



Water Safety in South Australia

STATE WATER SAFETY PLAN

2021-2030



WATER SAFETY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

State Water Safety Plan 2021-2030

The State Water Safety Plan 2021-2030 (SWSP21-30) has been developed by the South Australian Water Safety Committee (SAWSC) and is intended to complement the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 (AWSS2030).

The SAWSC wishes to acknowledge the individuals and organisations that have contributed to the production of this plan.

The Plan aims to:

- Contextualise the high level priorities contained within the AWSS2030 to the South Australian risk environment
- Guide the activities of organisations providing water safety initiatives and programs according to available resources
- Highlight and encourage opportunities for partnerships and resource sharing to maximise efficiencies and outcomes
- Evaluate progress against objectives to encourage effort in highest priority areas

Note:

This plan does not commit any organisation to allocate resources.

Any reference to documentation within this plan remains the opinion of the author and does not infer the endorsement of the State Government or stakeholder agencies of the SAWSC.

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Message from the Minister

South Australia is blessed with over 5,000 kilometres of pristine coastal waters, around 700 kilometres of the mighty Murray River and an abundance of rivers, lakes, reservoirs and aquatic facilities that are enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

Whether recreational or occupational, being on, in or around any body of water brings with it the risk of drowning.

Whilst one drowning incident is one too many, it is encouraging to see the impact that improved water safety awareness is generating. Through the dedicated work of water safety stakeholders, overall drowning fatalities have decreased nation-wide by 26% over the past ten years to 2020.

The South Australian Water Safety Committee was established to bring Government and non-Government water safety stakeholders together, to encourage collaboration and information sharing to better use statistical evidence to identify 'at-risk' demographics and guide objectives and priorities within the State's Water Safety Plan.

I acknowledge the positive steps that have been taken towards mitigating the risk of drowning and the commitment by the South Australian Water Safety Committee and stakeholders to the objectives of the plan.

Although the numbers of drowning fatalities in South Australia annually may be relatively low, they are preventable. As a state we are committed to addressing that risk. The prevalence of drowning fatalities associated with recreational boating and watercraft use, sightseeing or rock fishing in the coastal environment and those involving people of ethnic backgrounds remain of significant concern.

The fourth iteration of the State Water Safety Plan 2021-2030 has been developed in consideration of the recently released Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 "Towards a nation free of drowning", mirroring Priority Areas and contextualising objectives, strategies and actions to the South Australian risk environment.

I take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to those who have contributed to the formulation of the plan, and encourage any organisation with a stake in water safety and drowning prevention to use it to direct available resources towards foundation programs and priority areas.

On behalf of the Government of South Australia and the South Australian Water Safety Committee, I commend to you the South Australian Water Safety plan 2021-2030.

Hon Vincent Tarzia MP

MINISTER FOR POLICE, EMERGENCY SERVICES AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State Water Safety Plan 2021-2030 (The Plan) is developed and maintained by the South Australian Water Safety Committee (SAWSC) and is South Australia's framework for guiding the ongoing and coordinated commitment to water safety.

To achieve this commitment The Plan looks to address the prevention of drowning and water related injuries through statistical analysis, engagement with stakeholders, tailoring programs, creating safe environments and promoting public awareness.

To measure the effectiveness and efficiency of activities undertaken The Plan features four underlying 'pillars':

1. Collaboration
2. Education (Including creating safer venues, education in water safety and training people with a focus on lifesaving skills.)
3. Legislation and policy
4. Research.

5 key result areas (KRAs) have been established:

1. People
2. Populations
3. Places
4. Activities
5. Risk Factors

While the incidence of drowning in South Australia could be viewed as being relatively low, the Committee considers that all are preventable and continues to strive towards the aspirational target of zero drowning deaths. As a state, we understand the factors that contribute to better water safety outcomes and the barriers to participation. While long-established foundation initiatives such as the Department for Education water safety program and VACSWIM continue and provide opportunities for youth to commence or build upon water safety skills, work is progressing to identify 'high risk' demographics and communities to enable implementation of targeted water safety programs and services.

There is still work to do. Our rich variety of cultures, demographics, participation levels and urban design factors remain a focus of the SAWSC. The Plan is committed to:

- Increased participation in aquatic activities in the community
- Improved water safety awareness for residents in urban environments with wetlands and bodies of water
- Engaging with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community leaders to identify best practice for delivery of water safety messaging
- Engaging with new arrivals, including international students with limited experience in aquatic and coastal environments
- Raising Awareness of dangers associated with severe weather events, such as flooding

DEFINITIONS

The definitions central to the State Water Safety Plan 2021-2030:

Drowning	Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/ immersion in liquid. Drowning outcomes should be classified as death, morbidity and no morbidity
Near Drowning	Former reference to survival after suffocation caused by submersion in water or another fluid, now captured within the revised definition of 'drowning'.
Public and private environments	Coastal and inland waters (beaches, rivers, lakes, creeks, estuaries and wetlands); water bodies on rural properties such as dams and water troughs; drainage, water retention systems and wetlands in developed environments; public and private swimming pools and the broader home environment.
Relevant government and Non-government stakeholders	Organisations that provide programs, services and information that might reduce the risk of drowning deaths or water-related injuries. Programs and services include water safety education, health and safety, rescue operations, water activities such as boating, rowing, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, surfing and scuba diving and planning, development and management of aquatic facilities.
Water Safety	Water safety refers to safety around water, the prevention of drowning deaths and water-related injuries through programs, services and promotions. Water safety relates to the ocean, beaches, lakes, rivers, dams, public and private swimming pools, artificial water features, water tanks, baths or any other body of water.

Introduction

While known as the driest state in Australia, South Australia remains to be blessed with beautiful coastal and inland waters and aquatic recreational facilities that encourage both residents and visitors to participate in water related recreational and sporting activities year-round.

The diversity of those activities, risk environments and other factors such as severe weather events pose significant challenges for water safety stakeholders to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to mitigate the risk of injury or drowning.

The SAWSC was established in 2006 to provide a coordinated approach to water safety related programs, legislation and risk management. The committee is administered by the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) and includes representation from a broad range of Government agencies and non-Government organisations from across the water safety spectrum. The SAWSC promotes, guides and provides subject matter expertise relating to water safety.

The Plan was first developed in 2000 to support the high level targets contained within the National Water Safety Strategy and to guide South Australia's approach to water safety.

The Plan 2021-2030 has again been developed in consideration of the AWSS2030, and through engagement with a broad range of stakeholders.



5 Key Messages

Based on evidence from state and national drowning statistics, the SAWSC has adopted five key water safety messages. These messages are embedded in South Australia's water safety planning and are cross promoted through SAWSC programs and projects



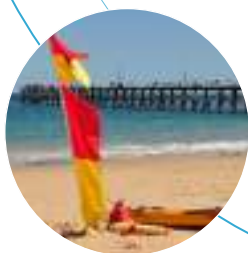
Learn Resuscitation

All South Australians should, where possible, learn to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), as this is a vital step towards preventing death by drowning



Participate in water safety programs

All South Australians that participate in water related activities should undertake a water safety program that is consistent with the national benchmarks.



Swim between the flags

Where possible, South Australians should swim at patrolled beaches between the flags.



Wear a lifejacket when boating

When participating in boating activities, South Australians should wear a lifejacket, especially children, over 55s and those operating open boats alone.



Keep watch around water

Children should be under the supervision of their parents or a responsible adult at all times when in or around water.

South Australia's vision and mission for the prevention of drowning

The Vision

For South Australian's to have safe environments and safe people.

The Mission

To reduce the risk of drowning and injuries from water-related incidents through an ongoing commitment to:

- increased water safety skills and awareness in communities across South Australia
- public and private environments that are designed and managed to minimise risks
- the efficient use of resources by relevant government and non-government stakeholders towards the delivery of high quality water safety initiatives.

The Objectives to:

- identify, enhance and validate effective programs and services developed by organisations in South Australia and nationally
- advance those programs through coordinated and consistent approaches and the efficient use of available resources
- provide strategic direction to proposed programs based on current and predictable risk demographics.

A key outcome remains for organisations to work together to reduce the risk of drowning deaths and water related injuries using The Plan as a framework.

Implementation of the Plan

The Plan will be implemented by the SAWSC and contributed to by a range of industry, community groups and community organisations. The Plan is dynamic and will continue to evolve in reflection of the risk environment and emerging trends.

A Collaborative Approach

Due to the diversity of the risk environment and number of stakeholders, a collaborative and coordinated approach is encouraged to maximise the use of available resources and achieve goals.

At a national level, maintaining strong links to the Australian Water Safety Council provides two-way access to the latest information on statistics, trends and risk mitigation, all of which can be considered by the SAWSC to guide strategies at the State level.

Ongoing monitoring and review

Monitoring and evaluation of The Plan by SAWSC will be vital to ensure that effort is directed towards risk mitigation in both the short and long terms. Due to its very nature, The Plan will continue to evolve as objectives are realised and emerging trends are identified.

Priorities may change and new opportunities may present. The Plan should be embraced and implemented by organisations and Government departments with a commitment to water safety.

The SAWSC will review, validate and where required, realign The Plan to ensure that it continues to maintain relevance and is reflective of the current risk profile and advances in risk mitigation.

At the conclusion of this Plan (2030), it is recommended that a comprehensive review and assessment of The Plan and the role of the SAWSC take place.

Status Reporting

The SAWSC will undertake an annual review that evaluates, validates and assesses progress against actions identified within the plan, to be detailed in Appendix A. The status report will be produced by 30 June each year and report on each target with a reference to being on track, progressing, stalled, complete or no longer relevant.





Major Stakeholders

The Plan is created in consultation with the SAWSC. This Committee is comprised of representatives from Government and non-Government agencies and organisations:

Non-Government

AUSTSWIM – SA Branch
Boating Industry Association
Kidsafe SA Inc
Life Saving SA
Multicultural Communities Council of SA
Royal Life Saving Society of Australia (SA Branch)
Surf Life Saving South Australia Inc
Swimming Pool & Spa Association of Australia
Swimming SA
Volunteer Marine Rescue
YMCA SA

Government

Department for Education
Department for Infrastructure and Transport
Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing
South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission
South Australia Police, Water Operations Unit
South Australian State Emergency Service

For a brief bio on each of these organisations visit

https://www.safecom.sa.gov.au/site/water_safety/watersafety.jsp

National Picture

Evidence-informed decision making is critical to successfully identifying issues, planning prevention strategies and introducing outcome measures. The AWSS 2030 identifies various factors that continue to impact drowning statistics nationally and are represented in this Plan.¹

For every **fatal drowning**, there are three non-fatal drowning incidents

One-year-old toddlers record the highest drowning rate of any age (3.47/100,000 population)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 3% of the Australian population but account for 5% of drowning deaths

19% of drowning deaths among people aged 15 years and over recorded a **Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) $\geq 0.05\%$**

Rivers account for 27% of drowning deaths

Beaches account for 19% of drowning deaths

A **pre-existing medical condition** was present in 36% of drowning deaths

23% of drowning deaths occur while **swimming and recreating**

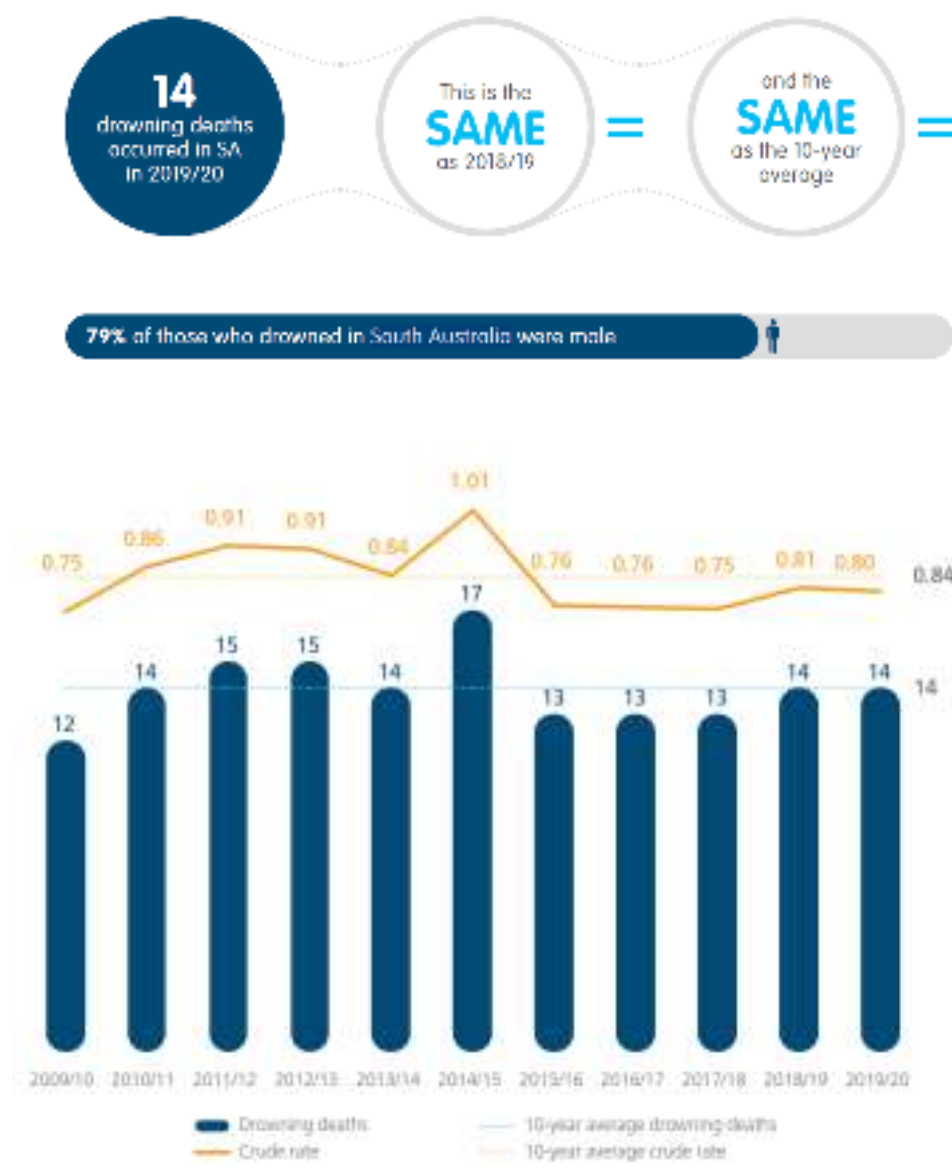
Males drown at a rate four times that of females

61% of drowning deaths occur **outside of major cities**

South Australia

South Australia's population continues to change and grow. According to the last census the population increased at an average of 0.9% per year². While there has been a population increase, South Australia's drowning rates have remained relatively consistent over the ten year period.

Drowning deaths and death rates in South Australia from 2009/10 to 2019/20 and the 10-year average³

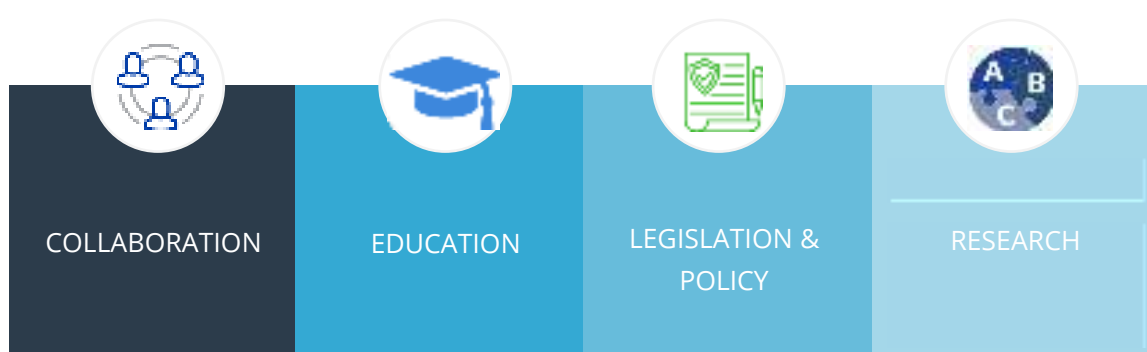


The Plan

Our Vision – Towards a state free from drowning

Our Supporting Pillars (Enablers)

Water safety stakeholders have endorsed four pillars or ‘enablers’ that support the Vision:



Collaboration:

Collaboration with purpose will enable alignment and coordination across the drowning prevention sector. Advocacy efforts can be strengthened by a united voice and consistent safety message.

Education:

Awareness, knowledge and skill development is vital to create water safe communities. Given the opportunity, people of all ages and backgrounds can learn water safety, swimming and lifesaving skills.

Legislation & Policy:

Only legislation, properly authorised and made, can unilaterally create or change rights and obligations. Legislation can be a particularly powerful way to present a policy that addresses public safety.

Strong, evidence-informed policy can generate positive change. Attention needs to be given to all levels of Government and policymakers, as well as the general public.

Research:

Research should be relevant in terms of policy and practice; in turn, policy and practice must be evidence-informed. This is facilitated by building capacity across the sector and establishing strong partnerships between researchers, policymakers and practitioners.

Priority Areas

Priority areas for South Australia have been determined by industry stakeholders based on identified issues and opportunities, and are consistent with the AWSS2030.



Objectives, Strategy and Actions

High level objectives, tailored strategies and individual actions are contained within Appendix A, along with an annual status rating.

As the Plan progresses new issues or trends may emerge, while objectives, strategies or actions may have been achieved or are no longer relevant.

The action status will be updated in Appendix A following the completion of the annual review.








Action status is categorised as:

- On track – denotes areas where substantial progress has been made and where organisations are committed to sustaining those programs and initiatives.
- Progressing – denotes areas where progress has been made towards a positive outcome but more work is still needed.
- Opportunity – this denotes areas where data is showing that there is still important work to be achieved to prevent drowning or the action has decreased in priority. Generally, new resources need to be sourced, developed and utilised to address these matters.
- Complete – denotes areas where a positive outcome has been achieved and the action completed with no further activity required.
- No longer relevant - denotes where the risk has been removed or been mitigated to an acceptable level .













Appendix A – Status Report








Objective	Strategy	Action	KRA	Status
Reduce drowning deaths in children younger than five years of age. <i>Pillar: Education.</i>	Strengthen programs that raise awareness and build skills in supervision.	Programs are evidence based and aimed at parents, carers and supervisors of children younger than five.	1	On Track
Influence/establish effective legislation and promotion. <i>Pillar: Legislation and Policy</i>	Promote, monitor and enforce safety barrier/isolation fencing.	Create or strengthen systems that promote, monitor and enforce safety barrier/isolation fencing such as four-sided pool fencing, safe play areas on farms and fencing near public water hazards.	1 3	Progressing
		Promotion, monitoring and enforcement programs are implemented and evaluated in all jurisdictions.	3 5	
		Review current legislation to evaluate and validate these arrangements; make recommendations to government for amendments.	1	
Ensure effective programs are in place. <i>Pillar: Education</i>	Investigate the effects of water familiarisation in children younger than five.	Explore the opinion that water familiarisation builds safe behaviours in children younger than five.	1	On Track
	Promote community wide rescue and resuscitation skills.	Create a state-wide campaign to promote resuscitation skills to parents and carers.	1	Progressing
Reduce alcohol-related drowning deaths. <i>Pillar: Collaboration</i>	Implement a state-wide alcohol and drowning reduction plan.	Explore opportunities for collaborative programs with government and non-government agencies focussing on:	3	Progressing











		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeting high-risk demographics of young males aged between 18-24 reviewing legislation prescribing blood alcohol levels for recreational boat operators and random breath testing encouraging local councils to designate and promote 'alcohol- and drug-free' aquatic environments (e.g. along rivers, lakes, beaches and jetties). 	 	
		Collaborate with recreational boating and fishing groups, alcohol- related advocacy groups and government to build effective policy.		On Track
Increase the number and value of lifesaving people. <i>Pillar: Education</i>	Strengthen the skills, standards and recognition of paid and volunteer lifesavers, lifeguards and instructors.	Develop training programs and ongoing professional development to enhance the skills and provide support to this workforce.		On Track
		Review the recruiting of individuals from high- risk populations such as Indigenous, rural and CALD groups as potential instructors or lifesavers.		Progressing
	Promote water safety and lifesaving education to school-aged children.	Continue to provide the annual VACSWIM water safety program targeting primary school aged children at both metropolitan and regional locations.		On Track
		Provide high-quality water safety programs within the school curriculum state wide and influence policy to promote maximum student participation.		On Track



Reduce drowning deaths in older people (> 55 years of age). <i>Pillar: Education</i>	Create awareness campaign targeting drowning prevention in older people.	Evidence-based older person drowning prevention campaign is implemented and evaluated.	2	Opportunity
		Implement strategies that foster more inclusive aquatic venues and associated programs to meet the growing needs of older people.	3	Progressing
Reduce drowning deaths in rural and remote locations. <i>Pillar: Legislation and Policy</i>	Develop and implement a rural and remote water safety strategy.	Increase access to tailored water safety programs for people living in rural and remote areas.	2	Progressing
		Address Water safety education and instructor shortages in regional, rural and remote areas. Maintain qualified instructors and lifeguards in regional and rural communities.	2	Progressing
Reduce drowning deaths on beach locations. <i>Pillar: Legislation and Policy</i>	Maintain and strengthen safety management on the coast.	Review safety management strategies for beaches and coastal environments to respond to increasing use and pressures on surf rescue operations (e.g. signage, outpost radio alarms on non-patrolled beaches).	3	On Track
		Provide high-quality water safety programs targeted at high-risk populations of surf beach drownings such as CALD, Indigenous and tourists.	2	Progressing
		Coordinate across- industry development and delivery of water safety programs and promotions for rural schools, isolated and Indigenous communities.	2	On Track
Create and maintain safer venues. <i>Pillars: Education, Collaboration</i>	Identify and address risk-management issues in aquatic environments.	Develop and implement guidelines that provide a framework for planning and assessing aquatic environments, including wetland developments and	3	Progressing

		identifying risk issues such as weather conditions and the safety of environments.		
		Through the LGA, encourage local councils to undertake a risk audit of aquatic and coastal environments, including public access wetland developments (particularly those considered higher risk) and develop design and management strategies to address issues.	3	On Track
Reduce drowning deaths in home swimming pools. <i>Pillar: Legislation and Policy</i>	Promote, monitor and enforce four-sided private pool fencing.	In partnership with water safety agencies, promote four-sided isolation fencing for private swimming pools.	1	Opportunity
		Establish greater reporting of drowning and near-drowning incidents through health agencies.	1	Progressing
		Review current legislation with the view to validate or to make recommendations to government to amend legislation.	1	On Track
		Implement compliance testing for maintenance of pool fences, gates and latches.	1	Opportunity
Reduce drowning deaths in high-risk activities. <i>Pillars: Education, Legislation and Policy</i>	Increase access to water safety and drowning prevention education for recreational watercraft users.	Provide information packages, website content and attend appropriate events to further promote programs to recreational boating groups.		Progressing
	Advocate for consistency in policies. Legislation and best practice established for recreational boating safety.	Review current legislation on personal floatation devices (PFD) with the view to validate or to make recommendations to government for amendment.	4	On Track
Influence legislation and policy. <i>Pillar: Legislation and Policy</i>	Implement and promote relevant legislation and policy.	Implement and promote existing legislation relating to boating use, pool fencing and swimming-pool management.	1 4	Progressing

		Coordinate an industry position on standards, regulations, policies or legislation relating to water safety.	 	Progressing
		Form sub-committees as required to review high-risk demographics with the view to validate current legislation or make recommendations to government for amendments relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life Jackets coastal signage code of practice (public pools) safety barrier legislation (private spa pools and pools).	 	Progressing
Foster collaboration. <i>Pillar: Collaboration</i>	Share industry information.	Collate and distribute information on water safety programs, guidelines, resources and other relevant information to industry organisations.		Progressing
		Identify and develop collaborative projects that aim to address program and service gaps or improve existing service delivery.		Progressing
		Formulate collective approaches to promote water safety.		Progressing
Base activities on substantiated research on key drowning issues. <i>Pillar: Research</i>	Foster drowning and aquatic injury research.	Continue to develop and collate reports on drowning deaths and related injuries specific to South Australia.		On Track
		Utilise drowning, near drowning, injury and rescue data and relevant reports to assess risks and determine priority target groups and projects.	 	On Track

		Advise government of potential over-represented demographics and, where necessary, provide recommendations to mitigate against continued risk.	 	On Track
Maintain effective communication and promotion of key drowning challenges. <i>Pillar: Collaboration</i>	Facilitate communication of strategies to stakeholders and the community.	Through the SAWSC continue to discuss and develop a coordinated response to water safety. Committee to continue to meet quarterly. Ensure South Australian representation on relevant national bodies, forums and at conferences.		On Track
		Develop a combined water safety promotion package that provides a consistent message and promotes the various water safety organisations and programs. The package could be used to promote water safety to target groups such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CALD communities • 18-34 year-old males • 0-5 year-old children • Indigenous communities 	 	Progressing
		Review and continue to update the South Australian Water Safety website, which presents state water safety information and opportunities.		On Track
		Cross-promote water safety and aquatic programs to strengthen water safety skills and user responsibility including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water safety information linked to the use of watercraft and associated equipment 		Progressing

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> watersafetyinformation linked to activities such as rock fishing, surfing, canoeing, scuba diving and kayaking home owner responsibility, such as safe fish ponds, water tanks, troughs, drains, swimming pools and other water features information that increases carer and parent awareness of their responsibilities for supervising children around water. 	  	
		<p>Further promote the adoption of standards by community and user groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> swimming pool safety, including the location, design of swimming and spa pool safety barriers (enforcement by local councils) CPR education and awareness by private pool and spa owners. 	 	Progressing
Reduce drowning risks in targeted populations. <i>Pillars: Education, Collaboration</i>	Increase availability of water safety information for CALD communities.	Further develop and implement across-industry development and delivery of water safety programs and promotions for regional, rural schools, isolated and Indigenous communities.		On Track
	Increase participation rates in water safety programs for CALD communities	Promote a community development approach to working with CALD communities.		Progressing
		Encourage translation of programs, resources and signage.		On Track
Reduce the effects of disasters and extreme weather on drowning deaths.	Continue to conduct coordinated marine rescue training and exercise programs aimed at validating and	Facilitate the training and education of local government and other responders working in and around flood and fast-moving water.	 	Progressing

<i>Pillar: Collaboration</i>	improving multi-agency responses to marine- related emergencies.			
		Promote awareness across the community of the dangers associated with moving and driving through flood and fast- moving water.	 	Progressing