Drowning Deaths at Public Swimming Pools

Dr Bernadette Matthews
Principal Research Associate
Aquatic Risk and Research
Life Saving Victoria
http://www.cvent.com/d/yvqzhg

SURVEY
DROWNING DEATHS IN VICTORIA
Drowning deaths in Victoria
Males at greatest risk

05/06 06/07 07/08 08/09 09/10 10/11 11/12 12/13 13/14 14/15 15/16

Females
Males
Young children and older adults

Fatal drowning rate per 100,000 persons in Victoria by age 2005-2016

- 0-4
- 5-14
- 15-24
- 25-44
- 45-64
- 65+

Avg 2005-2015
2014/2015
3 out of 4 drowning victims, country of birth unknown
Coastal drowning increase

Activity prior to drowning

- 23% walking playing near water
- 17% swimming, paddling, wading
- 15% boating
- 11% bathing
Fatal and non-fatal drowning in public pools

- 1:15 fatal to non-fatal drowning
- Highest proportion of drowning incidents in those aged 5-19 years and 0-4 years.
  - Majority of these are non-fatal.

Age-specific percentages of fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents attended by paramedics in Victoria, 2007-2012.

Matthews et al, 2016
AWSS and VWSS Goal 7

- Reduce drowning deaths by strengthening the aquatic industry
- 15 objectives
- Alignment with WHO actions Global Report on Drowning
- Alignment with EMV actions SAP
Research

• Public pool supervision
  ▪ Literature review
  ▪ Detailed case analysis
  ▪ Evaluation of new resources - WAW
  ▪ Pilot projects - supervision interventions – use of VR
  ▪ Eye-tracking research
DROWNING DEATHS AT PUBLIC SWIMMING POOLS IN VICTORIA:
DRAFT WORKING DOCUMENT.
Overview

- Purpose
- Need for change
- Drowning deaths summary
- Key challenges
- Management of PSP in Victoria
- Industry best practice
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Prevention opportunities
- Draft recommendations
Purpose

• To outline the recommended actions for Government to address the implementation of a recent coronial recommendation:
  “to establish a central oversight and regulation body for public swimming pool operation in Victoria, to ensure safety standards are applied and upheld consistently across the industry”

• LSV engaged the aquatic industry to investigate the practical implications of the coroner’s recommendation, and the related recommendations outlined in the Drowning at Public Swimming Pools Review (2016).
Current status

Consultation
• Awaiting feedback from key industry bodies- due Friday 21 October
• Increase sample size of facility staff survey responses- survey closes Monday 24th October.

Report
• In draft and due to be completed by the end of October.
• Will be submitted to government in the first week of November.
NEED FOR CHANGE
Drowning deaths at public swimming pools

• 35 unintentional drowning deaths at PSP in Victoria in the past 25 years*
• 71% (29) occurred at a council owned aquatic and leisure facility
• 26% (10) occurred at non-council owned pools (typically privately owned health and fitness centres, or hotels/resorts)
• 83% (30) male
• Median age - 27 years
• Lack of supervision and pre-existing medical conditions:
  ▪ Parent or carer supervision lacking in 5 out of 7 child drowning cases
  ▪ 37% pre-existing medical condition (e.g. heart disease, epilepsy)
Drowning deaths at public swimming pools

- 66% occurred in the period 1991-2000
- 20% (7) of cases occurred in the two year period from 2014-2015, the highest since 1998-1999
Drowning deaths at public swimming pools

• 3% of the total unintentional drowning deaths in Victoria over the last 25 years.
• Controlled environment significantly reduces the likelihood of a drowning incident.

“No one should drown at a public pool.”

• GSPO industry best practice.
• But they have no formal, legal or regulatory status.
Key challenges

- Facilities seen as a cost centre to Councils.
- Until recently, failure to acknowledge the health and wellness benefits.
- No formal classification of commercial pool types.
- No register of Victorian commercial pools.
- There is a lack of incentive to generate change in the PSP operations.
- There are no references to operational requirements for water safety in PSP within the relevant Acts, regulations, or standards for Victoria.
- No consistently applied KPIs for water safety which PSP operators should be measured against.
- There is no centralised coordinating body that monitors, evaluates and reports on all aspects of safety of public swimming pools in Victoria. In particular there is:
  - No follow-up of coronial recommendations that have been made following fatal drowning incidents to monitor their implementation.
  - No ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting of non-fatal drowning and other major aquatic incidents at PSP.
- There is no requirement for facilities to undertake a safety audit or assessment.
  - 47% of PSP in Victoria haven’t undergone a recognised independent auditing process in over 5 years, and
  - 30% of PSP in Victoria haven’t undergone a recognised independent auditing process in over 10 years.
- No single responsible organisation or Government Agency /Department responsible for PSP safety in Victoria.
ABOUT THE INDUSTRY
Management of PSP in Victoria

- Predominantly managed by councils, private or non-profit organisations.
- 278 council-owned aquatic facilities in Victoria.
  - 31% open all year
  - 69% seasonal
  - Primary responsibility for the planning, development, management, and maintenance of these facilities resides with local government.
- Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) is part of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and provides financial support in the form of grants.
  - Focus of SRV: maximise economic and social benefits provided by the sport and recreation sector.
- 500-1000 commercially owned pools
  - No formal classification of these commercial pool types
  - No register of Victorian commercial pools
Industry best-practice

- GSPO
- Existing steering committees provide input into GSPO
- Risk Management
  - ISO 31000
  - AS3460
Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- Independent auditing process
  - PSAs
- Independent reporting
  - State of the Industry Report
  - Victorian Drowning Report
- Local Government Performance Reporting Framework
Prevention opportunities- Industry engagement

- Industry benchmarking and reporting:
  - Provide an opportunity to ensure the quality and safety of PSP in Victoria as well as greater transparency and availability of performance indicators.
    - Formalise GSPO as minimum standard for safety.
    - Formalise pool safety audits/assessments
- Communication and training:
  - The requirement to engage and communicate with the Victorian aquatic industry in all areas of interest is more vital than ever.
    - Greater coordination between organisations/agencies for consistent messages.
- Reporting of aquatic incidents:
  - Incidents monitored and reported on an annual basis to ensure greater oversight.
- Watch Around Water:
  - Supervision is based on a combined supervision effort between parents/carers and facility lifeguards.
  - Expansion of the program to incorporate other ‘vulnerable groups.”
Draft recommendations

1. Formal recognition that the GSPO is the industry minimum standard for safety.
2. LSV support WorkSafe by providing pool safety specific training for WorkSafe personnel.
3. The PSA process or approved equivalent be included as part of the performance criteria or part of management contractual requirements, to provide facility owners, for example Local Government, with an independent evaluation of the contract manager’s compliance to industry best practice.
4. That independent pool safety audits be conducted every 2-3 years.
5. That the relevant PSA scores/date of most recent PSA be included in the Local Government Performance and Reporting Framework
6. Promotion of the above by WorkSafe, DHHS, LGV, LSV and ARV.
7. Register of PSP in Victoria.
8. That data on notifiable incidents i.e. that result in death or serious injury be provided to LSV for annual reporting of agreed measures through the State of the Industry Report.
9. LSV to provide data annually to WorkSafe on PSA conducted.