

# Key findings

## How many drowning deaths were there around the coast?

- During the 2007-08 season, 88 coastal drowning deaths\*\* occurred. This is an increase of six on the previous season.
- The annual total of 88 coastal drowning deaths is higher than the five year average of 82.

## Who were they?

- Males continue to dominate the coastal drowning death figure, representing 78 of 88 drowning fatalities (89%).
- For the first time in recent years, the 20 to 29 years age bracket has the highest representation at 24%. In the 2006-07 season, most coastal drowning deaths occurred in the 30 to 39 age bracket.
- 18 drowning death victims (20%) have been confirmed to have had either a foreign nationality or birthplace, up from 11 (or 14%) in the previous season.

## Where did the drowning deaths occur?

- 33 coastal drowning deaths occurred in New South Wales, 18 in Victoria, 11 in South Australia, 10 in Western Australia with eight in both Queensland and Tasmania. The Northern Territory had no coastal drowning deaths.
- 36 (41%) coastal drowning deaths occurred less than 1km from a lifesaving service and just over 30 (34%) occurred more than 5km from a lifesaving service.

## When did the drowning deaths occur?

- In the 2007-08 season the most fatal time of the day was between midday and 1pm with nine (10%) coastal drowning deaths, but 22 (25%) occurred between 6pm and 8am.
- Saturday was the most dangerous day of the week with 22 (25%) drowning deaths. 55 (63%) drowning deaths occurred during the week.
- 18 coastal drowning deaths occurred during March, showing an irregular late season peak.
- During the period December to March, 53 coastal drowning deaths occurred. This equates to an average of one every two to three days.

## What were the people doing when the drowning deaths occurred?

- Around the coastline, 38 (43%) of all those who died by drowning were swimming or wading at the time.
- 16 (18%) coastal drowning deaths involved a rock or cliff related activity.

## Other deaths around the coast

- 25 coastal deaths\*\* occurred during 2007-08 many involving some variant of heart complication.
- In eight ocean drowning deaths and one ocean death\*\*, the person was involved in diving, snorkelling or boating.

## What did it take to save more than 13,600 lives in the water in 2007-08?

- 40,000 active surf lifesavers conducting more than 12,500 rescues.
- 500 paid lifeguards conducting more than 1,100 rescues.
- 1,112,205 hours of patrols with countless more spent in coaching, competing, officiating, training, assessing and club administrative duties.
- Six Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopters, 2,620 rescue boards, 913 inflatable rescue boats (IRBs), 294 defibrillators, 509 oxy vivas, 403 spinal boards and many other pieces of sophisticated first aid and rescue equipment...

...and millions of dollars of government, corporate and community support.

Surf Life Saving Australia thanks our major corporate partners...



Australian Government

...and all our other partners and donors who contributed to our lifesaving activities.

To help us save more lives, please donate to the Surf Life Saving Foundation at [www.lifesavingfoundation.com.au](http://www.lifesavingfoundation.com.au) or call us on 1800 642 925.



For any information on any matter relating to coastal safety, please contact us:

### Surf Life Saving Australia

02 9300 4000 or [www.slsa.com.au](http://www.slsa.com.au)

### Surf Life Saving New South Wales

02 9984 7188 or [www.surflifesaving.com.au](http://www.surflifesaving.com.au)

### Surf Life Saving Northern Territory

08 8985 6588 or [www.lifesavingnt.com.au](http://www.lifesavingnt.com.au)

### Surf Life Saving Queensland

07 3846 8000 or [www.lifesaving.com.au](http://www.lifesaving.com.au)

### Surf Life Saving South Australia

08 8354 6900 or [www.surfrescue.com.au](http://www.surfrescue.com.au)

### Surf Life Saving Tasmania

03 6223 5555 or [www.slst.asn.au](http://www.slst.asn.au)

### Life Saving Victoria

03 9676 6900 or [www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au](http://www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au)

### Surf Life Saving Western Australia

08 9243 9444 or [www.mybeach.com.au](http://www.mybeach.com.au)

# 2008

## NATIONAL COASTAL SAFETY REPORT

SUPPORTED BY WESTPAC



An overview of lifesaving activities and coastal drowning deaths in Australia during 2007-08



# What is Surf Life Saving?

Surf Life Saving is Australia's major water safety and rescue authority, and is the largest organisation of its type in the country. Our core activities are:

- **Community safety**—performing more than 13,600 rescues last season.
- **Health and fitness**—providing a range of surf sports opportunities, from local to international, for our members, as well as a range of community sporting events.
- **Education and training**—providing leadership and personal development for our junior and youth members as well as community education and training.
- **Australian Coastsafe Services**—providing risk management services to local government and other organisations.

## What are our strategies to reduce coastal drowning deaths?

Our strategic management plan 'Saving Lives in the Water' outlines the priorities for Surf Life Saving in Australia through to 2011. Key among them are:

- **Using 'smarter' lifesaving services and systems** – for example by improving our coastal incident reporting and data analysis functions.
- **Extending our lifesaving services** – for example, by identifying and prioritising locations ('blackspots') and times which require improved and/or additional lifesaving services.
- **Conducting proactive education campaigns** – for example, working with our partner, Westpac, to use the branch environment, statements and online to remind and educate Australians about surf safety. The Westpac Surf Safety Campaign features Olympic champion and former volunteer surf lifesaver, Grant Hackett, in a surf safety DVD to be screened in Westpac branches over summer. In addition, wallet cards with instructions for resuscitation, how to spot a rip and surf safety advice will be available free of charge from Westpac branches. Statement envelopes will also include surf safety reminder tips.

## What would happen around our coastline without surf lifesavers and lifeguards?

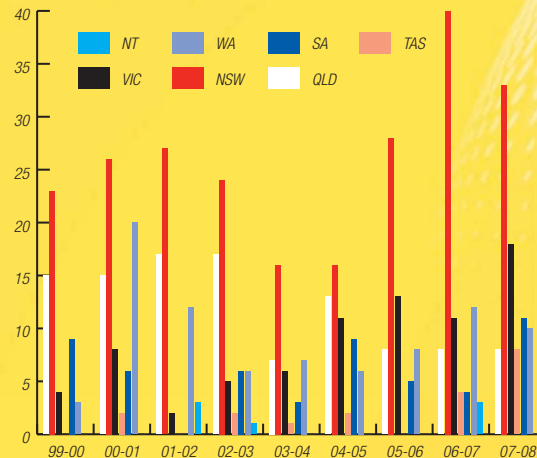
- An independent study into the social and economic benefits of surf lifesaving in Australia\* found that if not for the presence of surf lifesavers and lifeguards on our beaches, 485 people would die, while 311 would be seriously incapacitated each year.

\* **Valuing an Australian Icon: The Economic Contribution of Surf Life Saving in Australia**, The Allen Consulting Group, 2005

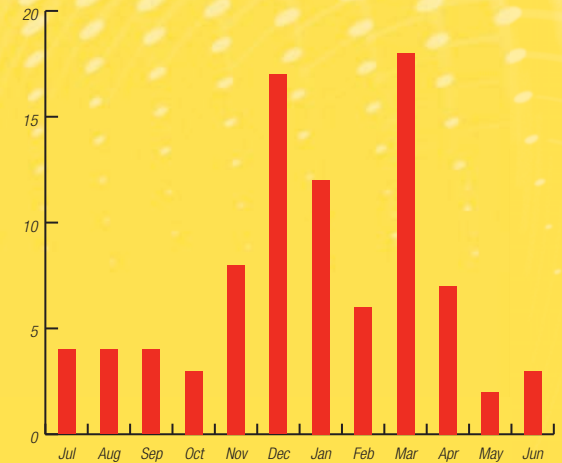
For a full copy of the 2008 National Coastal Safety Report, go to [www.slsa.com.au](http://www.slsa.com.au) (see 'about us/news'), send us an email on [info@slsa.asn.au](mailto:info@slsa.asn.au) or call us on +61 (0)2 9300 4000.

# At a glance – what happened around the coastline in 2007-08?

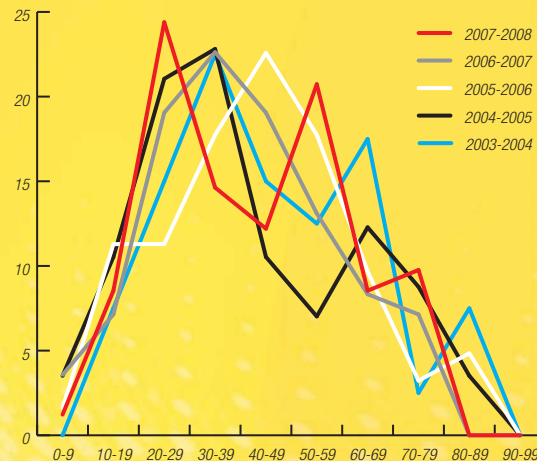
Graph 1: Nine year coastal drowning death analysis by state



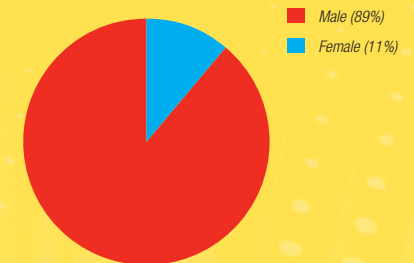
Graph 3: Coastal drowning deaths 07-08 by month



Graph 2: Five year coastal drowning death by age



Graph 4: Coastal drowning deaths 07-08 by gender



### \*\*Definitions

**Coastal drowning death** – a fatality arising from the process of respiratory impairment as a result of submersion/immersion in liquid where the location of the drowning is on the coast or in the ocean up to 1nm offshore.

**Ocean drowning death** – a fatality arising from the process of respiratory impairment as a result of submersion/immersion in liquid where the location of the drowning is in the ocean greater than 1nm offshore, but no greater than 12nm (the Australian territorial waters limit).

**Coastal death** – a fatality arising from various circumstances occurring (e.g. heart attack, suicide, boat collision) where the location of the death is coastal or in the ocean up to 1nm offshore.

**Ocean death** – a fatality arising from various circumstances occurring (e.g. heart attack, suicide, boat collision) where the location of the death is in the ocean greater than 1nm offshore, but no greater than 12nm (the Australian territorial waters limit).