

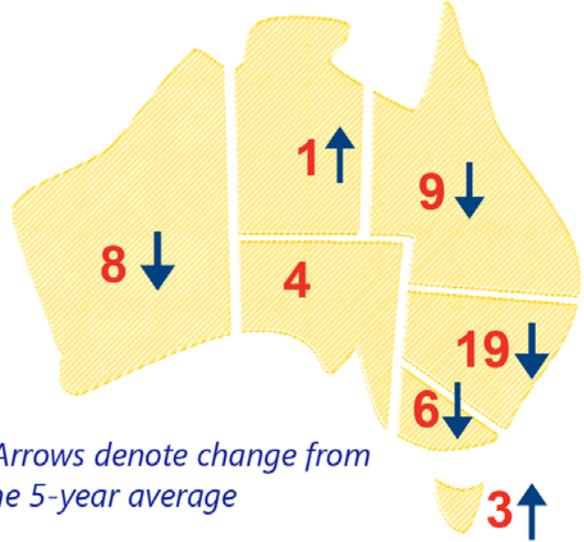


**SUMMER COASTAL  
DROWNING REPORT  
2025/26**

# SUMMER COASTAL DROWNING SNAPSHOT

**50**

**COASTAL DROWNING DEATHS**



**-14%**

**DECREASE FROM 5-YEAR AVERAGE**



**92%**

**MALE**



**48%**

**BEACH**



**30%**

**SWIMMING/WADING**



**42%**

**RIP-RELATED BEACH DROWNING**

**40% JANUARY**

**56% AFTERNOONS**

**56% WEEKDAYS**



**3,989**

**RESCUES**



**994,946**

**PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS**



**17,221**

**FIRST AID TREATMENTS**

Calculated as a percentage of rescues and preventative actions that would otherwise have been fatal, these interventions are estimated to have resulted in an additional:

**697**

**LIVES SAVED**

**418**

**CRITICAL INJURIES PREVENTED**



**\$4,185,161,303**

**VALUE TO COMMUNITY**

# SUMMER DROWNING ON OUR COAST

Historically, 40% of coastal drowning deaths in Australia occur during summer. During the 2025/26 summer, 50 coastal drowning deaths were recorded, equivalent to one coastal drowning death every two days of summer. However, this summer welcomes a -14% decrease in coastal drowning deaths from the 5-year average and -21% from last year, with substantial declines from average also observed at beaches (-34%), for swimmers (-42%) and of incidents involving rip currents (-43%). Public holidays and long weekends were especially risky with drowning risk more than 3.6 times greater. These tragic incidents have enduring and devastating impact on families, responders and whole communities, and these numbers would have been far worse if not for the 3,989 rescues, 994,946 preventative actions, and 17,221 first aid treatments performed by Surf Life Saving personnel. Modelling estimates that these actions alone have saved an additional 697 lives and prevented 418 critical injuries with services valued at \$4,185,161,303 to the community.

**50** COASTAL DROWNING DEATHS

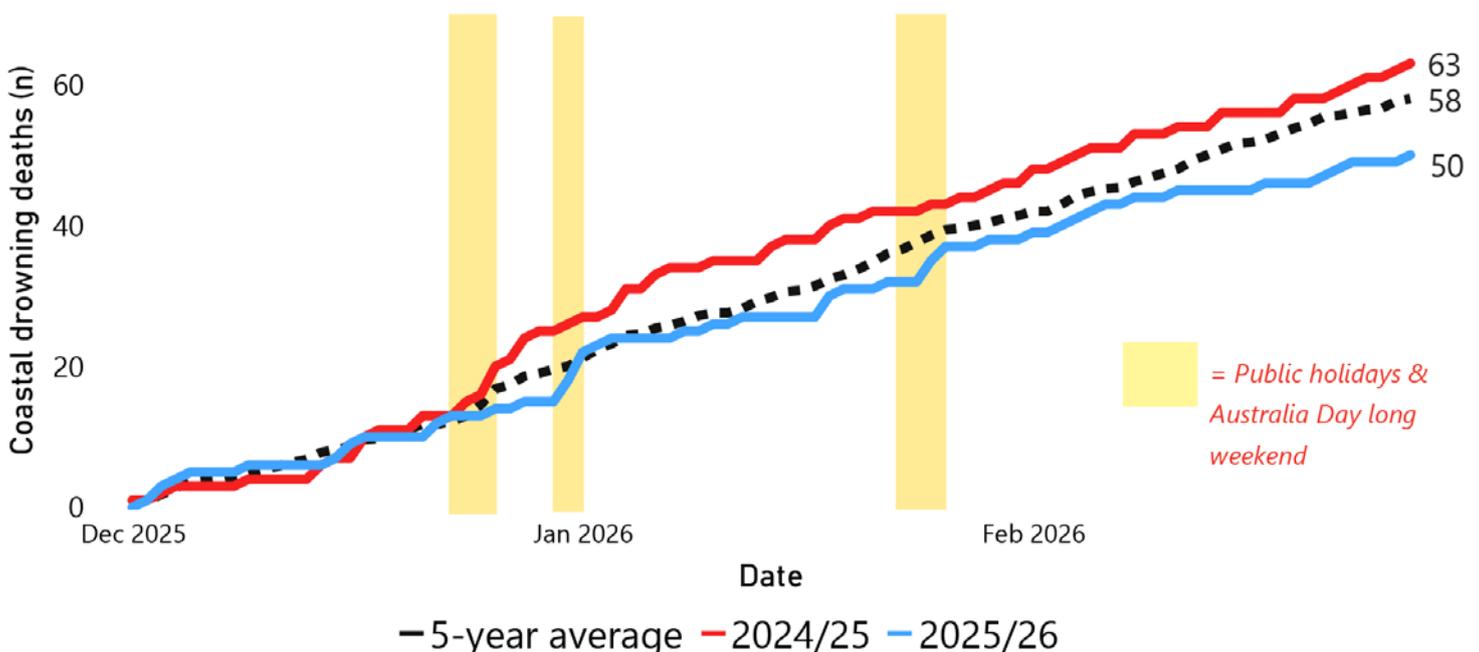
DROWNING DEATHS PER DAY **0.56**



46% 55+ YEARS OLD  
92% MALE

Coastal drowning risk was **3.6x** higher on public holidays and long weekends

## Daily summer coastal drowning trends



# SUMMER COASTAL DROWNING



81

ALL DROWNING DEATHS\*



50

COASTAL DROWNING DEATHS



10

RIP-RELATED DROWNING DEATHS



48%

BEACH



92%

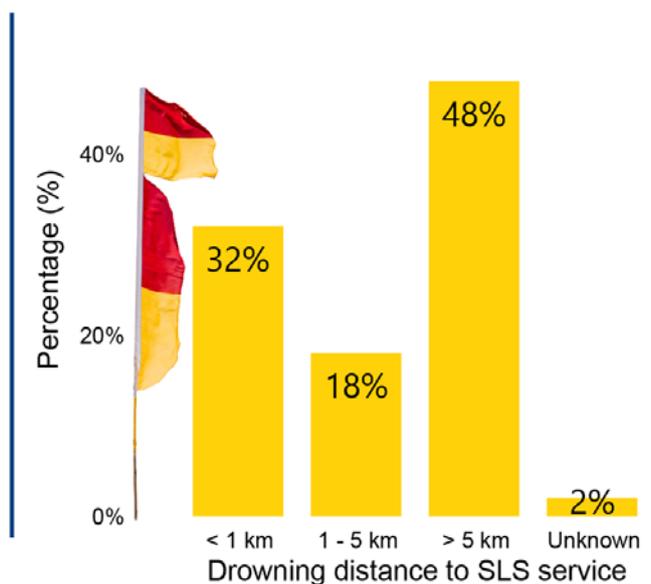
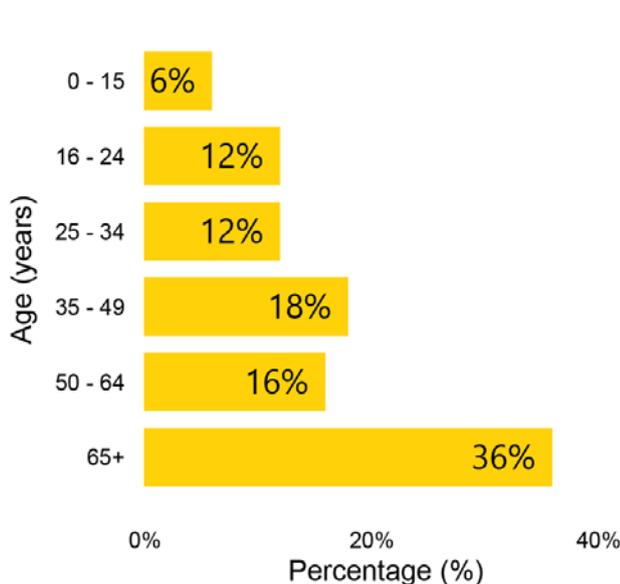
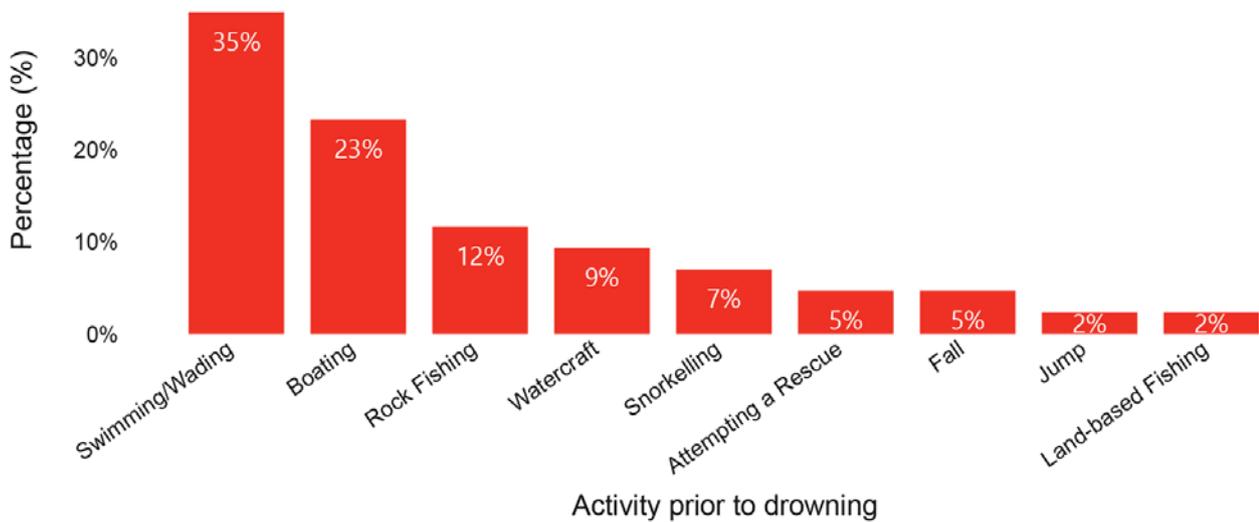
MALE



66%

>1KM TO SLS SERVICE

\* Includes drowning deaths in all aquatic locations nationally



# SUMMER COASTAL DROWNING



24

BEACH INCIDENTS



9

OFFSHORE WATERS



6

ROCK/CLIFF LOCATIONS



## 5-YEAR SUMMER COASTAL DROWNING ANALYSIS

Coastal drowning overall decreased from the 5-year average, with summer decreases observed in males (-8%), at beaches (-34%), for swimmers (-42%) and of incidents involving rip currents (-43%). Sadly, increases were observed for boating (114%) and rock fishing (32%) incidents and those that occurred in offshore waters.

COASTAL DROWNING		% CHANGE
2025/26	50	5 YR AVG. 58
		-14%

>1KM from SLS service	
2025/26	33
5 YR AVG.	40
% CHANGE	-18%

15-39	
2025/26	14
5 YR AVG.	16
% CHANGE	-13%

55+	
2025/26	23
5 YR AVG.	26
% CHANGE	-10%

Male	
2025/26	46
5 YR AVG.	50
% CHANGE	-8%

Regional / Remote	
2025/26	27
5 YR AVG.	32
% CHANGE	-15%

Swimming / Wading	
2025/26	15
5 YR AVG.	26
% CHANGE	-42%

Boating	
2025/26	12
5 YR AVG.	6
% CHANGE	114%

Rock Fishing	
2025/26	5
5 YR AVG.	4
% CHANGE	32%

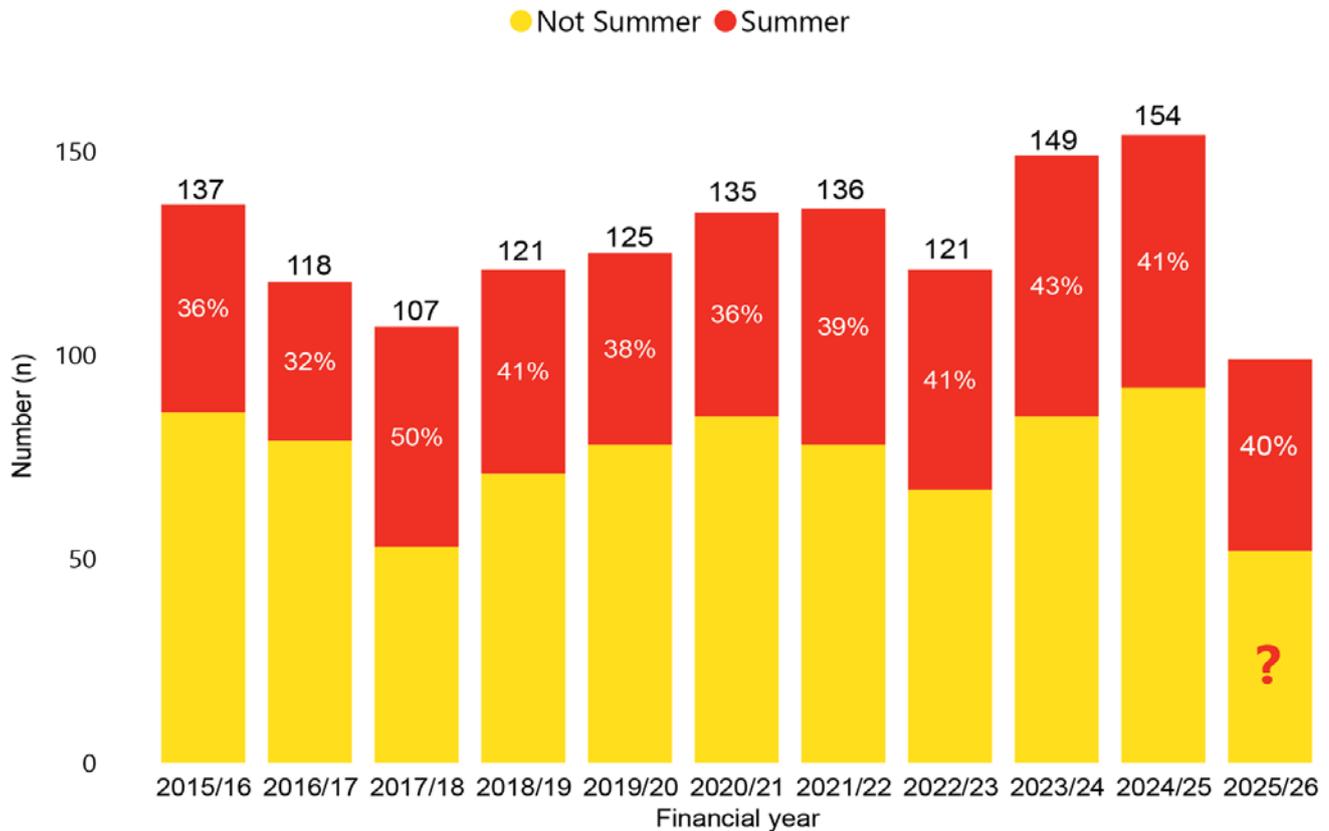
Beach	
2025/26	24
5 YR AVG.	36
% CHANGE	-34%

Offshore	
2025/26	9
5 YR AVG.	8
% CHANGE	10%

Rock / Cliff	
2025/26	6
5 YR AVG.	8
% CHANGE	-27%

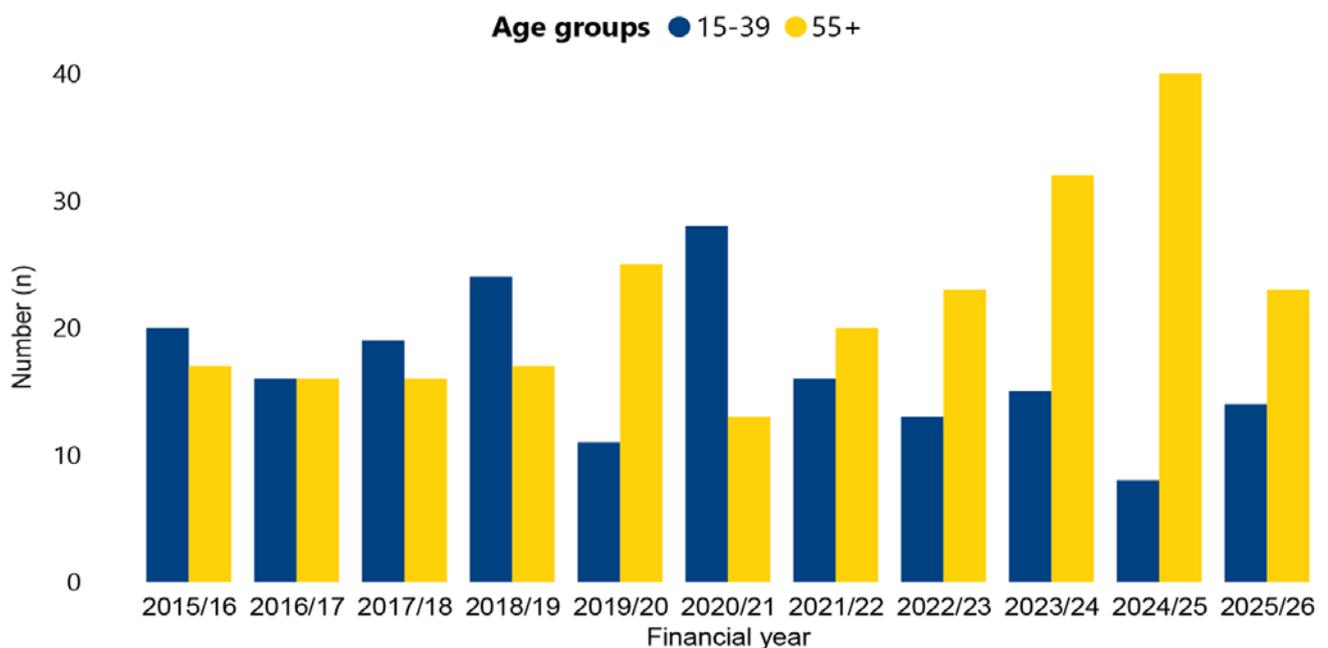
Rip Currents	
2025/26	10
5 YR AVG.	17
% CHANGE	-43%

# SUMMER COASTAL DROWNING TRENDS



The figure above shows 10-year trends in annual coastal drowning deaths and the proportion that occurred during summer. On average, two in five coastal drowning deaths occur during the summer months (40%).

The figure below shows 10-years for two high-risk groups for coastal drowning - 15-39 year olds and those aged 55+ years. Traditionally, younger age groups (especially young males) were thought to be a significant group of risk, but recent trends reveal that over 55 year olds have emerged as the dominant age group at risk of coastal drowning, comprising 46% of the 2025/26 coastal drowning burden.



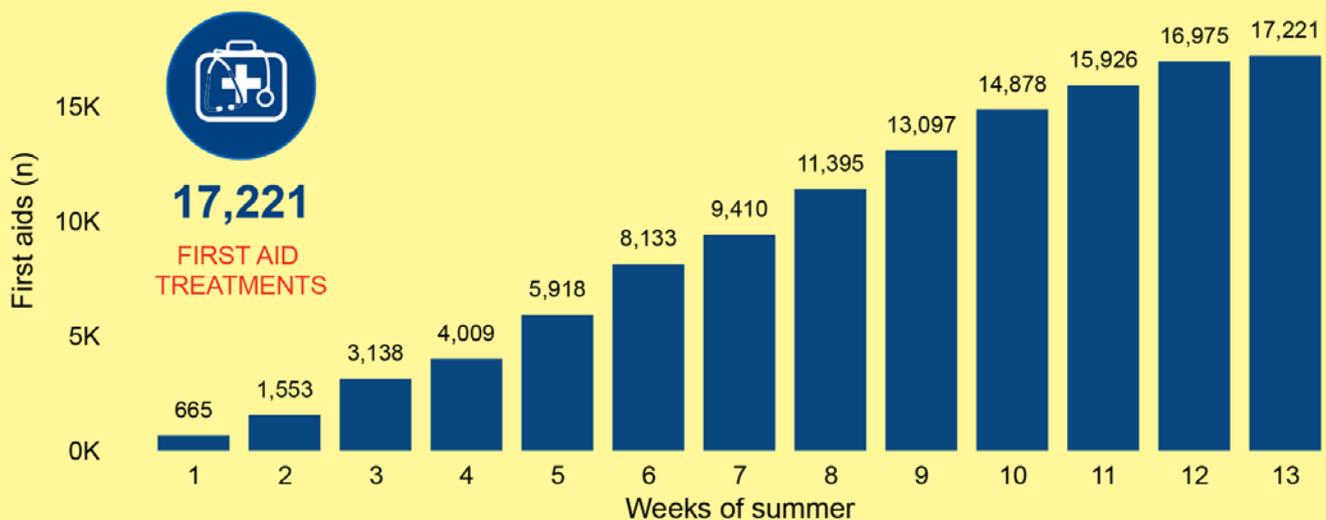
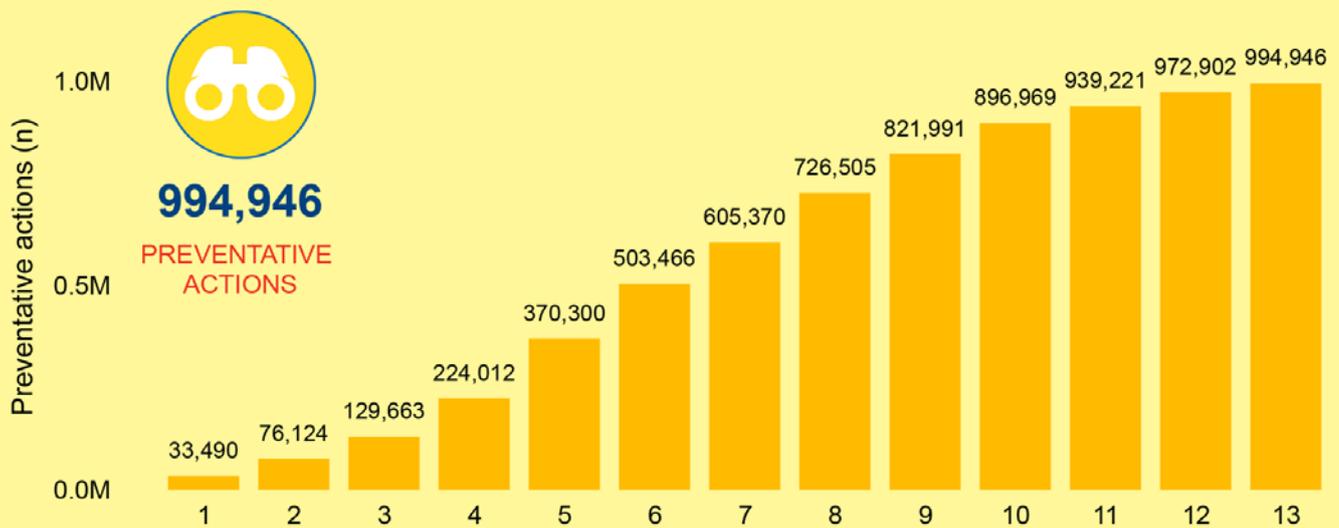
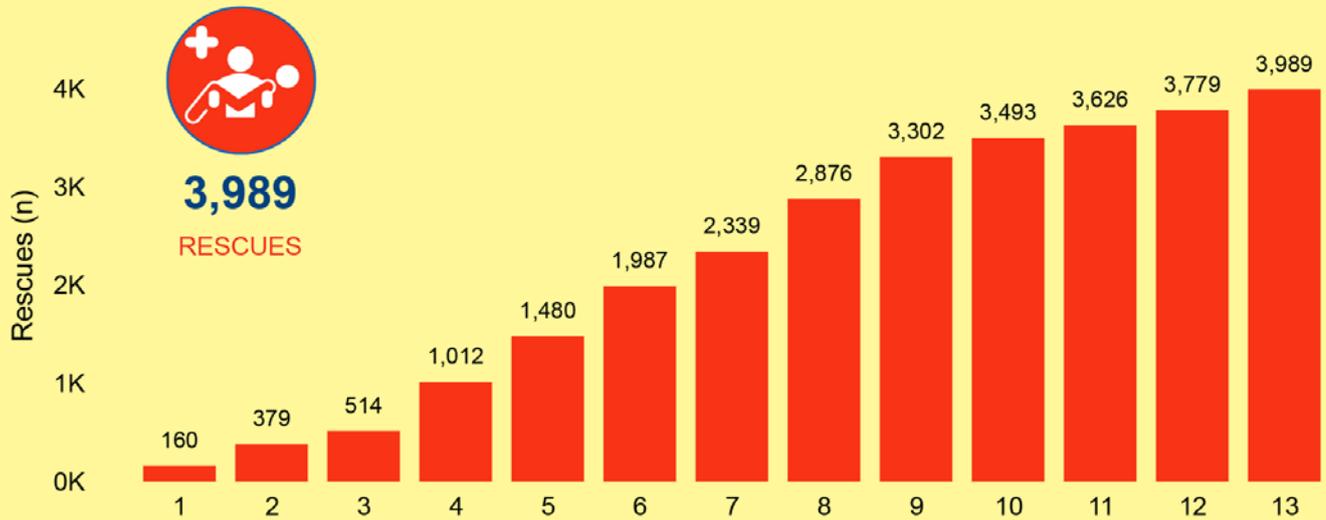
# SUMMER LIFESAVING ACTIONS TRENDS

Over the 2025/26 summer, Surf Life Saving members performed 3,989 rescues, delivered 994,946 preventative actions, and provided 17,221 first aid treatments. Modelling estimates that these actions have saved an additional 697 lives and prevented 418 critical injuries with services valued at \$4,185,161,303 to the community.



**\$4.19bn**

Value to the community





SUMMIT

QANTAS

VE



# BEACH PASSPORT

In partnership with



**50k**

USERS  
OVER  
SUMMER

**13.4k**

COURSES  
COMPLETED  
OVER SUMMER

**52k**

COURSES  
COMPLETED  
TO DATE

**12 MILLION**

ADVERTISING  
CAMPAIGN TOTAL  
REACH

Beach Passport is an SLSA initiative that was launched in November 2024. Over 37,000 people completed the course in year one and in December 2025 new features were added to further enhance the educational outcomes.

**New features in 2025 include:**

- New rip current identification module
- 5 new languages bringing the total available to 7: English, Simplified Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, Arabic, Japanese and German

SLSA's 'Stop Look Stay Alive' national water safety campaign had a total reach of 12 million over summer via TV, out of home and online channels. This resulted in a further 13,400 Beach Passport course completions over summer, bringing the total to 52,000 to date.

Beach Passport is available to adults, teens and children at

[www.beachpassport.org.au](http://www.beachpassport.org.au)



# GLOSSARY

**ATTEMPTING A RESCUE** Trying to retrieve a person in distress and deliver them to a place of safety.

**BAY** A body of water partially enclosed by land but with a wide mouth, affording access to the sea.

**BEACH** A wave-deposited accumulation of sediment usually sand, but ranging in size up to boulders, deposited between the upper swash limit and wave base.

**BOATING** Using either a powered vessel or sailing boat for pleasure and/or fishing.

**BYSTANDER** A person who is present at an incident but not part of it initially (e.g. member of the public).

**COASTAL** Describes the foreshore, seabed, coastal water, and air space above a large body of water (harbour/bay/inlet), including areas up to 3nm offshore and of which the landward boundary is the line of mean high water, except where that line crosses a river/inlet, the landward boundary at that point shall be the point upstream that is calculated by multiplying the width of the river/inlet mouth by five. (Adopted from the Resource Management Amendment Act 1993 New Zealand).

**COD** Cause of death.

**DROWNING** The process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid; outcomes are classified as death, morbidity, and no morbidity.

**DROWNING DEATH** A fatal drowning incident arising from the process of respiratory impairment as a result of submersion/immersion in liquid.

**DROWNING RATE** A comparative rate of drowning deaths to the size of the population for a given area or activity.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE** An action taken by an SLS entity in response to a call for assistance from an emergency management organisation.

**FALLS (TRIPS/SLIPS)** Events that result in a person coming to rest inadvertently on the ground or other lower level.

**FIRST AID** Assessments and interventions that can be performed by a bystander (including surf lifesaving personnel) or by the patient with minimal to no equipment.

**INCIDENT** Any unplanned event requiring lifesaving services intervention.

**JUMP(ING)** The activity of launching off a cliff, rock platform, pier, jetty. Aka tombstoning (UK/Europe/North America).

**LIFESAVING SERVICE** A coordinated group that exists to provide aquatic safety services to the public. This includes Surf Life Saving Clubs, Lifeguards, SurfCom, RWCs, RIBs, JRBs, ORBs, Rescue Helicopters and 4WD units.

**OCEAN** The seabed, water, and air space above the water between 3nm and 12nm (the Australian Territorial Sea) offshore.

**OFFSHORE** Describes the coastal water area beyond the surf zone and inshore area from 500m to 200nm.

**ORB** Offshore rescue boat.

**OTHER** An uncommon known activity or location not otherwise listed (e.g. paragliding, jogging, mangrove, swamp)

**PATROL** Service undertaken to monitor activities in/around an aquatic environment and respond accordingly through either preventative actions or rescue operations.

**PATROL FLAGS** Red and yellow horizontally divided flags which are set after performing a risk assessment to determine the most suitable area for swimming. The flags identify a zone for swimming and bodyboarding within a patrolled location.

**PATROLLED LOCATION** A location supervised by a lifesaving service (including by Surf Life Saving Clubs and lifeguards).

**PREVENTATIVE ACTION** Direct action taken to reduce or eliminate the probability of a specific rescue, first aid or other reportable incident from happening in the future.

**RESCUE** The retrieval of a person in distress, delivering them to a place of safety and the application of first aid and basic life support as may be required.

**RIB** Rigid-hull inflatable boat.

**RIP CURRENT** A seaward flowing current of water moving through a surf zone.

**ROCK/CLIFF** A rock platform that may or may not have a high steep face.

**ROCK FISHING** The act of attempting to catch fish from a coastal rock platform.

**RWC** Rescue watercraft.

**SCUBA DIVING** Swimming underwater with the aid of scuba equipment for recreational or commercial purposes.

**SNORKELLING** Swimming with a snorkel and face mask. Includes freediving and spearfishing.

**SURF LIFESAVER** An individual who undertakes patrols at a beach or other aquatic environment. They are typically a non-salaried member qualified in public safety and aquatic

**SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB** An SLS affiliated not-for-profit organisation that has volunteer members who provide coastal safety services to the community.

**SWIMMING** Moving through water by moving the body or parts of the body.

**UNPATROLLED LOCATION** A location not actively supervised by a lifesaving service, including at times outside of patrol hours and areas away from supervised, flagged zones.

**WADING** Walking through water while partially immersed.

**WATERCRAFT** Non-powered recreational aquatic equipment. E.g. surfboards, stand- up paddle boards, bodyboards, or kayaks.

# REFERENCES

**METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS** The Summer Coastal Drowning Report 2025/26 contains information on coastal drowning deaths reported in the media that occurred in Australian waters over summer (1 December 2025 - 28 February 2026). This information is correct as of 11:00 am 1 March 2026. All care is taken to ensure the statistical information included within this report is correct. However, since the primary data source is media and case information has not been validated further, this data may be amended at a later date. For this report, drowning death data was collated from multiple sources, including SurfGuard, the IRD, SurfCom, and by monitoring media reports. The information for these cases is preliminary and is likely to change as they are further verified using coronial reports.

**DROWNING DATA LIMITATIONS** The data in this interim summer report are considered preliminary and likely to change as many coronial investigations remain open. Deaths are excluded as a coastal drowning if they are reported as 'intentional deaths', they occur at inland or non-aquatic locations, or drowning/ immersion' is not a contributory factor. In an effort to produce a timely report on our current summer data we acknowledge that these figures, which have been collated from multiple sources, are preliminary and subject to change as case investigations occur during the coronial process. The authors are responsible for the use made of the data in this report.

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