



19<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**EMBARGOED AND NOT FOR USE BEFORE THURSDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020**

**STORY AT A GLANCE:** Royal Life Saving's latest Keep Watch campaign highlights a staggering 41% of drowning deaths among children under 5 in Australia occur in 1-year-old toddlers.

Its alarming research reveals that, over the past 18 years, 507 children aged 0 to 4 have drowned. 207 (41%) were children aged 1 year or below.

Royal Life Saving says the risk of drowning triples as soon as a child starts to crawl, peaking shortly after a child's first birthday.

Royal Life Saving is also highlighting that sadly for every fatal drowning in this age group, there are a further 8 children admitted to hospital following a non-fatal drowning. Some will sustain lifelong brain injuries as a result.

**STORY IN FULL:** Forty-one per cent of drowning deaths among children under five in Australia occur in one-year-old toddlers, according to data published by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia.

Research figures show that, over the past 18 years, 507 children aged 0 to four years drowned. Of these, 207 (41%) children aged one year drowned. For every fatal drowning in this age group, a further eight children are admitted to hospital following a non-fatal drowning. Some may sustain lifelong brain injuries.

The majority of deaths in children aged 0 to four occurred in backyard swimming pools (53%). They happen during the summer months (39%). Accidental falls into water was the leading activity prior to drowning in this age group, accounting for a huge 78% of all deaths. Almost all of these deaths were due to a lack of active adult supervision.

Royal Life Saving's new Keep Watch Campaign kicks off in time for summer to remind parents and carers about the risks of child drowning. Justin Scarr, CEO at Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, said "The risk of drowning triples as soon as a child starts to crawl, peaking shortly after a child's first birthday, just as they start to become more mobile. At this age, they are curious and unpredictable. It is vital you keep constant watch. We are reminding parents that 'Kids can't help themselves around water, you need to.'"

He added "Drowning deaths in young children are wholly preventable and have a huge impact on a family. We also know that children who survive a drowning incident often experience lifelong health issues, which in some cases, may lead to premature death. The emotional toll this has on children, their parents and carers is terribly sad."

#### Media Release

“Royal Life Saving is asking all parents to Supervise, Restrict, Teach and Respond. Active adult supervision prevents child drowning. Any distraction is dangerous and puts young children at risk around water. Whether it is a phone or social media use, or carrying out everyday tasks, such as leaving a child unsupervised momentarily to cook, take the rubbish out or collect the washing, no task is worth your child’s life.”

“We ask parents and carers to always Keep Watch. It is also essential that people have well maintained pool fences and pool gates that are checked regularly to make sure they are not faulty and never prop them open.”

Since 2002, drowning deaths in children aged under five have decreased by 74%, but drowning remains one of the leading causes of accidental death in this age group. Mr Scarr notes “Royal Life Saving’s Keep Watch campaign has made significant inroads in helping to reduce drowning in young children since it was launched nearly 30 years ago, but we know that implementing simple safety measures and changing pool safety behaviours can realise our vision of zero child drowning deaths.”

#### Notes to the editor

Royal Life Saving Australia’s Keep Watch public awareness and education campaign has been running for more than 25 years. It recommends the following safety tips to keep children safe around water:

1. **Supervise.** Actively supervise children around water
2. **Restrict.** Restrict children’s access to water
3. **Teach.** Teach children water safety skills
4. **Respond.** Learn how to respond in the case of an emergency

For more information about Royal Life Saving’s Keep Watch campaign, visit [www.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.royallifesaving.com.au)

**For media enquiries, please contact Media Key on 0409 420 112 or 03 9769 6488.**

**Images and Broll can be found at**

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