the number of non-fatal drowning incidents at public pools. The program targets parents and guardians of young children to help them understand their responsibilities and the dangers of leaving children unattended at the pool.

Watch Around Water (WA, SA & VIC)

Watch Around Water (WAW) is an industry-driven program that aims to ensure the safety of young children by reducing risk at public pools. The WAW program was developed in 2004 by the Leisure Institute of Western Australia Aquatics (LIWA) and was extended to Victoria through a partnership between Life Saving Victoria (LSV) and Aquatics & Recreation Victoria (ARV) in 2008. Around 2011, it was extended to South Australia through a partnership with Recreation South Australia, LIWA and ARV. WAW provides a consistent message to parents and guardians about effective supervision of young children at public pools and aims to reduce the incidences of drowning and non-fatal drowning of children in public pools.

SwimSafe: at the pool (VIC)

SwimSafe is a public education program developed by Life Saving Victoria born out of coronial recommendations that is targeted at vulnerable adult swimmers. It is a research-based campaign that has been proven to be effective at educating both staff and patrons on the vulnerabilities of weak and non-swimmers, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with pre-existing medical conditions or disabilities about the hazards associated with aquatic environments.

Swimming and Water Safety Education Initiatives

National Swimming and Water Safety Framework

The National Swimming and Water Safety Framework (the Framework) was developed by the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia and aims to enable individuals to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and behaviours required to lead safe and active lives in, on and around a range of aquatic environments.

The Framework is intended for those who influence the learning opportunities and experiences of individuals in developing swimming and water safety capabilities. It ensures those individuals are provided with the essential skills to keep them safer in, on and around water, including governments, aquatic facilities, the education sector, swim schools, swimming and water safety teachers, parents and students.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Swim and Survive

Royal Life Saving Society - Australia's Swim and Survive is a dynamic swimming and water safety program designed to foster personal survival, basic rescue, and lifesaving skills. Its aim is to equip individuals with the tools they need to lead safe and active lives in and around water. The Swim and Survive community has seen more than 15 million children become confident and capable swimmers each year, and the program prides itself on inclusivity, welcoming participants of all experience levels, from beginners to seasoned swimmers.

The program is aligned with the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework; as such Swim and Survive is the best avenue to achieve National Benchmarks for swimming and water safety. With each step of the program, participants build endurance and confront increasingly complex aquatic scenarios, creating a foundation for a lifetime of water confidence and safety. There is an extensive network of partners throughout Australia who provide the program at their facility, through their school or at a local community venue.

To learn more, visit the [Swim and Survive website](#)



Australian Water Safety Strategy (AWSS)

The new Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 was launched in March 2021. Produced by the Australian Water Safety Council (AWSC), the Strategy seeks to raise awareness about non-fatal drowning incidents, encourage communities to create local water safety plans and promote access to swimming and water safety skills for all Australians, including refugees, migrants and those living in regional areas.

The AWSC plays an essential role in preventing drowning and promoting the safe use of the nation's waterways and swimming pools and outlines priority areas where Australia's peak water safety bodies Royal Life Saving Society – Australia and Surf Life Saving Australia, and AWSC members can work together to prevent drowning on beaches, at rivers and lakes, and in swimming pools across Australia.

Aquatic facilities are used by all age groups for different purposes, including swimming and water safety education, exercise, rehabilitation and leisure. Although more regulated than other aquatic environments, drowning deaths still occur in public swimming pools and aquatic facilities. Preventing drowning in swimming pools is a priority because public access to safe aquatic recreation is vital to reducing drowning in Australia. Aquatic facilities allow skill development and practice in a more controlled environment.

The AWSS contains a section on aquatic facilities, with two targets by 2030:

- 1. Increased availability and sustainability of aquatic facilities
- 2. Drowning rate at aquatic facilities reduced by 50%

Aquatic facilities comprise public and commercial swimming pools, and communal aquatic facilities such as pools at hotels, motels and caravan parks, but exclude private home pools.

Most swimming pool drowning deaths occur in home pools, which are addressed in detail in the AWSS in the People Priority Area – Children (0-4 years).



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Importance of child supervision campaigns

Evidence shows that child supervision programs such as Watch Around Water and Keep Watch at Public Pools have contributed to a positive impact on the reduction of child drowning, with a 60 per cent decrease in drowning rates at swimming pools, a 59 per cent reduction in the drowning rate overall when comparing baseline years (2002-07 to 2017-22). In addition, child drowning over time has shown a five per cent annual decrease in overall child drowning rates. Despite this positive change, each year children continue to drown in public pools. As Coroner McNamara said: "No one should drown in a public pool".

Of the 2,113 public-owned and public-accessible pools in Australia, only 32 per cent are accredited partners with either of the recognised child supervision programs. To increase registration with child supervision programs, it is vital that child supervision programs are aligned, simple to understand, in place at every public pool and are refreshed and promoted to each new cohort or generation of parents.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

20-Year Analysis of Drowning Data

In 2023, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia produced the Analysis of Unintentional Drowning in Australia 2002-22 report that analysed 20 years of drowning data to inform action that prevents fatal and non-fatal drowning. The data presented in the report provided the opportunity to understand gains made in decreasing the rates of drowning and highlighted areas that were not improving or worsening. Newer data from the 2022-23 financial year has been added to the totals.

While aquatic facilities provide comparatively safe places to swim, the analysis of long-term trends reveals there have been many deaths, all of which were likely preventable.

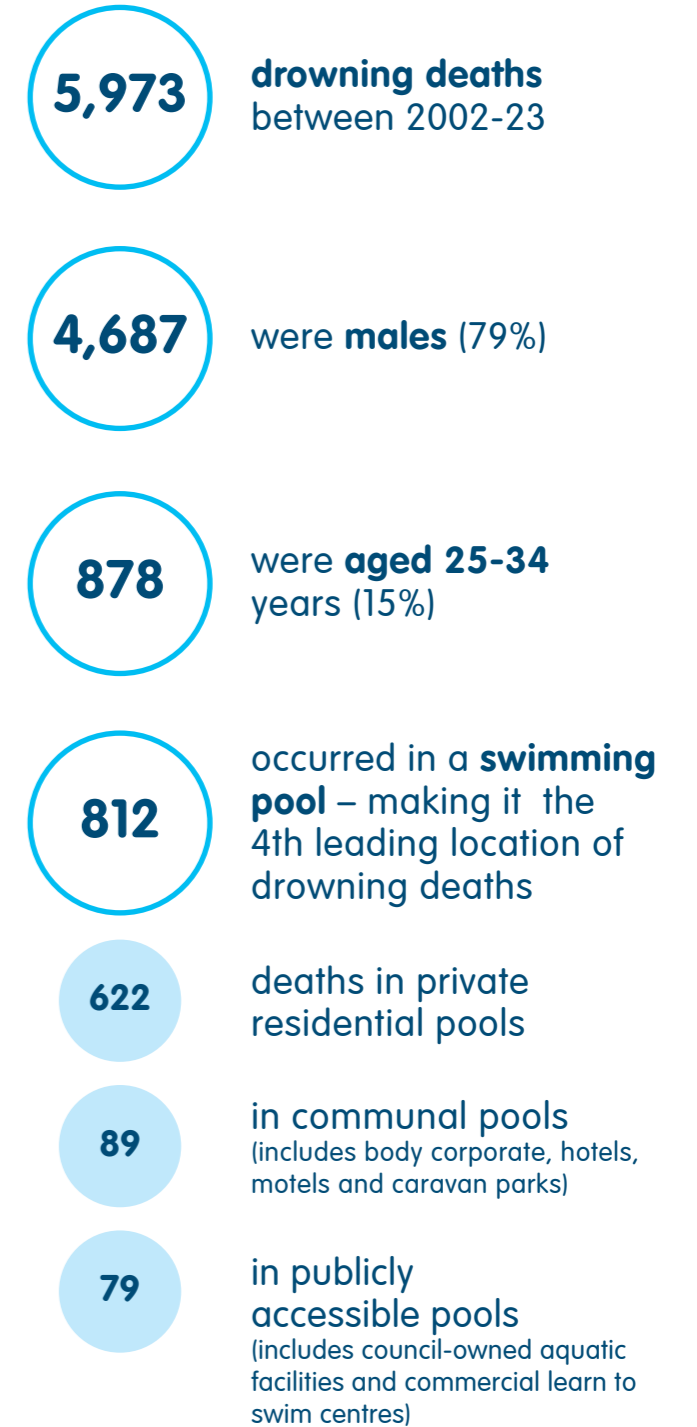
Populations of concern

- › All children 0-10
- › Young males 15-29 years
- › Older age groups >55+ years



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Drowning Data



> KEY WORK HIGHLIGHTS

Industry Social Value

Commissioned by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, PricewaterhouseCoopers prepared the Social, Health, and Economic Value of the Australian National Aquatic Industry² report on the status of the 2,113 publicly accessible aquatic facilities located across the nation. The report found that with nearly 90 per cent of Australians living within a 20-minute drive of their nearest pool, the aquatic industry positively impacts the Australian community in significant and diverse ways.

Annual contribution: The industry contributes a substantial \$9.1 billion annually in combined economic, health, and social benefits.

Economic driver: It serves as a significant driver of economic activity nationwide, employing the equivalent of 33,600 full-time workers and adding a notable \$2.8 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP).

Health benefits: The industry generates \$2.5 billion in health benefits, spanning from a reduction in the burden of disease to improved mental health outcomes, decreased absenteeism, and a reduction in childhood drownings.

Social benefits: Providing \$3.8 billion in social benefits, the industry enhances individual leisure time, increases life satisfaction, brings communities together, supports vulnerable groups, and aids in early learning.

Lifesaving impact: The industry saves 7,479 disability-adjusted life years annually.

Social return on investment: It offers a social return on investment of \$4.87 for every dollar spent operating an aquatic facility in a capital city and \$2.18 in regional Australia.

Employment: With over 67,000 employees (as at 2019), the aquatic industry stands as one of the largest employers in the sport and recreation sector.

Accessibility: It provides easily accessible leisure, fitness, and learning opportunities to 89 per cent of Australians residing within a 20-minute drive of a public pool.

Regional impact: The industry's economic activity extends into regional Australia, as 57 per cent of aquatic facilities are situated outside of capital cities.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Social Impact of the Aquatic Industry

A recent report, jointly prepared by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia and Swinburne University, highlights increased social cohesion and enhanced health and wellbeing as primary social benefits derived from the Australian aquatic industry. The Social Impact of the National Aquatic Industry report goes beyond the conventional perception of public pools merely as places to learn to swim, revealing them to be pivotal community hubs fostering social interaction.

The report builds upon prior research outlined in the Health, Social, and Economic Value of the National Aquatic Industry report, which quantified the industry's annual contribution to Australian society. While the initial study focused on monetary values, the Social Impact report concentrates on non-quantifiable benefits, emphasising the significance of users' experiences alongside the economic data presented in the PwC report.

Key benefits identified in the report encompass:

Health and wellbeing impact: The industry significantly contributes to the health and wellbeing of individuals.

Enhanced social connection: Public pools serve as catalysts for increased social connections within communities.

Safe environments: These facilities provide secure spaces for swimming and education

Facilitation of social cohesion: The industry actively promotes social cohesion within communities.

Employment opportunities: It brings forth substantial employment benefits.

The next steps to this framework include accrediting facilities as against this important framework to enable drivers of social impact to be measured and reported on.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Social Impact Case Study: Life Saving Victoria Multicultural Program

In 2007, the Life Saving Victoria Multicultural Program (LSVMP) was initiated with a specific focus on providing water safety education to Victoria's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community, particularly new arrivals and refugees. This group faces a heightened risk of drowning due to their unfamiliarity with water conditions, lack of confidence, and limited swimming ability.

Expanding beyond water safety education, the LSVMP now offers additional services such as swimming lessons, first-aid training, and training for career pathways. These pathways support participants in pursuing careers like volunteer surf lifesaving, pool lifeguarding, swimming teaching, and roles within emergency services agencies such as Ambulance Victoria and the Department of Land, Water, and Planning.

To enhance its outreach and engagement with new arrivals and CALD communities in Victoria, LSV established a Delivery Network. This network comprises more than 450 partnering organisations across three main sectors: sport and recreation, emergency services, and community and health. The program's extensive activities and diverse network contribute to its high impact, encompassing physical and mental health benefits, social and cultural advantages, economic gains, as well as process, workforce, and management benefits.

These impacts extend broadly, reaching CALD participants, organisations within the Delivery Network, and the wider Victorian CALD and non-CALD communities.

The Centre for Sport and Social Impact from La Trobe University was engaged by LSV, and supported by VicHealth, to put a financial calculation on the impact of the program by exploring the social return on investment of LSVMP.

The study found that for every \$1 invested into the LSVMP, there is a \$14.85 return in social value. (La Trobe University, Centre for Sport and Social Impact, 2021). This return demonstrates the breadth of impact investment in the program has on the CALD community and how the program is delivered, potentially strengthening future discussions with government and funding partners about the value of the program.



To view the full report: <https://lsv.com.au/social-return-on-investment/>



Social Impact Case Study: Remote Swimming Pools

Recent findings from Royal Life Saving Society - Australia reveal that First Nations children face a higher risk of drowning compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. In the age group of 5-14 years, First Nations children are nearly three times more likely to experience drowning incidents.

This heightened risk is attributed to factors such as limited swimming skills, insufficient water safety knowledge, and residing in remote areas close to waterways. Notably, 40.6 per cent of drowning fatalities among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals transpire in locations classified as remote or very remote.

Remote Indigenous communities across Australia also suffer poorer health and living conditions than other Australians, marked by disproportionately higher rates of chronic disease.

Community swimming pools create an opportunity for children to develop life-long swimming skills and water safety knowledge, and they promote healthy living practices, which is particularly important in remote communities.

Remote Aboriginal Swimming Pools Project - Royal Life Saving Society - Western Australia

The Remote Aboriginal Swimming Pools Project was established in Western Australia in 1999 and is managed by Royal Life Saving in Western Australia and funded by the Department of Communities, with additional contributions from BHP and the Telethon Kids Institute.

The program is now run in communities within the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberly regions in the north-west of WA by Royal Life Saving pool managers who live and work in these remote areas to deliver safe, efficient and effective aquatic facilities and programs. The communities include Balgo, Bidyadanga, Burringurrah, Fitzroy Crossing, Jigalong, Kalumburu, Warmun and Yandeyarra. The populations of these communities range between 150-700, and residents are predominately Aboriginal.

Royal Life Saving advocates for school attendance by promoting the widespread adoption of the 'No School, No Pool' policy across communities. In many areas, this has seen a significant upswing in school retention rates and a general improvement in the behaviour of children.

The Talent Pool program aims to nurture the self-esteem and confidence essential for the smooth transition of young individuals into adult employment. Specifically tailored for Aboriginal youth, these initiatives provide hands-on experience in job-focused domains, coupled with mentorship and training, fostering a sense of responsibility and ownership that ultimately circulates back into the community.

<https://royallifesavingwa.com.au/programs/remote-pools>

Accessible Swimming Lessons for Aboriginal Children

Piper Stewart is a young Indigenous woman who has made swimming lessons accessible to hundreds of Aboriginal children, and in July 2023, she was honoured at the National Sports and Physical Activity Convention for her tireless work to improve water safety outcomes for Indigenous young people.

Piper not only won the Young Innovator of the Year Award but was also awarded for the highest contribution nationally to leadership in sports and physical activity.

At 12 years of age, Ms Stewart established Bambigi, a word that translates to "to swim" in Wiradjuri, the Aboriginal language spoken in Griffith. Her mission was to raise funds to provide Indigenous children in the local community with the opportunity to learn swimming and water safety.

Bambigi funds six months of swimming lessons for Aboriginal children in the Griffith region, and the program has supported Wiradjuri Preschool children to learn to swim and the Tirkandi Inaburra boys to learn about water safety.

Aboriginal people are four times more likely to drown than non-Indigenous Australians, and those from low-socio economic, rural and remote communities are most likely to miss out on swimming and water safety education. To date, more than 300 children have reaped the benefits of the program, gaining access to lessons and essential equipment such as swimming caps and goggles.



Initiative: National Aquatics Symposium

The National Aquatics Symposium builds on over a decade of efforts to ensure all Australian children, regardless of background or economic status, acquire essential swimming and water safety skills. The inaugural event in 2017 established a comprehensive six-lane plan, focusing on strengthening school programs, revising the National Framework, setting benchmarks, increasing access for at-risk populations, improving facility availability, and enhancing secondary school students' swimming and lifesaving skills.

The 2018 symposium, marked by collaboration among 55 representatives from government, industry, private sector, and academia, sustained an open and inclusive approach. It aimed to support the Australian Water Safety Strategy's goals, particularly those related to reducing drowning deaths in children and young people. Objectives included engaging key stakeholders, reporting progress on the first symposium's actions, and facilitating discussions on revising the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework. The ongoing commitment to collaboration and progress underscores the symposium's role in advancing national initiatives for comprehensive swimming and water safety education.

Hosted by Royal Life Saving Society - Australia, the third and most recent symposium took place in 2023 and brought together 150 respected and experienced leaders in policy, aquatic safety, education and research. With the COVID-19 pandemic causing significant disruptions and enduring impacts on the national aquatic industry and drowning prevention organisations, the resolve of this symposium was to collaborate, activate systemic change, foster more inclusive environments and deliver more critical lifesaving services.

The National Aquatics Symposium 2023 – Summary Report captures the contributions of the delegates across two days of discussions and contains the collective strategic priorities of the national aquatic industry, governments, and water safety organisations have committed to with regard to swimming skills, workforce and infrastructure.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Objective 1: Universal Access to Swimming and Water Safety Education

Lowering Barriers to Access

- Expand funding for voucher, school, and holiday swimming programs.
- Target strategies to lower barriers for children aged 7-12 affected by COVID-19 lockdowns and groups that are at a higher drowning risk.

Implementing National Framework

- Align curricula and delivery with the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework for evidence-based education.

Strengthening Benchmark and Outcome Reporting

- Strengthen systems for tracking, reporting, and benchmarking children's achievement, promoting industry advocacy for drowning prevention.

Objective 2: Strengthening the Aquatic Workforce

Improving Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- Develop incentives, programs, and strategies for diverse staff recruitment and retention, promoting the aquatic sector as a career choice.

Further Developing the Workforce

- Support training and professional development, lower access barriers, and professionalise the workforce to attract and retain talent.

Improving Safety, Quality, and Consistency

- Encourage a national framework for workforce development, enhancing service delivery and work environment quality.

Objective 3: Accessible and Inclusive Aquatic Facilities

National Aquatic Infrastructure Strategy

- Urge governments to develop a national strategy for aging aquatic infrastructure, prioritising equitable access in disadvantaged and regional areas.

Strategic Facility Funding

- Encourage governments to establish funding programs for the construction, refurbishment, and maintenance of aquatic facilities.

Encouraging Innovative Planning

- Promote responsible planning, explore public-private partnerships, social enterprise, and sustainability for infrastructure development.

Initiative: New AI-enhanced Drowning Detection System

Case Study: Lane Cove Aquatic Leisure Centre

Lane Cove Aquatic Leisure Centre in Metropolitan Sydney is an early adopter of Lynxight technology, aiming to enhance operations and improve safety.

Objective & context

With multiple water bodies over two levels and significant glare from large glass windows providing significant challenges for supervision at the facility, Lynxight was implemented to assist lifeguards in maintaining adequate supervision and ensuring safety.

Implementation and Integration

The AI technology monitors users of the pool area, with real-time alerts sent to lifeguards' watches, allowing rapid responses to potential risks. The system has a user-friendly interface and data collection capabilities which provide actionable insights for operational improvements.

Results

Enhanced Detection: The system identified incidents unnoticed by human lifeguards, enabling timely interventions.

Improved Vigilance: Lifeguards gained an additional layer of support, increasing their confidence and effectiveness.

Intelligent Decision Making: Data collected informed better decision-making regarding bather load patterns, lifeguard deployment, and risk management.

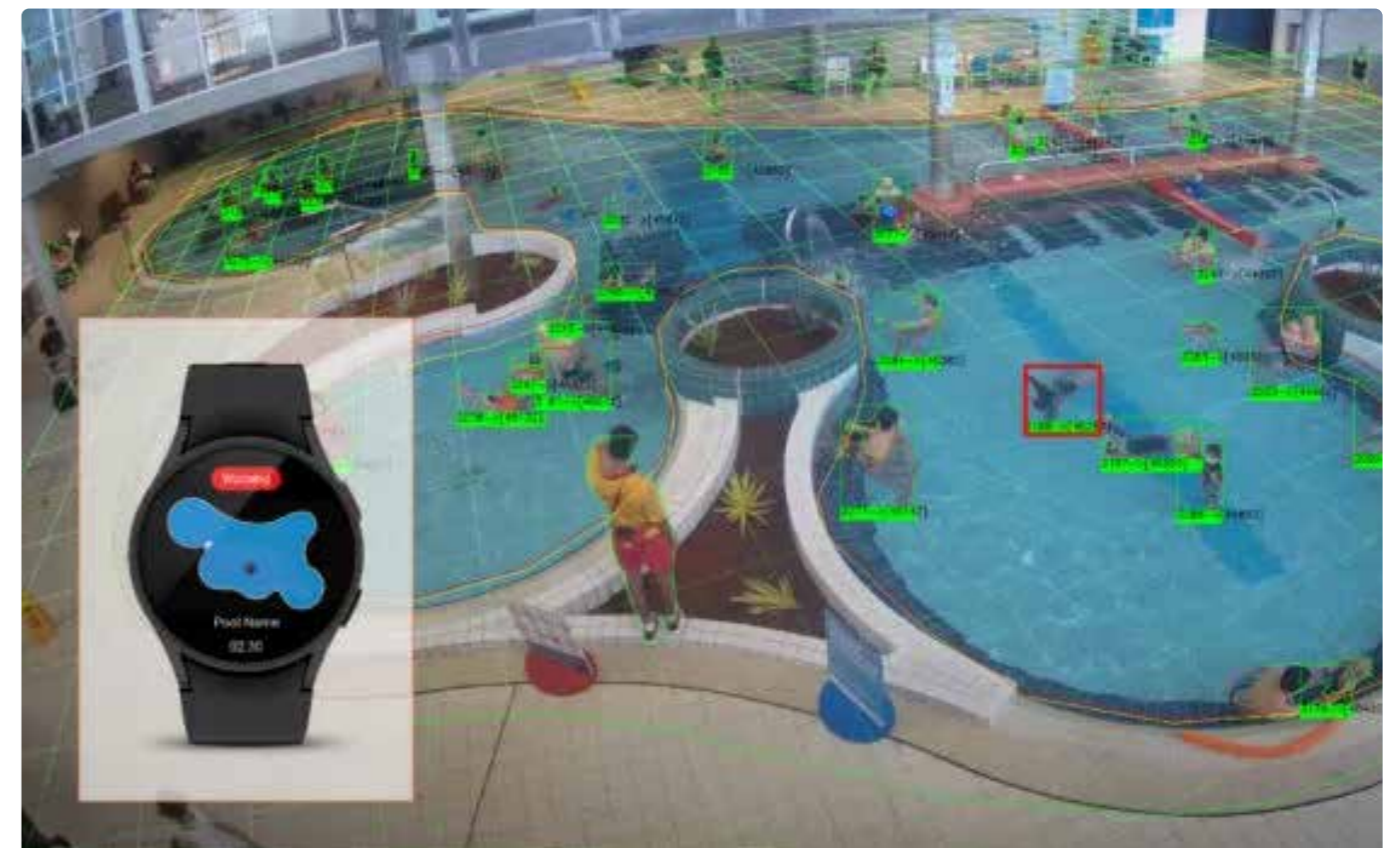
Risk Mitigation: The technology offered control not achievable through training or increased human supervision alone.

Conclusion

While AI technologies significantly support proactive and comprehensive safety management systems, they cannot replace lifeguards. AI cannot have educational conversations with patrons, rescue those in difficulty, or provide resuscitation. However, it can be a powerful tool to enhance lifeguards' vigilance and effectiveness.

Customer Quotes

"Lynxight has added an additional layer of protection and safety for both our staff and customers. I am able to sleep better at night knowing that we are doing everything reasonably practicable to ensure our customers and staff are as safe as possible."
Todd McHardy, BlueFit Group CEO



Report: The Role of Learn To Swim

The report provides recommendations to maximise the potential of learn to swim to improve the nation's swimming and water safety skills and help mitigate the generational risk of drowning. With the COVID-19 pandemic causing pool closures, missed lessons, swim teacher shortages, and prolonged wait lists, existing issues were amplified and continue to impact Australians learning to swim. Some of the key findings were alarming. Despite participation in lessons, a significant number of Australians fall short of minimum swimming and water safety standards, with some missing out entirely. About 40 per cent of children leave primary school without the ability to swim the length of an Olympic pool, and 23 per cent of Australian adults report weak or no swimming ability. The most vulnerable populations face challenges in accessing lessons due to cultural, financial, and language barriers, exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address the findings, the report highlights the need for intentional action to prevent long-term effects on:

- The overall swimming proficiency of the Australian population.
- The persistent risk of drowning for children, young people, and adults.
- Physical activity, as water plays a crucial role in sports, leisure, and recreation.
- Sporting participation and success.
- Tourism, where water and water recreation are essential to domestic and international offerings.

To strengthen learn to swim in Australia, the report identifies four overarching principles:

Universal and equitable access: Ensure widespread access to lessons for everyone.

Reducing barriers: Encourage and support all individuals to learn to swim by addressing cultural, financial, and other barriers.

Regional support: Provide support to regional and remote communities, ensuring the availability of pools and programs.

National benchmarks alignment: Ensure learn to swim delivery meets the National Swimming and Water Safety Benchmarks.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Initiative: National Aquatic Workforce Framework

To advance a longstanding commitment to strengthening the national aquatic industry, Royal Life Saving is working with industry leadership to review, re-think and re-imagine a future-focused National Aquatic Workforce Framework.

Over two inspiring days 50 industry leaders collaborated to tackle the future of the aquatic industry. The goal was clear - to ensure every community across Australia has access to safe places to swim and that the workforce which delivers this is safe, capable, sustainable and strengthened.

With a strong commitment to collaboration, the group took significant steps towards creating a robust framework that not only enhances safety and assurance but also elevates the sector's profile by highlighting the myriad of pathways and career opportunities within the industry.

Extensive workforce consultation and research has been undertaken by Royal Life Saving on behalf of the National Aquatic Industry Committee (NAIC), with extensive backing from the broader industry community, including: a Workforce Profile and Report 2019 & 2020, a Workforce Report 2023, the National Aquatics Symposium 2023, the Workforce Framework Survey 2024 and the National Aquatic Workforce Symposium 2024.

Safety is paramount

Around 80% of workers and leaders identified that safety was their primary value, driver and concern when it came to what was important in the aquatic industry. The aquatic industry workforce framework will serve to strengthen an industry that plays a critical role in drowning prevention and community safety, that overwhelming the industry has identified they all care deeply about.

The framework is intended to be made available in 2024.



Report: National Aquatic Industry Workforce Research

In 2022, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia conducted a National Aquatic Industry Workforce Survey (on behalf of the National Aquatic Industry Committee), with results published in the National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report 2023.

This report was subsequent to the previously published 2019 workforce profile and 2020 workforce report and is critical to informing advocacy strategies and programs centred on challenges and opportunities for the aquatic industry.

The latest survey results compare the workforce pre and post-COVID-19 and the impacts of lockdowns on individual workers and the industry, which is still recovering from the ripple effects of the pandemic.

Key findings

- > Approx. 65,000 workers – down from 2019 pre-COVID numbers
- > 58% female – down 15% from 2019
- > 40% male – up 13% from 2019
- > 34% casual – down 13% from 2019
- > 90% speak English at home
- > 87% born in Australia, but only 4% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- > 70% of lifeguards work less than 24 hours per week and 50% work seasonally
- > 81% of swim teachers work less than 24 hours per week and 72% are casually employed
- > 49% of duty managers/supervisors work more than 24 hours per week and 64% are male
- > More than half of workers perform more than one role
- > 'Making a positive impact on people's lives and the community' rated highest for enjoyment/satisfaction from the role.



Recommendations

Recommendations highlighted in the report include promoting career advancement by establishing clear pathways and support systems. With 39 per cent of the workforce wanting to stay in their roles for more than three years, it's important to recognise that workers are seeking more than just a job.

Total workforce numbers have dropped significantly since 2019, with casual staff impacted the most. To attract and retain quality staff, the industry must develop effective incentives and strategies, with an emphasis placed on cultivating a lifestyle and fostering connections and engagement.

The report also recognises the need to create a diverse and representative workforce by actively seeking individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Report: State of National Aquatic Infrastructure

The State of Aquatic Facility Infrastructure in Australia – Rebuilding our Aging Public Swimming Pools⁴ report provides important research about the age and condition of aquatic assets and highlights the need for deliberate and considered action to plan for the future of these facilities. Built on average in 1968, the impending functional obsolescence of 500 (40 per cent) of public pools by 2030 poses a daunting challenge. To replace these aging facilities, a staggering \$8 billion investment is required, with an additional \$3 billion needed for pools approaching the end of their lifespan by 2035.

Compounding this issue, the majority of aging public pools are primarily concentrated in regional areas, which are inherently less likely to be well-positioned financially to replace these assets when they expire. Additional findings include:

- 64 per cent of all renewal or new aquatic facility construction is currently financed by local government in Australia.
- 77 per cent of aquatic facilities in regional areas are publicly owned.
- 79 per cent of aquatic facilities located in areas with the lowest socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA) decile are publicly owned
- 74 per cent of aquatic facilities located in areas with the highest SEIFA decile are privately owned

The financial burden on regional councils is highlighted as many struggle with the financial burden of maintaining or replacing aging swimming pools, with the unfortunate prospect of pool closures looming. However, closing community pools is inherently very unpopular and consistently aggravates community sentiment and mobilises communities towards involvement in the political process. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative strategies, with the report identifying ways to address the nation's aging aquatic facilities. These include partnering with the private sector to expand services beyond learn to swim, and potentially opening privately owned facilities for broader community use. Exploring possibilities for schools to construct and share aquatic facilities is also proposed. Moreover, facilitating increased cooperation between councils and encouraging collaborative approaches to aquatic facility development by sports clubs and associations are identified as key steps toward rejuvenating the nation's aging aquatic infrastructure.



Scan the QR code to view the full report.

Initiative: World Conference on Drowning Prevention

The World Conference on Drowning Prevention 2023 (WCDP2023), organised by the International Life Saving Federation (ILS) and co-hosted by the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (RLSSA) and Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), brought together 750 experts in drowning prevention from 50 nations at the Perth Conference and Exhibition Centre in Western Australia.

Hosted for the first time in Australia, the conference focused on shaping a global strategy and mobilising for action to address the critical issue of drowning prevention. It addressed various themes, reflecting the challenges and opportunities faced in reducing drowning incidents across different communities, nations, and regions.

Topics ranged from measuring and mapping the drowning burden to advancing drowning prevention through policy, partnerships, and planning. The WCDP2023 Closing Statement outlines a call to shape a global strategy and mobilise local action. The statement encourages aquatic industry personnel to:

- increase collaboration.
- create new knowledge.
- reach further into the communities most vulnerable to drowning.
- for new partnerships, especially with those not yet engaged in drowning prevention.
- capitalise on this exciting time to be committed to eliminating drowning.

[WCDP2023 Closing Statement](#)



Case Study: Transforming Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre into a Zero Emissions Hub

The Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre, situated in Keilor Downs, is one of the first zero emissions aquatic centres in Australia without the use of carbon offsets. As part of the \$60 million development, situated in Keilor Downs, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), on behalf of the Australian Government, invested \$1.53 million into the Centre's Integrated Energy System project.

The Integrated Energy System project incorporated cutting-edge technologies to achieve sustainability milestones. Key components of the renewable energy and enabling technologies include:

- **Four-Pipe Heat Pump System:** This advanced system enables simultaneous heating and cooling, integrating water-to-water heat recovery that will provide whole-of-facility heating for all spaces within the facility, including pools and showers.
- **Thermal Energy Storage System:** Moving away from traditional gas boilers, the centre will adopt an 88-kilolitre above-ground thermal energy storage system.
- **Solar Photovoltaic Panels:** With a capacity of 500 kW, solar PV panels will be integrated to harness renewable energy from the sun.
- **Heat Recovery System:** A heat recovery system will be implemented to optimise energy usage efficiently.
- **Direct Digital Control Systems:** These systems will be installed to enhance control and monitoring, ensuring optimal energy efficiency.

- **Renewable Energy Power Purchase Agreement:** The facility aims to source any excess electricity needed through a 100 per cent renewable energy power purchase agreement.

The Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre aspires to achieve a coveted '6 Star Green Star' rating, and the impacts of the sustainable design elements are anticipated to result in an energy reduction of over 80 per cent, setting a new benchmark compared to conventional aquatic centres.

The Integrated Energy System serves as a pioneering model, showcasing the viability of combining heat pumps with renewable energy solutions. The project also underscores its commercial feasibility, offering a compelling case for emulation by other local governments and businesses across Australia.

The Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre officially opened on 12 September 2022.



Case Study: Parramatta Aquatic Centre - A Sustainable Community Hub

In 2021, the City of Parramatta Council embarked on a project to enhance the community's well-being through the construction of a state-of-the-art aquatic centre. Lipman was appointed to construct the \$88.6 million facility, which is now a cornerstone in the city's commitment to a liveable,

The construction involved moving 60,000 cubic meters of dirt and replanting 489 trees on-site, and the new 40,000-square-metre aquatic centre seamlessly integrates with the lush surroundings of Parramatta Park. Solar panels on the centre's roof will generate over 142,000 kilowatts of power annually, showcasing a commitment to sustainability that aligns with the council's vision and sustainable future, and the centre's aquatic, fitness and social components reflect the council's vision for a thriving and diverse community.

Aquatic Facilities:

- 10-lane, 50-metre heated outdoor pool with ramp entry and shaded pool-side seating.
- Multipurpose pool accommodating competition, lap swimming, school events, and water polo training.
- Dedicated heated indoor learn-to-swim pool for year-round lessons.
- 8-lane, 25-metre heated indoor pool for lap swimming, learn-to-swim, programming, and rehabilitation services.
- Dedicated indoor all-abilities water play zone suitable for babies and children with zero entry points.

Fitness Centre:

- Health and wellness centre with a modern gym and programming rooms for yoga and circuit training.
- Consultant rooms available to allied health professionals.
- Separate club office room.
- Multipurpose room available for community hire.
- Sauna, steam, and spa facilities.

Other Key Features:

- Café with casual seating, serving indoor and outdoor.
- Modern family-friendly change rooms and amenities for indoor and outdoor activities.
- Open park-like outdoor space.
- 186 parking spots, coach set-down area, and bicycle spaces connected to Parramatta Park pathways.
- Single-level centre with accessible lifts and ramps to all facilities and graded lawn area for a seamless user experience.

This once-in-a-generation project was completed in 2023, and the aquatic centre now plays a crucial role in providing health and wellbeing benefits for the diverse Parramatta community. Acting as a meeting place for people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, skills, and interests, the facility has become a hub for social interactions and active lifestyle choices.



Case Study: SWELL - Palmerston Swimming, Wellness, Events, Leisure, Lifestyle Precinct

In 2022, the City of Palmerston embarked on a transformative project to revitalise and modernise the Palmerston Swimming and Fitness Centre into a comprehensive Swimming, Wellness, Events, Leisure, and Lifestyle (SWELL) precinct. The redevelopment project is situated in Moulden, Palmerston, and the focus was on upgrading the ageing facility to cater to a broader range of interests and support the city's expanding population.

The project was undertaken as part of the Council's strategic vision to provide the growing population of Palmerston with a contemporary and family-friendly destination for water-based activities and a healthy lifestyle. The SWELL master plan aimed to create a dynamic space that not only addressed the community's aquatic needs but also provided facilities for events, leisure activities, and wellness programs.

The success of the SWELL project was made possible through collaborative efforts. The City of Palmerston, the Northern Territory Government, and the Australian Government jointly committed \$19.4 million towards the redevelopment, showcasing a shared commitment to community development and wellbeing.



The comprehensive redevelopment included various key features to meet the diverse needs of the community:

- Refurbishment of the 50-metre pool: The existing 50-metre pool was refurbished to meet modern standards, providing residents with a top-notch swimming facility.
- Splash and play area: A designated splash and play area was incorporated, catering to families and individuals looking for a more recreational water experience.
- Events area: An events area was created to host community events, bringing people together for social and recreational purposes.
- Basketball half-court: To promote an active lifestyle, a basketball half-court was included within the precinct.
- Improved facilities: New and improved accessible toilets and change rooms were constructed, ensuring inclusivity and comfort for all visitors.
- Aquatic play structure: An innovative aquatic play structure was introduced, enhancing the overall experience for visitors.
- Modern pool plant and equipment: The facility boasts energy-efficient and modern pool plant and equipment, aligning with sustainability goals.
- Shade features: The inclusion of shade features contributes to a safer and more comfortable environment for users.
- Re-roofing of gym and youth drop-in centre: The gym and youth drop-in centre underwent re-roofing, enhancing the overall infrastructure of the facility.

Construction of the SWELL precinct was completed in late 2023, with the official opening taking place on 17 December 2023, marking a significant milestone for the Palmerston community.

The SWELL precinct has had a positive impact on the Palmerston community, providing a modern and inclusive space for residents of all ages. The redevelopment has not only addressed the immediate needs for aquatic activities but has also created a hub for social gatherings, events, and a healthier lifestyle.



Case Study: Redevelopment of Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre

The Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre (known as NARC), a vital community asset, faced an imperative need for redevelopment due to its end-of-life status. The redevelopment was driven by the City of Darwin Plan 2017—2021, acknowledging the facility's role in meeting the evolving needs of the growing Darwin community and demonstrating a commitment to enhance community well-being through modern and inclusive recreational facilities. The project was supported by the Victorian Government.

An investment of \$63.5 million was earmarked for the redevelopment, covering design, demolition, construction, and landscaping. Despite inflation and rising construction costs, this investment was deemed value for money, ensuring the revamped centre's sustainability and functionality for the next 50 years. The redesign process involved extensive community consultation, allowing residents to contribute to the project's shaping. The collaboration with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation ensured the incorporation of cultural and environmental considerations into both the facility's design and landscaping.

Warren and Mahoney Architects Australia led the design phase, while the construction contract was awarded to Kane Construction Pty Ltd.

The redevelopment prioritised sustainability, targeting a '6 Star Green Star-As Built' rating, reflecting a world-leading level in sustainable design. Initiatives include a carbon-neutral building, rainwater harvesting, greywater reuse, energy-efficient systems, solar panels, and native landscaping. The facility aims to operate with minimal environmental impact while promoting biodiversity and water conservation.

Aquatic and Fitness Facilities

The new facility boasts a range of aquatic amenities, including indoor and outdoor pools, learn-to-swim areas, aquatic playgrounds, and a warm water pool for exercise and rehabilitation. Steam and sauna facilities complement the diverse aquatic offerings, ensuring a comprehensive wellness experience.



Fitness Facilities

An expansive 800-square-metre gym, outdoor fitness training areas, group fitness rooms, and private consult rooms for allied health services provide ample opportunities for community members to engage in health and fitness activities.

Change Room Facilities

The facility prioritises inclusivity with a diverse range of change room options, including individual gender-neutral and family change cubicles, a changing places facility, accessible change rooms, and separate facilities for various groups. Culturally and faith-diverse groups were formally consulted to address specific needs and concerns.

Additional Features

The centre includes a café, crèche, multipurpose room, outdoor spectator areas, and improved entry and exit points to the car park. Electric vehicle charging stations, increased bicycle parking, and pick-up/drop-off zones contribute to the facility's accessibility and environmental sustainability.

The Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre aims to serve the entire Darwin community, fostering inclusivity and accessibility. With a focus on universal design principles, the facility caters to individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Public transport accessibility, proximity to road and bike networks, and hosting capabilities for local events and competitions further enhance its community impact.

The revamped facility, with its modern amenities, inclusive design, and environmental consciousness, is a vibrant new hub for the Darwin community, promoting health, connection, and recreation for generations to come.

> OTHER FACILITIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

South Australia



Salisbury Aquatic and Recreation Precinct, City of Salisbury
Under construction - opening 2024

The City of Salisbury is undertaking a \$28.4 million redevelopment of the Salisbury Aquatic and Recreation Precinct. Co-funded by the South Australian Government, this new facility will provide a diverse range of aquatic, health and leisure services to the community.

- Features:
- New swimming centre building infrastructure and amenities
 - New indoor multi-use lap/leisure pool and speciality program pool
 - Fitness gym
 - Café
 - New outdoor eight-lane 50m swimming pool
 - New outdoor water slides and water play
 - Landscaping improvements
 - Upgraded car park and pedestrian links



Mount Barker, Mount Barker District Council
Under construction – opening 2025

Mount Barker District Council is currently in the construction phase of its new \$22.3 million Regional Indoor Aquatic and Leisure Centre in Mount Barker.

- Features of Stage 1:
- 25-metre, 10-lane competition/lap pool
 - Learn to swim pool
 - Shallow entry leisure pool/water play
 - Warm water therapy pool
 - Gym and fitness rooms
 - Crèche
 - Kiosk/café
 - Toilets/change rooms
 - Meeting rooms

The design will allow future expansion to include other features such as an outdoor 50-metre competition/lap pool, an expanded leisure centre, and indoor sports courts.



Adelaide Aquatic Centre, South Australian Government
Under construction – opening summer 2025-26

The South Australian Government is currently redeveloping a new \$135 million sustainably designed aquatic facility at the existing Adelaide Aquatic Centre in the city's northern Park Lands.

- Features:
- 50-metre, 10-lane indoor pool
 - Learn to swim pool
 - Splash zones and waterslides
 - 25-metre, 6-lane external pool with lagoon
 - Outdoor play area
 - Gym and fitness facilities
 - Spa, sauna and steam rooms
 - Lawned recreation area with barbecues
 - Inclusive amenities and change rooms
 - Improved car parking and public transport access

Queensland

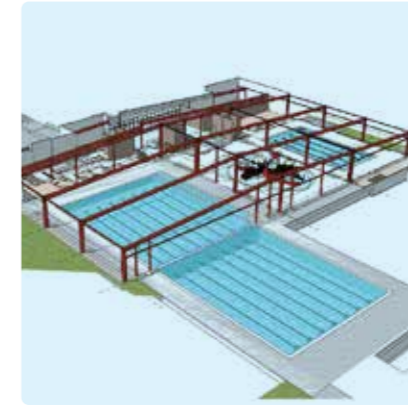


Palm Beach Aquatic and Community Centre, City of Gold Coast
Stage two under construction – opening 2024

The first stage of the redevelopment, which was the 50-metre outdoor pool, was completed in 2010. The second stage of the multimillion-dollar redevelopment of the regional aquatic centre is currently underway and will address the current and future population growth demands of the area.

- Features:
- Heated indoor learn to swim pool
 - Indoor warm water program pool
 - 25-metre outdoor pool
 - New and improved fitness centre
 - Water play
 - Community centre, including multipurpose spaces and meeting rooms
 - Centrally located café with indoor and outdoor seating options
 - New and improved crèche
 - Integrated landscape with pool concourses, terraces, shade and lawns
 - Basement car parking with lift access to the aquatic and community centre.

New South Wales



Inverell Aquatic Centre, Inverell Shire Council
Under construction – opening December 2024

Redevelopment of the \$24.98 million Inverell Aquatic Centre commenced in May 2023 following an extensive community consultation. It will provide a one-stop shop for aquatics, health, and wellness for the Inverell community.

- Features:
- 50-metre, 8-lane FINA-compliant outdoor/indoor pools
 - 20-metre heated pool with a moveable floor to maximise the range of uses
 - Indoor splash park with toddlers' pool
 - State-of-the-art access to ensure ease of use for all mobility ranges
 - Wellness and consulting rooms
 - Multipurpose activity room for group fitness, community activities and training
 - Café and movable retail display area



Canterbury Leisure and Aquatic Centre, City of Canterbury Bankstown
Under construction – opening 2024

As part of the City of Canterbury Bankstown's \$170 million strategic plan to renew and revitalise the Council's services and facilities to improve community health and wellbeing, the 62-year-old Canterbury and Aquatic Centre is under redevelopment.

- Features:
- 50-metre outdoor pool
 - 25-metre indoor pool
 - Indoor heated therapy pool
 - Zero-depth children's water play area
 - Onsite café
 - Sauna and gym

Victoria



Kingston Aquatic Centre,
City of Kingston

Design concept feedback stage – opening 2026

The City of Kingston is planning a new, high-quality aquatic and leisure centre to support the health and wellbeing of the community. The project is jointly funded by the City of Kingston and the Australian Government, who have committed \$20 million towards the project.

The draft concept is available online for feedback. The central elements include:

- 50-metre, multipurpose lap pool
- Learn to swim pool
- Warm water exercise pool
- Leisure pool
- Sauna and steam room
- Café
- Foyer, car parking and change rooms.



Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre,
City of Melbourne

Under construction – opening 2025

Construction is currently underway on the \$68.2 million (revised from the original \$42 million budget) Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre, which is designed to support the diverse needs of the community.

Features:

- 25-metre, 8-lane pool
- Improved gym facilities
- Children's water play
- Three full-sized multipurpose courts
- Health and wellness areas
- Three large flexible spaces suitable for a range of classes and community uses
- Accessible change rooms, including an adult-accessible change facility funded by the Victorian Government
- Cafe.

> METHODOLOGY

The drowning data information presented in this report has been collated from the National Coronial Information System (NCIS), State and Territory Coronial offices and year-round media monitoring. Cases are collated in partnership with Royal Life Saving Society State and Territory Member Organisations and Surf Life Saving Australia and analysed by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia.

Great care is taken to ensure that the information in this report is as accurate as possible. Figures may change depending on ongoing coronial investigations and findings, and many cases are still under investigation (i.e., open) as this report went to press. Royal Life Saving Society - Australia regularly publishes ongoing studies, which provide detailed information on long-term data trends.

Drowning rates per 100,000 population are calculated using population data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publication 'Australian Demographic Statistics' (Cat 3101.0). Percentages and averages are presented as whole numbers and have been rounded up or down accordingly. Some graphics may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Safety Assessment results are collated from safety assessments conducted by Royal Life Saving in the National Pool Safety Assessment System.

Incident and injury data is calculated based on statistically significant datasets provided by major operators. Royal Life Saving Australia thanks those operators for their support of this advocacy.

> CONCLUSION

The aquatic industry in Australia is frequently lauded for its positive contributions to community wellbeing. While there are encouraging signs of industry maturity and progress, significant inconsistencies in the adoption of safety programs and initiatives persist. The occurrence of drowning incidents, injuries, rescues, and near misses is still cause for concern.

Despite the competitive nature of the industry in terms of customer service, programs, technologies, and equipment, it is imperative that safety remains a non-negotiable priority. The industry must not compete on safety; instead, it should collaborate to ensure the highest safety standards are uniformly applied.

The concerning lack of coherent and consistent approaches to child supervision programs, safety assessments, and adherence to industry safety guidelines underscores the need for unified action. Governments, industry groups, and facility owners and operators must work together to align with best practices, enable better benchmarking, and facilitate the sharing of information and practices.

By fully engaging with key industry safety initiatives and maintaining a collective commitment to safety, we can create a safer environment for all. The wellbeing of our communities depends on it.



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