



Curtin University

# 2024 EVALUATION SUMMARY ADULT WATER SAFETY PROGRAM

COLLABORATION FOR EVIDENCE, RESEARCH & IMPACT IN PUBLIC HEALTH

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# INTRODUCTION

Drowning risk changes throughout a person's life course and drowning among adults is an ongoing public health concern. In 2022-2023, 57% of the proportion of Australians who drowned were aged 45 years and older, with drowning above the 10-year average in all age groups except for 65-74 years where there was no change (1). In Western Australia (WA) over the summer of 2022-2023, 57% of deaths from drowning occurred in those aged 35 - 64 years (2). A range of factors influence the risk of drowning in adults including location, swimming capability, pre-existing medical conditions, medications and alcohol use.

Royal Life Saving Society WA (RLSSWA) is funded by the Western Australian Department of Health WA to coordinate an Adult Water Safety Program (AWSP) for adults over 45 years old. The program focuses on key drowning trends, risk factors, and prevention strategies and addresses swimming ability, water safety, and lifesaving skills in the target group. The primary target group for the Adult Water Safety Program is adults aged 45 years and older who reside in Western Australia.

The objectives of the Adult Water Safety Program are to:

1. Increase awareness and knowledge of general water safety and drowning prevention issues (particularly alcohol-related drowning, the impact of pre-existing medical conditions and holiday safety) in adults over 45 years of age in Western Australia;
2. Improve water safety, lifesaving and swimming skills through increased program participation amongst adults over 65 years of age in Western Australia; and
3. Increase knowledge of local water safety and drowning prevention issues amongst regional stakeholders and increase capacity to deliver this information to the community.

The Collaboration for Evidence Research and Impact in Public Health (CERIPH) was commissioned to undertake the evaluation of the Adult Water Safety Program (AWSP). The project team is composed of Associate Professor Justine Leavy, Associate Professor Gemma Crawford, Malena Della Bona and Tneale Maher. The team was responsible for contracting, ethics, providing direction and feedback on documentation, research and overall conduct of the project.

This report presents the final year of the current reporting phase and a collation of the tools used to design, deliver and evaluate the AWSP. Please find for your review:

- Recommendations for Future Practice, Research and Policy;
- Adult Water Safety Program (AWSP) Dashboard;
- Adult Water Safety Program Campaign Message Map; and
- A manuscript "Make the Right Call: Formative evaluation for a water safety program for adults in Western Australia (WA)".

The full versions of the Dashboard and Manuscript are attached to this report.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE, RESEARCH & POLICY

Collating the implications and opportunities of past AWSP publications is an important step to guide future recommendations for the AWSP program design and development. This section of the report has been created by consolidating and synthesising the implications and opportunities from publications both published (3, 4) and unpublished (5, 6). The summary provides key recommendations for consideration as the next iteration of the AWSP commences. These have been grouped under broad headings: Principles of Program Design, Segmentation, Key Populations; Messaging and Media Channels, Strategies (skills and education, peer influence and social support, community engagement and environmental, policy and advocacy) and Knowledge Translation to give greater clarity and cohesiveness to planning considerations.

The Recommendations are tabulated and presented below.

Table 1: Summary of recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS	CLUSTER ANALYSIS	QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS	PROCESS EVALUATION	IMPACT REPORTS
<b>PRINCIPLES OF PROGRAM DESIGN</b>				
A comprehensive health promotion approach that incorporates action across the socioecological spectrum			X	
Focus programs to: (a) encourage aquatic participation for associated health and social benefits; (b) increase the awareness and knowledge of risks and/or prevention; (c) highlight the skills to facilitate safe participation; and (d) address barriers to participation and common misconceptions.		X		
<b>SEGMENTATION</b>				
Use profiles of those who drown (e.g. ‘men who boat & fish in company’, ‘affluent men with poor health’, ‘non-drinkers who boat and fish’, and ‘older men who slipped and fell’, to drive subgroup program direction.	X			
Explore resonance and impact of strategies across age, location, gender, cultural and linguistic diversity indicators as well as aquatic activity participation.		X		X
<b>KEY POPULATIONS</b>				
For older adults, strengthen drowning prevention and aquatic programs designed for the ageing.	X			
For older adults, investigate attitudes, barriers and enablers towards swimming programs, include willingness to participate.		X		
For retirees, investigate the individual and sociocultural factors contributing to drowning risk.	X			X
For grandparents, develop group-level strategies focused on skill building.		X	X	
For those born overseas, more water safety education including strengthening of the links between RLSSWA multicultural swimming lessons to water safety classes, such as Aqua Skills 55+ program.				X
For travellers, further explore behaviour and location as risk factors.	X	X		
For travellers, provide additional messages around travel and risk to the suite of resources, with consideration to locations travellers are likely to visit, such as visitor centres.				X
For men, develop a targeted campaign reminding men of the importance of resuscitation skills.				X

For adults living in regional and rural/remote locations, explore water safety knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.	X	X		
<b>MESSAGING AND MEDIA CHANNELS</b>				
Re-profile media consumption patterns to inform appropriate media distribution channels considering the age profile of the target group.				X
Consider timing of ad placement given the most appropriate time to encourage recall is when water-based activity is front of mind.				X
Develop messages targeting social norms such as participating in water-based activities alone and at unfamiliar locations and specific risk-behaviours reported by participants such as water-based activity alone and not wearing a lifejacket whilst boating.				X
Investigate opportunities to increase social media advertising.				X
Investigate execution novelty and message usefulness in the next phase of media material development.				X
<b>STRATEGIES-SKILLS AND EDUCATION</b>				
Consider strategies which can continue to encourage target group swim ability and participation in water-based activity safely. Include a focus on encouraging those who can swim (albeit not well) to improve their swimming competence and confidence.				X
Incentivise requalification of CPR training.				X
Investigate opportunities to increase the Aqua Skills program in regional WA.				X
Investigate adult risk underestimation associated with aquatic activities and the overestimated ability to cope with that risk.				X
Focus on medications and medical conditions in all health promotion strategies.				X
<b>STRATEGIES-PEER INFLUENCE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT</b>				
Focus on the opportunity for social connection with others, across the suite of program strategies.				X
Continue to explore the role of family and peer influence among adults to understand risk practices and behaviours.				X
Further investigate the role of peer influence in adults to increase program participation.				X

**STRATEGIES-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + ENVIRONMENTAL**

Continue to invest in community engagement events such as outdoor expos, boating and tackle shops, and public pools.				<b>X</b>
Investigate opportunities to increase funding for lifejackets for adults.				<b>X</b>

**STRATEGIES-POLICY AND ADVOCACY**

Continue to build and contribute to advocacy strategies focussed on the commercial determinants of health and the role alcohol marketing has on the environment in which older adults live, work, retire and play is imperative.				<b>X</b>
Explore opportunities to influence policy regarding alcohol advertising featuring waterways.				<b>X</b>
Increase cross-sector partnerships with falls prevention and other health and ageing sectors.	<b>X</b>			

**KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION**

Formally evaluate and translate the findings on the implementation of programs such as Aqua Skills and impact on skills, confidence and drowning risk.	<b>X</b>			
Continue to follow an integrated knowledge translation (iKT) approach that recognises the active collaboration between researchers and research users in all parts of the research process.			<b>X</b>	
Continue to investigate strategies to close the know-do gap and maximise the application of research findings. For example, opportunities exist for rapid research projects (e.g. evidence reviews) and client-initiated projects (to address real world concerns) as well as joint sponsorship of higher degrees by research to build research and evaluation capacity in agencies and capacity and expertise in drowning prevention in the research setting.			<b>X</b>	

## Contact

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