

**Northern Territory Branch**

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The Contribution of sport to indigenous wellbeing and mentoring

Royal Life Saving Northern Territory has been actively conducting lifesaving sport and services in remote communities for the past five years. Prior to this, services were delivered in an adhoc manner dependant on a user pay system and occasional grants. There has been increased participation in sport during this time and this is directly accredited to Federal funding linked to real community outcomes.

Sport has benefits at all levels – individual, team and community but the universal benefit is a non- threatening environment with opportunities to participate in an array of sport and active recreation activities. Measuring increased participation and community involvement is relatively easy, however we are missing individual success stories, records of mentors quietly and consistently making a difference and community lessons and learnings that need to be shared.

Our indigenous people are fighting a battle of disadvantage that has created a destructive lifestyle. Sport is not the vehicle for change it is the Highway – with many users and this infrastructure needs to be strong, resilient and committed to real values for the long term. This Highway is not measured in KM's, the direction is change with real achievements and travel time is probably 20 years+ (generational).

The funding model is critical to the success of closing the gap and must be delivered with an appropriate community development plan to ensure strong relationships are formed. This is the only way we can ensure a collective approve, working together across all government and non-government sectors with an action plan that is reducing the gap.

Supporting documents include:

1. NT remote pools working together 2011-2016
2. ISRP (Indigenous Sport Recreation Program) 3 year snapshot
3. Royal Life Saving NT Remote Service Delivery and Community Action Plan
4. A Review of Swimming Pools in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory - Royal Life Saving
5. Royal Life Saving 9 year drowning report

How do sporting bodies increase opportunities for indigenous participation?

Historically remote communities in the Northern Territory have participated in sport, particularly in AFL. Over the past 5 years, thanks to Federal funding, other sports have

been able to provide access and opportunities for Indigenous people. This includes club and individual participation and in many cases career opportunities have arisen in sport and recreation, local government, NT Government and small business. Royal Life Saving NT has directly observed increased confidence in individuals not just in the aquatic environment but in the community, including the confidence to represent their community in other forums such as workshops in the Territory and interstate. Please see Attachment 1, case study on Shane Kerinaiaua from Pirlangimpi Please see Attachment 2, ISRP snapshot

Participation is probably the strongest link to health and wellbeing and this is why sport and active recreation is so critical, it can be part of the solution – the activist and motivator. Sporting bodies increase opportunities for indigenous participation by providing services locally – in their community as this will seed sustainability. In communities with swimming pools, Royal Life Saving assists management to ensure the swimming pools are staffed by qualified people and that the pool is open. We teach swimming and water safety for a week, mentoring local people to become swimming instructors and they also translate our instructions into language if required. The lifesaving carnival with a community barbeque at the end of the program is a highlight and local people assist with the cooking and running of the carnival. Participation occurs at several levels and there are also training and employment opportunities. Our sport is unique in that it also provides water safety knowledge that builds the foundation skills in drowning prevention.

Please see Attachment 5, 9 year drowning report

Similar opportunities are available in communities without swimming pools, minus the employment opportunities at the local pool. Identifying a safe open water environment and conducting programs there are often more fun than the swimming pool.

How do sporting bodies increase opportunities for indigenous women?

Indigenous women are becoming more active in participating in sport and noticeably taking on roles as sports administrators in both paid and volunteer roles. In the swimming pools, the males are attracted to the Pool Plant Operations side and both males and females have become Lifeguard qualified. AUSTSWIM teachers of swimming and water safety are predominantly female and this is the same for indigenous women.

Young mothers can become involved with programs at the swimming pool and it is a positive environment for them to enjoy. Sport has no barriers for young parents as the children come to the game, activity or training with their parent. The women develop friendships through the sport and they try to eliminate some of their negative activities such as smoking, eating junk food and for many just doing nothing. Indigenous women can experience unbelievable self-worth through their participation as well as opportunities to receive training and travel. These women become role models in the community and our goal is to support them in this community development model. Sport provides a powerful positive influence.

How do role models and mentors fit in?

Local role models provide reassurance and guidance for every child in the community. They are looked up to, although in some cases they are also scorned upon as jealousy is a strong emotion in the communities.

Outside role models are also inspiring and motivating and work best when real relationships are formed. They ensure the sport continues or the programs are run and they understand the challenges. They also provide services if the adults have cultural commitments and this routine or consistency is an important factor in closing the gap as new social norms must be formed for a healthy lifestyle, strong families, meaningful employment and lifelong learning to become embedded in their culture.

Famous people or sporting identities who fly into a community on a charter plane, drop off free drink bottles and backpack, take the politically correct photo, sign a few shirts and then fly back to the city to do a TV interview proclaiming their commitment, are not role models or mentors as their action may have been nice but makes no difference to the quality of Indigenous life and basically the action is really about them. I would challenge them to stay a few nights with no internet etc. Royal Life Saving have been in communities on several times when famous identities have thundered in and out and in some cases no-one even knew they were coming.

Likewise organisations that receive funding and breeze in a visit blame the community for non-participation and leave without any evidence of establishing community relationships need to be reported and held accountable. No community consultation and engagement should mean no funding.

Closing the Gap: Targets and building blocks

In summary sentences sport directly contributes to the Closing the Gap building blocks by:

- Early Childhood – either by attending the sport with the parents or through programs at the pre-school
- Schooling – Learn to swim, Lifesaving competitions, Years 10-12 leadership through training in Bronze Medallion, First Aid etc.
- Health- improved wellbeing, social inclusion, access and equity
- Economic Participation – assisting to run a swimming pool, training and employment
- Healthy Homes are built by healthy families
- Safe Communities – drowning prevention through water safety knowledge and skills
- Governance and Leadership- running Lifesaving carnivals, organising training, working with schools to run programs

All these actions contribute to the NT National Partnership Agreement:

- ensure the protection of women and children
- reduce violence and improve family and community safety
- improve the quality of education
- increase school participation and employment outcomes
- improve health and wellbeing, particularly that of children
- promote positive behaviours among Indigenous young people, and
- promote personal responsibility

In the 15 RSD sites in the Northern Territory the following nine have swimming pools or immediate access to one (within 1 hours drive): Angurugu, Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Wadeye, Yirrkala, Yuendumu and Umbakumba.

Alternative safe water environments are being investigated for the remaining RSD sites and in the meantime they travel to a regional centre or another remote pool to access programs and services.

Please see Attachment 3 Remote Service Delivery plan and Community Action Plan

Funding Models

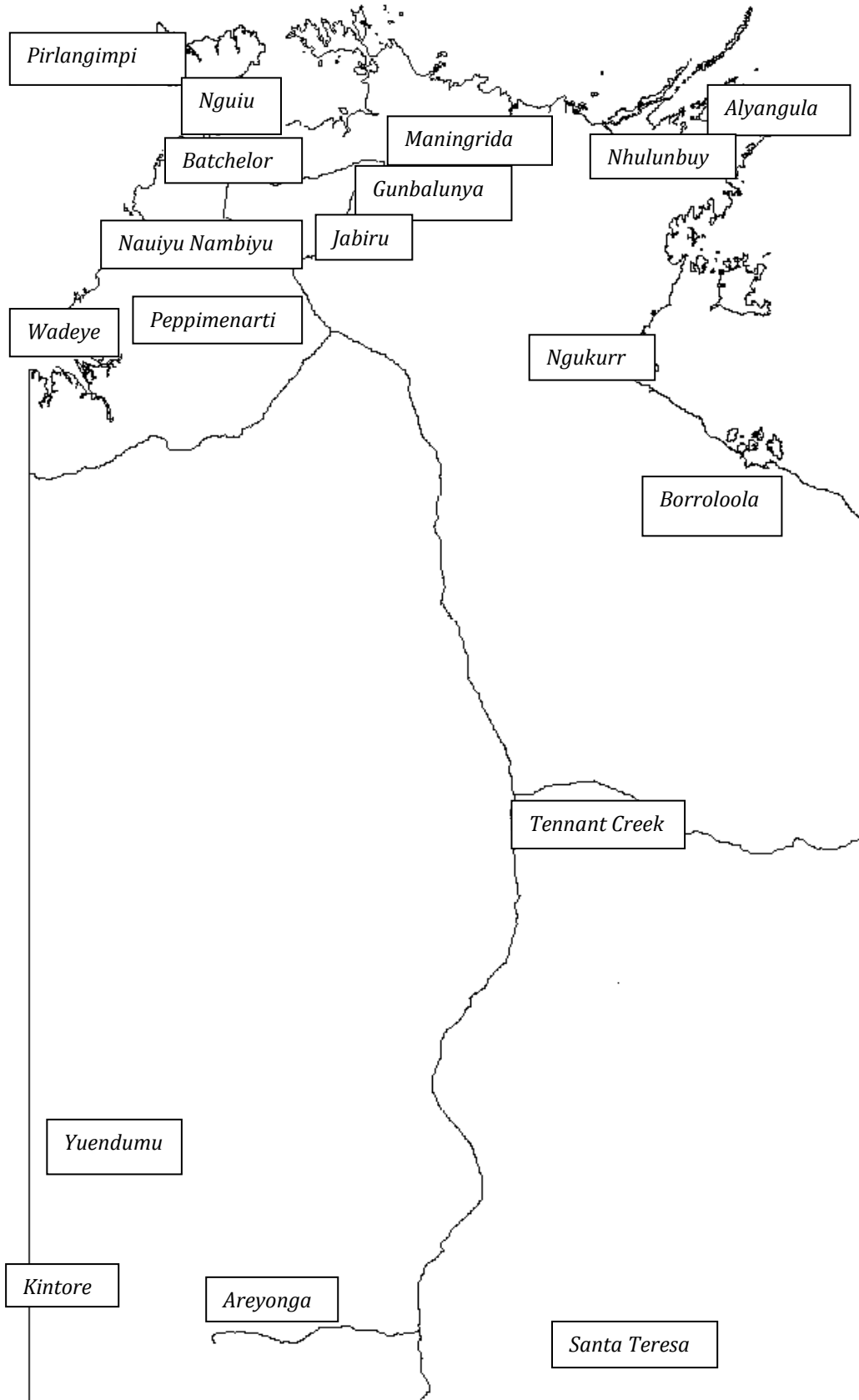
The Federally funded model is the most transparent and accountable model for funding sport in remote communities. Triennial or 5 year funding would provide a longer term vision as we need to shift from project mindset to program mindset for real community benefit. Perhaps key performance measures should be real data on participation, case studies for role models and mentors, evidence achievements towards Closing the Gap and evidence of the community development model.

Please see Attachment 1 NT remote pools- working together

Please see Attachment 4, a review of remote pools in the NT

Giving the money to state governments inserts an additional layer and we are meant to be removing barriers. Giving the money to the communities (either to the local government or sporting club) is the long term plan but they simply are not sustainable themselves yet and there is too much room for personalities to dominate.

NT Remote Pools: Working Together 2011-2016



Why Are Pools Important To Remote Communities?

- Remote pools have the capacity to significantly assist in progress towards the achievement of the seven building blocks identified as part of the COAG agreement on *Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage*. Six of the Remote Service Delivery sites have existing pools with great variance in operational level and capacity.¹
- Pools are an integral part of remote community life. While the health and educational value (such as measurable drowning reduction and school attendance) has been well-documented², the social impact for remote communities where the pool is well-maintained, staffed and appropriately managed is significantly underestimated.
- With a program specifically aimed at remote pool outcomes, there is capacity for significant job opportunities for local people at these pools. These opportunities range from roles requiring basic training to management positions and offer career progression in areas where few, if any, other work opportunities exist.
- The pools provide a point of contact between the community and the various levels of Government in a safe and healthy environment.

Achievements - The Past Two Years

“RLSSA are a dynamic team; people really enjoy having them here. Our staff and our community respond really well to them. We would be lost without them.” – Susie Low, CEO, Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) (Yuendumu Pool)

- All pools now have a facility-specific operations plan.
- An NT remote pools network has been built through three successful conferences – however these meetings need to be sustained for the network to continue.
- In 2009, the pools had their first Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment which indicated the neglect and disrepair of the facilities and the urgent safety needs. There is currently no funding for assessments on an annual or biennial basis.

¹ Royal Life Saving Society – Australia *Remote Pools 2010: A Royal Life Saving review of Swimming Pools in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory* www.nt.royallifesaving.com.au pg 7

² For example Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. *The Swimming Pool Study 2000-2006*: Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2006:12 and Audera C. *Swimming Pools in Aboriginal Communities: Health Related Issues*. *Swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities: Some basic information for planning a pool*: National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, 1999:15

Pools Snapshot

Seven of the 18 pools are more than 20 years old.

Batchelor, the oldest pool, is 55 years old. Santa Teresa is the oldest remote community pool at 39 years old.

Two of the 18 are not currently open (Peppimenarti, Ngukurr).

Only three are rated as having good infrastructure.

Seven had no improvements in last five years.

Half had no maintenance plan prior to this project.

Half have no operational budget.

Only four pools have full-time managers – none of them are Indigenous.

Most managers have other major responsibilities – some don't even have pools in their job description.

17 of the 18 pools have no ability to collect hard data on usage patterns.

Only 1/3 managed to score 50 or above out of a possible 100 in their safety assessment. The lowest scored 23; the highest 68.

- For the first time in the NT and Indigenous lifeguard has achieved trainer status and has commenced training in his community.
- Yuendumu Pool opened within this period and is setting the standard for best practice in remote pool management.
- New management in Nhulunbuy has seen a strengthened relationship with RLSSA and plans for the pool to become a regional facility servicing Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak and Galiwin'ku.
- At Pirlangimpi and Borroloola seven staff achieved their AUSTSWIM qualification entitling them to teach water safety and swimming to the children in their community.

Current Status

- Funding winds up on 30 June for the latest project work in communities. The performance report is due to FAHCSIA on 11 August 2011.
- The Remote Pools Working Group has held one meeting. What is already clear is that Government bodies are looking for the best way forward with communities and local stakeholders. RLSSA has been identified as the only body with the relationships, data and understanding of the individual circumstances of the community pools that will be crucial to the success of the working group.

Issues for Government

- Without dedicated funding, everything is reactive to crisis situations, rather than having a strong, proactive strategy for maximising a range of community benefits.
- Difficulties with overseeing and measuring the effectiveness and impact of allocated funding because requests are reactive and desperate, and sources are often disparate.
- Difficulties evaluating requests for funding direct from pools. Without specialist advice it is incredibly difficult for the Department to make judgements on the suitability, priority and necessity of individual requests.
- Challenges to relationship building with communities given other, unrelated areas of activity.
- The composition and issues within communities change regularly, requiring long-term, consistent presence to identify issues as they emerge.
- Lack of continuity in external advice due to funding pressures means expensive errors at individual pools that then impact of FaHCSIA's budget. For example, using the wrong amount of chemical in a pool pump or not putting in enough water and having the pump run dry can completely destroy the pump. To replace it costs \$30,000 for the pump, plus labour, transport and other costs. If new workers could access free expert advice these costly errors could be avoided.

Issues for the 18 Remote Pools

- Funding is a key barrier for the pools; most operate with no pool-specific operational budget. Most are aligned with Sport and Recreation or Youth Diversion budgets which are already overburdened. Shires run 14 of the 18 pools. *"We know how to run pools; if someone was employed specifically on pools then that would happen. Everyone is also trying to run all the other sport programs; we just don't have enough time or resources."* – Brooke Atkins, Sport & Recreation Victoria Daly Shire.
- For a pool open seasonally (up to 8 months of the year) annual operational costs are \$250,000; this rises to \$300,000 for opening up to 10 months a year. These overheads are for absolute base requirements – staff wages, pool chemicals, basic maintenance etc – and do not include any capital improvement works. All Shires struggle to either find this funding or absorb the expense across operations, which raise real questions around the sustainability of the pools.

- Recruiting and retaining qualified staff is a constant issue across all venues. Those pools which have accommodation available are slightly advantaged.
- There is no consistency of technical and professional support because the funding cycles to the key advisory group, the Royal Life Saving Society – NT, are ad-hoc and there is therefore no funding certainty from one year to the next.
- The pools don't engage in any collective purchasing bargaining with suppliers. Because they don't know what to ask for, they end up with consultants and suppliers who overcharge and under-deliver.
- Running a pool requires expertise – under-resourcing means NT remote pools are often expected to take whatever they can get in terms of staff – regardless of expertise.
- Most pools have difficulty managing the specific needs of Indigenous workforces.
- Energy and enthusiasm from Local Government stakeholders is difficult to muster with constant problems, seemingly few solutions and the constant statement “swimming pools are not core business”.

Issues for Royal Life Saving Society – NT

- As a not-for-profit, lack of consistency in funding leads to the loss of key, experienced staff in the downtime between funding rounds, which in turn fragments relationships with stakeholders.
- Achievements with communities are diminished over time when funding cycles end and the lack of consistent guidance leads to breakdowns in key systems and staffing arrangements.
- Because of gaps in funding, there are difficulties in maintaining hard-won momentum with families, communities and government stakeholders at all levels.
- Lost opportunity for a collaborative, positive approach to water safety education, training, drowning prevention and community development for regional and remote Northern Territory.

Our Vision

- Royal Life Saving's goal is to establish a Remote Service Delivery Unit with two full-time staff devoted to working with all stakeholders with a shared vision of sustainable remote swimming pools. We have identified key staff, the communities are ready; the only missing element is funding.
- This unit would provide business and operational support management to pools and their people, including business plans, ongoing improvements to operational plans, assistance on financial management for pools and vital networking across the 18 pools. To address issues arising from extraordinarily high staff turnover in remote community decision making bodies, this unit would then become the resource centre for new and existing staff in the communities.
- There would also be the potential to assist with contract management, workforce development, mentoring, and contingency preparations including short-term / emergency relief to ensure pools operate during peak periods such as school holidays.
- Stakeholders need a cross-government “facilitator” to help all parties understand the needs, restrictions and deliverables, so outcomes are achievable and measurable. The data needs to be linked to operations and planning with improvements and results recorded.
- This is not a quick-fix; while results will start to be apparent immediately; to achieve lasting results needs a funding cycle of four to five years so the remote pools have the support to become sustainable in the long term.

Budget Required To Achieve This Vision

Establish a Remote Service Delivery Unit of Royal Life Saving Society – NT to service 18 remote community pools. Staffing: Two full-time staff (1.5 in Darwin, 0.5 in Alice Springs).

Provide customised training in remote communities with a minimum of five working days on-site per community, per year. This includes ongoing mentoring and skill building.

Facilitate, coordinate and manage a face-to-face workshop annually bringing together key local government and pool staff for professional development and formal networking.

Provide business and operational support management to pools and their people, including business plans, ongoing improvements to operational plans, and assistance on financial management for pools.

Work with local governments to improve Indigenous employment rates at swimming pools, specifically by enhancing flexible workforce practices which enable staff to attend to their ceremonial and community requirements.

Conduct aquatic facility safety assessments annually to chart measurable progress.

Work with FaHCSIA to provide guidance and establish pool industry specific protocols to evaluate funding requests and to measure the effectiveness and impact of the Department’s investment in remote pools. Foster the change from a culture of problems to a culture of positive commitment in the business and operational management of remote swimming pools in the Northern Territory.

Provide independent advice and expertise to all levels of government about remote pool issues and achievements.

Continue to build on successful relationships and partnerships with communities. Foster development, wellbeing and safety of children in the community through programs and opportunities at the swimming pool.

Liaise between key stakeholders at all levels to ensure greater understanding of the needs of these communities.

Collect and share baseline data including: attendance numbers; opening hours; staffing levels and skills; user groups; programs and safety.

Total cost: \$350,000 pa

A Cross-Section of Community Needs: Case Studies

Pirlangimpi

While not the oldest pool in remote communities in the NT, at 16 years old without any major capital injection, the Pirlangimpi Pool needs capital funding so it can continue to serve the local community. Urgent safety needs include a shed to house the chemicals which for lack of any other option are currently stored outdoors and exposed to the elements. The toilets urgently need an overhaul after 16 years without any improvements or significant maintenance. Shane Kerinauia is currently the lifeguard and the only person to do any upkeep at the site; however he is still not a specific pool employee, but rather a Sport & Recreation staff member. Equipped with training from RLSSA, Shane has done a remarkable job with very few resources to keep the pool open.

These capital improvements and a small amount for funding for additional trainee staff would allow Shane to continue to grow as a mentor within his community as well as providing employment opportunities for young Indigenous people from the Pirlangimpi community.

At the 2009 Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment, the pool scored 29 out of a possible 100.

Ngukurr

“At the moment it’s costing us everything to look after the pools and we haven’t got the money to buy chemicals, or do repairs...All the equipment is just about gone. The pumps have eroded; there are a lot of OH&S issues. The pool at Ngukurr is completely dry. There’s a star-picket put through the bottom of it and it’s all drained. If something doesn’t get done soon (about Ngukurr) everything is going to collapse around it. ...We need to train people up and give them the right wage. It’s not rewarding enough with their wages. We don’t have the money to pay them. We don’t have any houses available in the community. So we’ve got no hope of getting anyone in until we have decent accommodation. So there’s all these issues in addition to the running of the pool.” – Paul Amarant, Regional Sport and Recreation Director

Ngukurr was a great success story two years ago and was highlighted in the *Remote Pools Report 2010*. But with the departure of a key staff member coinciding with a period where RLSSA had no funding to continue working with the community, the hard-fought gains quickly diminished. With no interim leadership to fill the gap

Further Recommendations:

That FAHCSIA establish a specific funding stream for remote swimming pools which would give pools a defined funding option which could be regulated and reported against more readily. This would need to cover two areas: maintenance / capital works and operating costs (staffing etc).

The present system puts an undue burden on the Department staff trying to manage funding applications, local government who divert significant staff resources applying for general funding (often unsuccessfully) and the communities themselves who end up with sub-standard services due to funding shortfalls. In some communities, the pools simply don’t open.

Even \$750,000 per year shared on the basis of need across the 18 remote pools would have a significant impact.

and no one with a relationship of trust with the community able to access funding to assist, the community pool quickly fell into disrepair. We understand there were issues brewing between people who have moved into the community for work in positions of authority and the local Indigenous community at the time of the act of vandalism that has significantly structurally damaged the pool. Without immediate funding, the pool will not open for the next wet season and all the previous time and financial resources that went into training and staff development will be irretrievably lost.

At the 2009 Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment, the pool scored 23 out of a possible 100.

Yuendumu

"In the remote communities there is a very fluid workforce. Non-Aboriginals when they come tend to stay but the Aboriginal workforce have an amazing extent of demands on their time. We've worked to create a work environment where they can fulfil those demands; including sorry business; ceremony business.

I've been looking for operational funding for the pool ever since it opened. It's one thing to do a budget with our needs; it's another thing to take in a business plan. It's 63 pages and it shows we've taken potential funding seriously. The budget is included in the business plan. Even going to philanthropists and the mining companies for example, one of the first things they'll say is do you have a business plan? With RLSSA's help the answer is now yes." – Susie Low CEO, WYDAC.

Yuendumu has been open for two years and is servicing a growing community. Through the sheer commitment of the CEO, despite critically low funding Yuendumu is one of the best functioning remote pools with safety prioritised and innovative workplace development strategies. These strategies include having someone from outside the pool as an independent manager with a pool of part-time and casual staff from various Indigenous clans. Staff let the manager know when they are available and when their clan responsibilities will mean they can't work. The manager then shares the work around between the staff.

With operational funding, the relationship between the pool operators and the community could be greatly enhanced; with funding would come the opportunity for Yuendumu Pool to become the benchmark for all other Shires servicing remote communities. Their innovative workplace conditions have created a positive work environment for Indigenous people. At the 2009 Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment, the pool scored 68 out of a possible 100.

Background of those at the meeting on 29/6/11

Floss Roberts

Floss Roberts is the Executive Director of Royal Life Saving Northern Territory. Floss has lived and worked in rural and remote locations across the Territory with her husband and three sons. Floss has been AUSTSWIM qualified for 22 years and is on the AUSTSWIM National Council and Executive Board. Floss loves teaching swimming and water safety and is passionate about programs in regional and remote locations.

Shane Kerinauia

Shane Kerinauia has been employed for more than six years at Pirlangimpi Pool, in the Tiwi Islands. He has the strongest personal motivation for his involvement in water safety, having lost a family member to a drowning tragedy. Shane has achieved the competencies for the role of pool supervisor including the Bronze Medallion, Pool Lifeguarding and Pool Plant Operations Certificates, First Aid and AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming & Water Safety. He is due to complete the resuscitation trainer qualification. Continuous employment at the pool reflects Shane's dedication to water safety. He is a mentor within his community and is a respected member of the remote pools network.

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Indigenous Sport & Recreation Program
Remote Swim & Survive Program

THREE YEAR ANALYSIS

Communities

2008-2009 – 4 communities: Nauiyu, Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Tiwi Islands (Program was called Indigenous Lifesaving – Swim 4 Life)

2009-2010 – 13 communities: Maningrida, Ngukurr, Gunbalanya, Borroloola, Nguiu, Pirlangimpi, Nauiyu, Peppimenarti, Wadeye, Areyonga, Santa Teresa, Kintore, Yuendumu

2010-2011 – 18 communities: Maningrida, Ngukurr, Gunbalanya, Borroloola, Nguiu, Pirlangimpi, Nauiyu, Peppimenarti, Wadeye, Areyonga, Santa Teresa, Kintore, Yuendumu, Batchelor, Jabiru, Alyangula, Yirrkala, Tennant Creek

2011-2-12 – 18 communities: Angurugu, Umbakumba, Areyonga, Santa Teresa, Kintore, Batchelor, Borroloola, Ngukurr, Gunbalanya, Jabiru, Maningrida, Nauiyu, Peppimenarti, Wadeye, Tennant Creek, Yuendumu, Tiwi Islands, Nhulunbuy

Participation in Swim & Survive Program

(Number of certificates issued)

2008-2009 – 300

2009-2010 – 858

2010-2011 – 1829

Stakeholders

- Local Government / Shire Office
 - ❖ Barkly Shire
 - ❖ West Arnhem Shire
 - ❖ Victoria Daly Shire
 - ❖ Tiwi Island Shire Council
 - ❖ East Arnhem Shire
 - ❖ MacDonnell Shire
- Health Clinics
- Department of Education

- Local schools
- Homeland schools
- Outstations
- Neighbouring communities
- Childcare facilities / Families as First Teachers

Training (Number of participates completed training)

	Bronze Medallion	Pool Life Guard	CPR Awareness	AUSTSWIM	First Aid	OTHER
2008-2009						
2009-2010	23 Indigenous 3 Non Ind	4 Indigenous 2 Non Indigenous		4 Indigenous 5 Non Indigenous		
2010-2011	17 Indigenous		40 Indigenous	14 Indigenous 3 Non Indigenous	5 Indigenous	1 Indigenous CPR Trainer
TOTALS	43	6	40	26	5	1

Facilities

Refer to Remote Pools Report.

Challenges

- Access to community
- Accommodation
- Instructors to deliver program
- Securing community visits
- Full understanding of culture process
- Weather
- Facilities
- Equipment
- Change in staff / contacts

Opportunities

- Two week programs in communities
- Extend invite to homeland schools

- Use local swimming holes to conduct lessons
- Training opportunities for local members
- Program delivery by local members
- Facility management by local members

Long Term Sustainability

We are currently onto our fourth year running Swim & Survive Programs in remote Indigenous communities though funding from Government bodies.

With increase in the number of children who have participated in the “Swim & Survive” program this is evidence of the relationships formed in communities and quality of the program. By the year 2019, Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) Northern Territory branch aims to have structured swimming and water safety programs coordinated and delivered by local Indigenous members throughout Northern Territory.

With regular changes in the community, this is a long term goal for Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) NT Branch. Completion date in 2019.

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Royal Life Saving Northern Territory Remote Service Delivery (RSD) Strategy

Royal Life Saving NT has been actively working within and with remote aboriginal communities since 1965. The community relationship is based on ensuring access to all members of the community to safe aquatic pursuits through sport, education, training and active recreation. The Remote Service Delivery Strategy is based upon the organisations **Mission**; To prevent loss of life and injury in the community with an emphasis on the aquatic environment and **Vision**; To build a healthy, strong and safe aquatic community through access to water safety education and training.

The Royal Life Saving (Australia) NT Branch Strategic Plan 2011-2014, identified through the strategic objectives item 9 that a Remote Service Delivery Strategy be implemented. Strategic objectives items 9 and 10 are listed below:

9. Implement a remote service delivery strategy with a targeted approach in community development and lifesaving in remote areas to help reduce the higher than average drowning rate amongst indigenous Territorians. This will link to the Northern Territory Government Twenty Towns strategy, Working Futures and 2030 plan.
10. Ensure relationships are created and maintained between Northern Territory Government, Federal Government and Local Government. These organisations include and are not limited to Department of Sport & Recreation, Department of Education and Training, Department of Family & Community Services, Department of Health, Department of Employment & Workplace Relations.

Royal Life Saving NT has identified an 8 point plan that outlines short and long term actions and will be reviewed and updated as required. The staff and Executive Board will help drive the Action Plan by working with key government agencies, service providers and the community. The plan is based on the values of the organisation with a consultative, committed and sustainable approach to programs and community outcomes.

1. Aim of RSD

The aim of Royal Life Saving NT's RSD strategy is to ensure all Territorians have access to water safety education and programs that contribute to their health and physical wellbeing while promoting safe aquatic participation and drowning prevention. This includes indigenous and non-indigenous Australians living in remote areas of the Northern Territory.

2. Objectives

- Royal Life Saving operates through a community development model, working together to build capacity in the community from the ground up and from management down. Royal Life S
- Royal Life Saving programs and services can be accessed in the community in a safe, inclusive and positive environment. This includes and is not limited to:
 - Water Safety Awareness Program for Families with children under 5 years of age
 - Swim & Survive Program for children from 5-14 years
 - Sport & Active Recreation – Pool Lifesaving and Community Leadership, this includes pool life saving and championships, Active Family Fun Days and community events, Bronze Awards
 - Training and Skills – community and vet programs including Bronze Medallion, Pool Lifeguard, Pool Plant Operations, AUSTSWIM, Resuscitation, First Aid and units of competencies from the Sport, Fitness, Recreation Training package SIS10
- Increase the active participation of able and disabled Indigenous Australians in sport and active recreation activities conducted at swimming pools and safe aquatic environments
- Encourage and increase community ownership of sport and active recreation activities, including skills development, around swimming pools and safe aquatic environments
- Provide training for communities to develop a skilled workforce for the operation of remote swimming pools in the Northern Territory

3. Community Action Plans

A Community Action Plan is in place for 30 identified regional and remote locations. This includes the 18 remote community swimming pools town/communities, Katherine, Alice Springs, 15 RSD sites and the NTG identified Twenty Towns. Refer Appendix 1
The community action plans are based on community needs / requests and include programs and services for: youth services; education and early childhood development; and business development around swimming pools.

Royal Life Saving endeavours to be in each community for 4-5 days per financial year, usually around the same time each year. A community Calendar is confirmed by August each year, with travel subject to funding, budget and quotes.

4. Working relationships and Critical (guiding) Documents

Royal Life Saving NT maintains strong working relationships with Federal Government, NT Government, Local Government (Shires), Community groups and Traditional Owners to ensure the highest quality program and services are delivered and demonstrate the best value for money every time. The guiding documents for RSD include:

- Royal Life Saving is committed to reducing indigenous disadvantage and **Closing the Gap** in Indigenous disadvantage by providing more opportunities for participation in safe aquatic sport and recreation programs.
<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/ctg/Pages/targets.aspx> In Line with COAGs Building Blocks the RSD strategy addresses 6 out of the 7, with all working together rather than isolation
 - Early Childhood
 - Schooling
 - Health
 - Economic Participation (Pool Management)
 - Safe Communities (Drowning prevention)
 - Governance and Leadership.(community leadership)

- **National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery**

Royal Life Saving NT will contribute to the COAG plan for Remote Service Delivery to ensure the 15 sites identified within the NT RSD sites have access to water safety programs and services.
http://cgris.gov.au/site/int_maps.asp.

This includes the NT Plan 2009-2014 <http://cgris.gov.au/site/ntip.asp>

- **Northern Territory Government Priorities**

Royal Life Saving NT will contribute to the **Northern Territory Government Working Futures strategy** by ensuring the twenty towns identified have access to water safety programs and services. <http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/Overview/overview.html>. Royal Life Saving will consult with community when planning programs, services and community visits. Local Implementation Plans will be consulted through six core themes including:

- Infrastructure Gaps
- School attendance/ education
- Youth
- Community Safety
- Child safe communities; and
- Governance and Capacity Development

NT priorities includes **The Territory Growth Towns** are Ali Curung, Angurugu, Borroloola, Daguragu/Kalkarindji, Elliott, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Ngukurr, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Numbulwar, Papunya, Ramingining, Umbakumba, Wadeye, Wurrumiyanga (Nguiu), Yirrkala and Yuendumu.

Territory 2030 is a 20-year strategic plan for the Northern Territory and the RSD plan contributes specifically to education, health and wellbeing. <http://www.territory2030.nt.gov.au/>

5. Communication

Royal Life Saving will liaise direct with each community either by phone, email or written communications. Wherever possible (depending on confirmation & funding) the community visit will be detailed on the Community's website and Royal Life Saving NT website

<http://www.royallifesaving.com.au/www/html/2196-regional-and-remote-services.asp>

Key Stakeholder communication and consultation includes the Shire / Pool Mangers (for Pool Management), Department Sport & Rec (for program training/assistance), Department of Education (particularly the school principals for the Swim & Survive data for students), FAHCSIA & GBM's, Traditional Owners and the families within the community.

6. Resources & Budget

Royal Life Saving NT will self-fund remote service delivery wherever possible from a provision in the annual budget as approved by the Executive Board. This has become increasingly difficult as costs have increased and the organisations income has remained the same. The responsibility of Remote Service Delivery remains with the Executive Director who works with the Business Units of the organisation in unison to detail the action plan each year. The executive Director will continue to seek funding to enable these communities to access Royal Life Saving programs and services and where services are user pay the costs represent value for money and wherever possible includes the organisation's public benevolence to assist.

7. Reporting

Each community will be monitored and community information will be recorded at the end of each site visit. This will include the ongoing data collected for the Organisation and detailed in the Annual Report. Specific Project outcomes will also be recorded and is evidence based on actuals rather than anecdotal.

Reporting will be through monthly newsletter on the website and the Annual Report compiled each financial year, this also includes the audited financial statements.

Specific project reports will be as specified in funding documents.

8. Evaluation and continuous Improvement

Royal life Saving will evaluate the outcome from Remote service delivery by the following measures:

- Number of communities visited
- Number of hours spent in remote communities
- Number of Programs conducted in remote locations
- Community involvement in activities
- Participation rates in remote locations, including age, gender and program breakdowns
- Relevance and evidence of closing the gap of Indigenous disadvantage by recording targets and building blocks that contribute to a health and wellbeing

RSD Communities

18 remote Community Swimming Pools

1. Yuendumu, RSD
2. Maningrida, RSD
3. Gunbalanya, RSD
4. Peppimenarti & Emu Point
5. Wadeye, RSD
6. Nauiyu
7. Batchelor
8. Nguiu, RSD
9. Pirlangimpi
10. Alyangula, includes Angurugu RSD & Umbakumba RSD & Milyakburra – Bickerton
11. Kintore
12. Areyonga
13. Santa Teresa
14. Tennant Creek
15. Ngukurr, RSD
16. Borrooloola, 20 Towns
17. Nhulunbuy, includes Yirrkala RSD
18. Jabiru

Additional RSD Sites

19. Hermannsburg
20. Lajamanu
21. Milingimbi
22. Galiwin'ku
23. Gapuwiyak
24. Numbulwar

Additional Twenty Towns

25. Ali Curung
26. Papunya
27. Daguragu / Kalkarindji
28. Elliott
29. Ramingining

Additional annual training

- 30. Mutitjulu
- 31. Yulara
- 32. Katherine

Remote Pools

2010

A Royal Life Saving review of Swimming Pools
in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory.



Remote Pools

“Royal Life Saving is dedicated to maximising the health, social and economic benefits of swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities...”

Submitted by:

Justin Scarr, Chief Operating Officer,
Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

Floss Roberts, Executive Director,
Royal Life Saving Society – Northern Territory

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Contents

Contents	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Background	6
3. Sustainability And Funding	9
4. Management And Planning	10
5. Infrastructure	11
6. Social Capacity	13
7. Conclusion	15
8. Summary Of Recommendations	16
9. Acknowledgements	16
10. Contacts	16
11. Appendices	17
Appendix 1 – Community Data	17
Appendix 2 - List Of Organisations Consulted	18
Appendix 3 - List Of Acronyms	18

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (RLSSA) has a long standing commitment to working to achieve the health, social and economic benefits of swimming pools in remote areas. Our track record includes a strong partnership with all levels of government and supportive relationships with communities across the Northern Territory.

This report was commissioned by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and seeks to investigate the issues and opportunities relating to swimming pools in remotes areas of the Northern Territory.

There are 18 swimming pools in remote areas across the Northern Territory. These swimming pools service a population exceeding 19,000 people in mainly remote Indigenous communities, but some are also located in small regional towns.

There is considerable evidence that swimming pools have significant health benefits for Indigenous children living in remote communities. Further work is needed to quantify the social and economic benefits that most feel exist.

Through the implementation of strategies including: key stakeholder interviews; formal and informal meetings; as well as workshops and conferences, many of which were conducted in the 18 communities with swimming pools, RLSSA sought to identify strategies for improving the management and operation of those swimming pools.

Additionally, RLSSA conducted swimming pool safety assessments to ascertain safety compliance against relevant standards and guidelines. The results of these assessments provide many insights including a high rate of non-compliance against safety benchmarks, an absence of business or risk management planning, and large gaps in workforce development strategies.

The overriding feel of those who participated in this investigation was that without a coordinated response to managing swimming pools in remote areas, talk of health, social or economic benefits was largely academic, as swimming pools must be accessible, functioning and well integrated into community life for any such benefits to be realised. This report makes 19 separate recommendations across each of the key areas. RLSSA intends to work with all key stakeholders to achieve the outcomes sought through these recommendations.

As a general overriding principle RLSSA believes that swimming pools must be considered a core community service, with potential benefits that reach beyond the simple provision of recreational swimming opportunities for children and interested adults.

A shift in mindset is required to realise the view that swimming pools are a social asset, with strong links to a range of outcomes in areas of health, employment, youth leadership and family relations.

Swimming pools require a budget allocation from all levels of government that values them beyond their basic ongoing maintenance cost, and includes the costs of service provision, community engagement and infrastructure revitalisation. User pays and other cost recovering systems need urgent investigation to ensure that all parties, including community members contribute to sustainable swimming pool plans.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Royal Life Saving Society – Australia in Remote Communities?

The Royal Life Saving Society - Australia (RLSSA) has been working with remote Indigenous communities for many years. Our focus has been on:

“Maximising the health, social and economic benefits of swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities...”

Our work in this area is driven by our vision that:

- Remote swimming pools are managed by Indigenous people who perform a variety of roles including facility management, supervision, instruction and health promotion.
- Remote swimming pools are the hub of community activity including effective use by the school, sport and recreation, health clinic, child care, aged care and council.
- Remote swimming pools are providing a range of community development activities including supporting community leadership, youth development, family relationships and health.

RLSSA aims to ensure that the primary outcomes of improved child health and school attendance are achieved, and the opportunities to influence a broad range of social, health and economic outcomes are identified and strategies implemented to address them.

RLSSA has led a range of initiatives over the past six years which aim to support remote communities. Since 2003, RLSSA through the Remote Pools Program has advocated the benefits of swimming pools in remote areas and worked towards building more sustainable practice in communities across the Northern Territory.

The Remote Pools program supports remote communities striving towards maximising the benefits of the community swimming pool by:

- Engaging and developing links between Shire Council and community agencies
- Building community leadership, employability, skills and training
- Facilitating strong networks across remote Indigenous communities
- Promoting community events, programs and physical activity
- Safety and risk management practices

In addition to the Remote Pools Program, RLSSA has implemented the following programs:

- Facilitation of Remote Swimming Pool Conferences in 2005, 2007 & 2009
- Nuiyu Aquatic Recreation Project 2006 – 2009 – a community development program aimed at increasing community wide physical activity
- Maningrida Capacity Planning Project – aimed at supporting the community in the first six months of swimming pool operation
- Various training and participation based initiatives

1.2. Project Rationale

In May 2009, RLSSA was engaged by FaHCSIA to conduct an investigation into the needs and issues being faced by remote Northern Territory communities with swimming pools.

The specific objectives of the project were:

1. Engagement with community and key stakeholders to conduct an appraisal of remote swimming pools.
2. Conduct a national conference for people working within remote swimming pools, funding bodies, community members, government representatives and other stakeholders to identify key issues and barriers to sustainability.
3. Support for remote swimming pool staff in collaboration with employers. Areas to be covered include technical operations, skill development and community engagement.
4. Provide education, training and leadership programs as negotiated with stakeholders, including exploring opportunities to implement a Pool Operations Course.
5. Seek to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between RLSSA, the Shire Councils and the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) to facilitate a whole-of-government approach to remote swimming pools in the Northern Territory.

The rationale for the project included the notion that all three tiers of Government and the private sector have contributed varying amounts of time, funds and management expertise to the construction and management of swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities.

The project sought to establish the current situation with respect to key issues of safety, management and usage of all 18 swimming pools in the Northern Territory (Appendix 1). These swimming pools support a remote population of over 19,000 people.

1.3. Methodology

RLSSA conducted research into the operational state of swimming pools in remote and regional communities in the Northern Territory. Research strategies included:

- Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Formal and Informal Meetings
- Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments
- Facilitation of a Workshop of Key Stakeholders
- Consideration of Related Literature
- Conduct of a Remote Pools Conference

A list of the organisations consulted is at Appendix 2.

This approach provided for the collation of information related to key areas including: the current state of swimming pool infrastructure; safety considerations; extension of community usage; education and training needs; identification of good practice; and more generally raising awareness among key stakeholders of the potential benefits of a coordinated approach to swimming pool management.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2009, RLSSA conducted community surveys which included stakeholder interviews, formal and informal meetings, and aquatic facility safety assessments at 18 remote swimming pools to identify key issues. The 18 communities targeted in this component of the investigation were:

- Alyangula
- Batchelor
- Gunbalanya
- Kintore
- Nauiyu Nambiyu
- Ngukurr
- Peppimenarti
- Santa Teresa
- Wadeye
- Areyonga
- Borroloola
- Jabiru
- Maningrida
- Nguiu
- Nhulunbuy
- Pirlangimpi
- Tennant Creek
- Yuendumu

Aquatic facility safety assessments were conducted at each of the community swimming pools, monitoring compliance with the Royal Life Saving Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation. The Assessment covers key elements such as safety signage, operational and emergency planning and supervision strategies. It is intended to provide feedback and improvement plans to swimming pool managers.

Information collected from these community surveys was discussed in further detail at stakeholder meetings including those conducted with key management at Shire Council level, workshoped throughout the Remote Pools Conference in Darwin September 2009 and analysed by the project team.

This report makes 19 recommendations for consideration by key stakeholders. These are provided within each section, and in summary form at the end of this document. The intended audience for these recommendations spans all tiers of government; non-government organisations, business, and the communities themselves.

Case studies are used in short form throughout the report to reinforce key points and to link to stakeholder experience. These case studies represent best practice and/or ideas that merit further consideration.

THREE LONG MONTHS ON THE ROAD

Royal Life Saving Society – Northern Territory Executive Director, Annette ‘Floss’ Roberts didn’t quite realise the scale of the task set in the three months between July and September 2009.

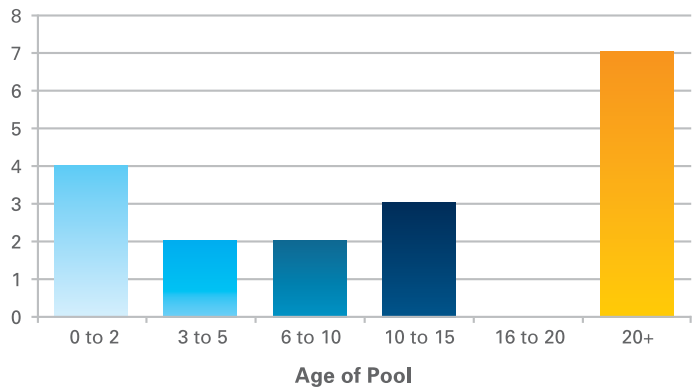
The research project demanded that she travel to 18 communities, spread across the NT to build relationships, conduct meetings, assessments and to collect information on how swimming pools were performing.

Whilst the conditions were generally cooler, tracking down key people during a time when most Territorians are making the most of the dry proved as challenging as the 10,000’s of KM travelled.

2.1. Remote swimming pools in the Northern Territory

The management complexity and benefits of swimming pools in remote communities has been an issue for policy makers in the Northern Territory for many years. Seven of the 18 pools in the study were built over 20 years ago, with five of those older than 35 years. Santa Teresa swimming pool, built in 1972, was the first built in a remote Indigenous community. [Table 1]

Table 1: Age of swimming pools in the Northern Territory



In recent years, the jointly funded Australian and Northern Territory Governments’ *Pools in Remote Areas* program resulted in the construction of three new swimming pools and further debate on sustainable swimming pool management. Whilst the construction of these swimming pools reinforce their value to communities in the eyes of many internal and external stakeholders, their ongoing sustainability and the challenges of managing other aged or deteriorating swimming pool assets make further work in this area vital.

Several Federal and Territory Government policies and initiatives offer opportunities to improve the services and sustainability of swimming pools in remote areas. Initiatives such as Closing the Gap, National Remote Service Delivery Partnership and the Northern Territory Shire reforms must be considered in designing and implementing remote swimming pool strategies in the Northern Territory.

Another relevant Government initiative is the Northern Territory Government’s Territory Growth Town Plan that seeks to develop the 20 largest remote communities into strong towns boasting services and amenities like those found in similar sized towns elsewhere in Australia.

2.2. Closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage

In 2008, the Australian Government adopted the Closing the Gap policy in response to overwhelming evidence of significant disadvantage among Indigenous Australian’s in terms of life expectancy, employment, health, education and economic outcomes. Closing the Gap is a significant collaboration among Government agencies, community groups and the business sector.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the principal forum through which Australia’s Commonwealth, State and Territory governments are advancing their partnership towards Closing the Gap.

Through COAG, Governments have committed to the six Closing the Gap targets to address Indigenous disadvantage across urban, rural and remote areas. To support this work, COAG agreed to seven strategic platforms or ‘building blocks’ as a means of meeting these targets:

- Early childhood
- Schooling
- Health
- Economic participation
- Healthy home
- Safe communities
- Governance and leadership

A key component of the Australian Government’s response to Closing the Gap is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery. This program will support improvements to the delivery of services across 29 remote locations with the largest concentrations of Indigenous Australians in remote Australia. A bilateral agreement between the Federal and the Northern Territory Governments covers remote service delivery in 15 communities, of which six have existing swimming pools. [Table 2]

Table 2: Fifteen Northern Territory Remote Service Delivery communities

Community	Shire Council	Swimming pool
Hermannsburg	MacDonnell	No
Yuendumu	Central Desert	Yes
Lajamanu	Central Desert	No
Ngukurr	Roper Gulf	Yes
Numbulwar	Roper Gulf	No
Angurugu	East Arnhem	No
Umbakumba	East Arnhem	No
Yirrkala	East Arnhem	No
Gapuwiyak	East Arnhem	No
Galiwin’ku	East Arnhem	No
Milingimbi	East Arnhem	No
Maningrida	West Arnhem	Yes
Gunbalanya	West Arnhem	Yes
Nguiu	Tiwi Islands	Yes
Wadeye	Victoria Daly	Yes

Convincing all levels of Government that swimming pools support outcomes in each of these strategic platforms is critical to securing a more sustainable future for communities with existing swimming pools. Strengthening the performance of existing swimming pools may also outline the case for the construction of new swimming pools.

2.3. Shire Reform in the Northern Territory

Prior to 2008, swimming pools in remote communities were managed by a collection of community government councils, small business and community groups. Following the reform of local government in the Northern Territory, responsibility for many of the swimming pools has fallen to respective Shire Councils and their local boards.

Stakeholder meetings established a high degree of concern about sustainability, infrastructure costs and future business plans for swimming pools among Shire Council staff.

2.4. Literature

As part of this research, RLSSA sought to clarify the benefits of swimming pools to Indigenous people living in remote areas. The following is an overview of the available literature, including extracts from a piece of work completed by RLSSA in 2008.

In an earlier paper titled Facilities, Programs and Services for Water Safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Rural and Remote Australia¹ RLSSA conducted a literature review. This review provided strong insights into the literature covering the areas of:

Water Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Swimming pools in communities across Australia are used to teach children skills in swimming, water safety and lifesaving. RLSSA plays a lead role in drowning prevention and water safety in Australia, and is extremely concerned that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drowning rate is up to four times higher than that of the general Australian population.²

In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in remote areas, the risk of drowning is 1.9 times higher for males and 10.5 times higher for females than for their counterparts in metropolitan areas of Australia³. This may be explained by increased exposure to water hazards, but also through the lack of availability in educational program to build water safety awareness and basic skills in survival swimming. The issue is broader than swimming pools, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote communities are known to swim in nearly any available water source for recreation and entertainment. This has serious implications for their health and safety⁴ and is identified as a key issue in the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008-2011, which states that the water safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be met through the provision of facilities and water safety programs and services.²

¹ Rubin T, Franklin RC, Scarr J, Peden A (2008). Issues Paper. Facilities, Programs and Services for the Water Safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Rural and Remote Australia. Australian Water Safety Council: Sydney [Secretariat: Royal Life Saving Society Australia, PO Box 558, Broadway NSW 2007, Australia].

² National Public Health Partnership. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Safety Promotion Strategy. Canberra: Department of Health and Ageing, 2005:28

³ Australian Water Safety Council. National Water Safety Plan 2004-2007. Sydney: Australian Water Safety Council, 2004.

⁴ Peart A, Szoek C. Recreational Water Use in Remote Indigenous Communities: Co-operative Research Centre for Water Quality and Treatment, 1998:47.

In response to high rates of child drowning, the Northern Territory Government introduced a system where residents have access to five free swimming and water safety lessons. This program is designed to improve access to and raise awareness of the importance of such lessons and is one area in which swimming pool operators can secure necessary funding. More information can be found at www.watersafety.nt.gov.au.

Benefits of pools in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Benefits to child and community health have been the key justification of the construction of swimming pools in remote communities. Much of this evidence stems from the work of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research which looked at a number of communities in Western Australia.

Key benefits to health found in the literature include:

- Regular access to chlorinated swimming pools had a number of health benefits, including a reduction in the prevalence of skin sores (pyoderma), eye problems, and ear disease (otitis media and associated tympanic membrane perforations)⁵.
- Skin sores are known to be related to glomerulonephritis (kidney disease) and rheumatic heart disease, both very common in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population⁵.
- A study in 1999 documented significant reductions in the prevalence of pyoderma when children swam at least once a week⁶.
- In the first three years of the study the incidence of pyoderma dropped from more than 60% to about 20%. Other less prevalent skin infections included abscesses, fungal infections and scabies.⁶
- A child health study conducted in a remote community in Western Australia between 2001-2005 after construction of a swimming pool found the following:
 - 51% decrease in skin disease in children between 2001-2005 that was attributed to swimming pool exposure
 - 44% decrease in the incidence of ear infections
 - 41% reduction in antibiotic prescriptions in the years following the opening of the swimming pool
 - 63% decrease in respiratory diseases
- Swimming pools provide opportunities for increased physical activity in remote communities; important where changes in lifestyle and diet have made Indigenous people more susceptible to conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.⁷

An evaluation of the sustainability and benefits of swimming pools in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY Lands) in South Australia⁸ completed in 2009 found that the three newly built swimming pools had had a positive impact on children's skin, but had not yet had an impact on ear health.

⁵ Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. The Swimming Pool Study 2000-2006: Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2006:12.

⁶ Audera C. Swimming Pools in Aboriginal Communities: Health Related Issues. Swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities: Some basic information for planning a pool: National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, 1999:15

⁷ Chester L, Gibbs T. Media Release - Remote pools boost Aboriginal child health: Telethon Institute of Child Health Research, 2006.

⁸ An evaluation of the sustainability and benefits of swimming pools in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY Lands) in South Australia. Department of Health and Ageing, 2009

The report further recommended that funding be allocated for training, employment and housing of swimming pools managers to provide for more consistent and sustainable service provision. This evaluation also looked closely at the impact of 'No School, No Pool' and found that whilst it was a policy well supported by community members, there was little or no evidence to suggest that it impacted directly on school attendance.

It is important to note that all the identified studies reinforce that swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities can assist in reducing the enormous burden of infectious disease on the assumption that they are well managed, well maintained and are accessible to community members for extended periods throughout the year.

There have been limited studies into the social and economic benefits of swimming pools in remote communities, with the key issue being their contribution to employment and leadership development and well being, particularly of young people.

In a report published by the Education and Health standing Committee of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 2006⁹ training and employment opportunities are explored. The report states that... "Swimming pool management training courses are an ideal employment pathway allowing an individual to obtain portable work skills and qualifications that can be used in mainstream society".

A report commissioned by Department of Education, Science and Training in 2004 found significant gaps between the literacy and numeracy outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the general student population. Fewer students living in remote areas of Australia reach national benchmarks for literacy and numeracy than those in metropolitan areas.¹⁰

Current educational discourse identifies the need for flexible educational practices that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of communities and engage students in the learning experience.¹¹ Use of the community swimming pool in education is one such practice that may be beneficial for school attendance, retention rates, and student learning and engagement.

An investigation conducted by RLSSA into the links between educational programs and swimming pools by Northern Territory schools, and specifically the notion of 'No School, No Pool' found that there is no uniform approach to strengthening the link between educational outcomes and swimming pool use.

The report recommended that the ideal model for the successful implementation of 'No School, No Pool' is characterised by:

- Whole of community support (monetary resourcing and support of parents, teachers, schools, swimming pool operators, community leadership);
- Regular opening hours of swimming pool facilities during the week and on weekends;
- Well-maintained swimming pool facilities;
- Appropriately trained local staff to implement, manage and enforce the program consistently;
- Incorporation of 'No School, No Pool' into broader school attendance strategies;

3. SUSTAINABILITY AND FUNDING

- Understanding of the ethical implications of restricting swimming pool access and the application of a considered and cautious approach to ensuring all students are treated fairly; and
- Locally interpreted programs to ensure specific needs of individual communities are addressed.

The link between health outcomes in children and swimming pool use has been identified earlier in this report. In order for these outcomes to be realised, children require regular access. This access may be achieved during school, after hours and weekends, and requires a more systematic approach than is currently evidenced in Northern Territory communities.

Further work in the area of quantifying the economic and social benefits of swimming pools to Indigenous people living in remote areas must be supported. Given the cost of building and maintaining such facilities, economic models that seek to show the impact of improvements in health and wellbeing on costs in other areas may assist in justifying expanding funding and revenue.

Sustainability and funding is central to the debate about the future of swimming pools in remote areas. With the exception of Western Australia (WA), where the State government funds all operational and staffing costs for swimming pools in remote communities, it is clear that communities, Shire Councils and associated organisations are in great need of assistance, both technical and funding.

3.1. Existing funding for swimming pools

Current funding for swimming pools can be divided into three areas:

1. Funds identified in Shire Council management plans
2. Funds secured from Government, State and Federal, for infrastructure and safety improvements
3. Funds secured for programs, services and equipment

All parties in the research believed that swimming pools were underfunded and under resourced, although there was no consensus on where and how further funds were to be secured. Community members felt it was the role of the Shire Council, the Shire Council looked to Northern Territory or Federal Government, and the Northern Territory Government looked to the Federal Government or placed responsibility back on the Shire Council.

What is clear is that swimming pools in remote areas are in desperate need of both funding and assistance towards more sustainable business practices. However, random and ad hoc funding is known to be counterproductive to the long term sustainability of swimming pools. The research identified the need to link any future funding to more specific objectives in sustainability, safety and community outcomes.

Other sources of funding and resources that can supplement or support the swimming pool operational budget must be identified at a National, Territory, and Shire Council level. A good example is the Northern Territory Government Free Water Safety Lessons program which could be used more effectively to increase program provision.

3.2. Viewing the Swimming Pool as a Core Community Service

Swimming pools in the Northern Territory suffer from ambiguity in terms of the contribution to community wellbeing and as a venue capable of delivering a range of services across all community demographics. Currently rated as a 'non-core' service, the management of a swimming pool that provides for this layered approach to community outcomes requires a reprioritisation. Shifting the swimming pool to 'core or essential service', including a designated budget allocation that values a range of outcomes will do much to remove barriers to achieving more sustainable outcomes.

All participants in the research were asked the question "Is the swimming pool an essential service in your community, and explain your reason?". Responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive, particularly from community members and swimming pool workers. However, one cohort that struggled with this question was Shire Council Chief Executive Officers' (CEO) or senior management.

⁹ Education and Health Standing Committee. Swimming Pools Program in Remote Communities. Perth: Education and Health Standing Committee, 2006:56.

¹⁰ Department of Education, Science, Training. National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2004. In: Department of Education Science and Training, editor: Australian Government, 2006:187.

¹¹ Ministerial Council on Education Employment, Training, Youth Affairs. Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2006:34.

¹² Rubin, T, Franklin, R.C, Scarr, J, & Peden, A, 'No School No Pool': Utilising the community pool for effective health promotion, 2008, The Royal Life Saving Society Australia

3.3. Valuing the impact on other government budgets

Earlier in this report the authors identified the evidence in support of improved health outcomes for children. While it appears logical that improved health outcomes result in lower costs in providing individual and population health services, research is required to quantify such gains. These savings may come indirectly via reduced demand for primary health services, or more directly through reductions in the costs for treatment, medication and therapy.

3.4. User pays and other funding models

User pays or other commercial activities are two methods often cited in discussions around increasing the sustainability of swimming pools. The most often mentioned examples of this include fees charged for recreational swimming or the establishment of a canteen to sell food to swimming pool users and/or wider customer groups.

The research identified that 12 of the 16 swimming pools charge entry fees to various groups. These fees ranged from \$1.00 to \$4.40 per visit. Schools have been identified as a major user group. In many cases schools contributed to swimming pool upkeep or maintenance, rather than contributing a per user per visit basis. Recreational swimmers, generally from the adult population, were most often charged fees for use, and were often provided with opportunities to do this outside of standard operational hours.

Whilst half of the swimming pools have a canteen amenity, only four were in good working order. Discussions with stakeholders about the barriers to successfully delivering this type of service, found that it may be counterproductive to the health agenda, distracted the swimming pool workforce from their core responsibility, and created problems with stock control and money handling.

Business planning processes will assist swimming pool operators to identify specific strategies to generate income from their activities. These strategies may or may not include user pays and other commercial activities, but need to be established, monitored and evaluated in the context of business planning in order to ensure that sustainable models are developed in the future. This is discussed in more detail at section 4.2.

3.5. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Governments work together with key stakeholders including community members, Shire Councils, peak bodies and non-government organisations to develop a coordinated approach to the sustainable management and safe operation of swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities across the Northern Territory.
2. Shire Councils reprioritise the swimming pool as a core community service and reflect this in planning and budgetary processes.
3. Territory and Federal Governments identify funding streams that encourage increased service levels, building local capacity to manage and utilise swimming pools.
4. A cost benefit analysis assessing the potential social and health impact that swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities have on government expenditure is undertaken.

Management and planning, particularly safety planning, remains a key area for improvement in swimming pools in the Northern Territory. Clarity in the management and resourcing of swimming pools was found to be a significant issue that impacts on availability, usage and impact on community outcomes.

The research identified the following key areas:

- Weaknesses in Business Planning
- Strengthening Operational Planning
- Benefits of Regular Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments
- Supporting Sustainable Practice
- Fostering Workforce Development Strategies

Prior to the discussion of these areas, a snapshot is provided of key points identified in the community surveys and stakeholder meetings.

4.1. Snapshot of community surveys and stakeholder meetings

Feedback from community surveys and stakeholder meetings in relation to management and planning highlighted the following:

- Only 2/18 swimming pools have a business plan
- Only 4/18 swimming pools have a full-time manager
- A further 4/18 have part-time managers
- Only 9/18 swimming pools have an operational budget
- Four major issues were reporting by key stakeholders:
 - A lack of funding and budgets
 - An absence of business planning
 - Large gaps in reporting systems
 - A lack of budget for designated staff

Many of the problems described by stakeholders are generally linked in part to an absence of adequate resourcing or sustainable business planning. Responsibility for this is commonly identified as belonging to the Shire Council, although there is a general tendency to reinforce the need for external funding and grants in areas such as infrastructure improvement, maintenance and staffing.

Full-time swimming pool managers are absent in 14/18 communities, indicating large gaps in human resource capacity at many facilities. Many stakeholders pointed the problems when responsibility rests with a workforce already overloaded with responsibilities in sport and recreation.

4.2. Weaknesses in Business planning

A lack of business planning or weaknesses in current planning systems was identified consistently by key stakeholders throughout the research process. Community Leaders, Administrators and Swimming Pool Workers are known to be concerned with methods and models to support the efficient management of swimming pools.

The stated barriers to achieving stronger outcomes in business planning included: ambiguity in reporting systems; gaps in business planning skills and knowledge; and limitations in the availability of human resources.

Much of this may be a factor influenced by recent local government changes, and uncertainty concerning the swimming pool as an essential community service. A greater focus on planning for best practice operation and workforce planning, and other business planning strategies may contribute greatly to improving outcomes.

4.3. Strengthening Operational planning

Operational plans are distinct from business plans in that they guide key functional activities that are implemented by the swimming pool workforce. They are seen as essential tools in safety, but also support succession planning and the building of deeper community level skills in swimming pool management.

The research identified significant gaps in the suitability and availability of operational plans in the majority of swimming pools. Quality and useability of the documentation impacted on skill development, caused prolonged periods of inoperability and in some case consisted solely of manufacturer guidelines for plant and equipment.

4.4. Benefits of Regular Aquatic Facility Pool Safety Assessments

RLSSA provides key safety advice to the managers and operators of Aquatic Facilities in Australia. Through programs such as the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation, and the Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments, RLSSA seeks to monitor and lift standards in key areas including signage, chemical storage, supervision and emergency procedures.

Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments were conducted at each of the 18 swimming pools in this report. The Swimming Pool Safety Assessment is a facility auditing system developed by RLSSA and used to benchmark safety compliance and management efficiency against a set of key criteria. This approach has widespread industry acceptance as providing a basis for facility improvement.

These findings show significant barriers to wider usage of existing swimming pools in all but the most recently constructed.

Further, none of the 18 swimming pools had a risk management plan in place. Risk management plans are a key component of the swimming pool's operational plan and identify specific strategies to ensure safety and security of the swimming pool patrons, workforce and those living and working in close proximity. Government and other donor funding should be contingent on swimming pool owner/operators meeting a set of safety standards. The RLSSA Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment is one strategy to monitor and improve safety standards. But a balance must be found.

4.5. Supporting Sustainable Practice

Water and energy conservation will become increasingly important as swimming pools across the Northern Territory face increased costs, as well as an obligation to meet 'Green' targets set by an increasingly environmentally aware set of stakeholders.

Research identified several issues in terms of water and energy use. In their current format, and with likely changes in water and energy costs, swimming pools have the potential to add to the financial burden of the changing regulatory environment, as well as impact negatively on sustainability more generally.

In more than one case, the misuse of water was leading to inefficient practice, as well as some potential environmental damage due to grey water being dumped into the local river system.

'Green' swimming pools utilise a range of technologies to minimise their environmental impact. These strategies include water saving devices such as reticulation systems and solar energy systems for heating. Investment in such devices provides dual benefits of contribution to more sustainable practice, as well as reducing long term costs of water and energy.

4.6. Fostering Workforce Development Strategies

Commonly the swimming pool workforce consists of: swimming pool management; staff directly employed in roles such as lifeguards, swimming and water safety instructors; ground maintenance; and those working directly for other agencies and indirectly contributing to swimming pool outcomes.

In remote communities these roles were found to be performed commonly by the same individual, and in many cases they performed additional community roles including Sport and Recreation Managers and Youth Diversion Officers.

Shortages in qualified staff are identified as a key barrier, with many swimming pools having untrained staff or a single qualified worker. This not only places considerable pressure on those resources but poses significant safety risks to swimming pool patrons.

The research found significant gaps in the training and induction plans of swimming pool employees. This, coupled with high rates of staff turn-over, presented many challenges to expanding the paid and volunteer workforce.

Training the local workforce in lifeguarding, instructing and technical swimming pool operations remains a key challenge, and more sustainable systems must be investigated including the use of community mentors, and longer term programs such as traineeships.

INNOVATION IN NGUKURR

The community of Ngukurr has found an innovative way to extend the range and quality of services provided to residents. Using the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), the Roper Gulf Shire Council's workforce at the Ngukurr sport and recreation service has been expanded to provide transitional experiences in key swimming pool activities such as supervision, instruction and operation.

Community Stakeholders reported that the system of mentoring and workplace learning has helped young Indigenous community members develop practical skills, as well as highly valuable skills in confidence, communication and basic leadership. The Roper Gulf Shire Council rotates CDEP participants through the sport and recreation service, as did several other Shire Councils, the difference appears to be in the mentoring that takes place by both the services and swimming pool managers.

4.7. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

5. Governments/Peak bodies work collaboratively with key stakeholders to develop templates and processes that facilitate business and operational planning in a manner that reduces barriers due to weaknesses in literacy.
6. Business and operational plans be developed, implemented and monitored in each of the Shire Councils where swimming pools exist.
7. Shire Councils, swimming pool owners/operators undertake annual Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments, and implement swimming pool improvement plans as part of a safety maintenance program.
8. Governments fund the investigation of innovative water and energy saving technologies, community education and awareness in order to improve sustainable practice and reduce ongoing operational expenses.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE

Swimming pool and associated infrastructure was a key component of the investigation. Facilities range in age from those built in the 1950’s to several less than two years of age.

Key components of this section are:

- Asset Management Planning
- Ensuring Safety Compliance
- Guidelines for Remote Swimming Pools
- Construction Guidelines for Swimming Pools in Remote Areas

Prior to the discussion of these points, a snapshot is provided of key points identified in the community surveys and stakeholder meetings.

5.1. Snapshot of community surveys and stakeholder meetings

In the area of infrastructure the key points from community surveys, stakeholder meetings and Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments are highlighted below in Table 3.

Table 3: Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments Findings Summary

Key Area	Summary of findings
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7/18 swimming pools are older than 20 years - 6/18 have been built in the past five years
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14/18 swimming pools are the responsibility of the local Shire Council - 1/18 - Yuendumu is soon to be transferred to the Shire Council - The remaining three are run by local organisations and clubs
Overall Condition (Scale 1-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 swimming pools were rated at eight or higher where 10 is the highest (all newly built) - 11 swimming pools were rated six or less, where six is considered to be requiring a medium degree of remedial work - 3 swimming pools were found to have significant structural issues
Specific issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12/17 swimming pools rated less than 50% in the aquatic facility safety assessment conducted by RLSS-NT (where 60% is considered an acceptable pass rate) - 0/18 swimming pools reported risk management plans - Toilets and shower facilities were found to be a major issue at 7 swimming pools - Red dust was found to be a problem at all sites in the central desert - 4 swimming pools had inadequate fencing, a significant safety issue - 15 swimming pool had significant deficiencies in safety signage - Half of the swimming pools do not have a maintenance plan - 7 swimming pools have poor chemical storage - 11/18 swimming pools have been subject to infrastructure improvement over the past 5 years - 1/18 swimming pools schedules and completes an annual aquatic facility safety assessment

5.2. Focusing on Asset Management Planning

The research uncovered a significant amount of operational stress on swimming pool infrastructure across the Northern Territory. In many cases the infrastructure was in poor condition, suffering from a range of short and medium term maintenance problems. In some cases, swimming pool management had adjusted work practices in an attempt to keep it open for community access, and in other cases the swimming pool was or had been closed for extended periods.

While the responsibility of general maintenance and small equipment or plant upgrades commonly falls to the Shire Council, the Australian and Northern Territory governments commonly contribute to larger scale upgrades and replacement of plant and equipment. This is mainly due to the costs of such upgrades, and in many cases the absence of long term asset management plans. This places significant pressures on all parties and could be relieved in part through the creation and implementation of improved asset management systems.

Findings highlight the lack of clarity around ownership, particularly in terms of Shire Councils' perspectives on their long term obligations with respect to swimming pools. Further consideration and support to achieve a culture and practice of asset planning for swimming pools is needed in order to strengthen capacity in this area.

5.3. Ensuring Safety Compliance

Research indicates that a high proportion of existing swimming pools fail to comply with basic safety standards. Deficiencies range from failures in appropriate storage of chemicals to absence of safety signage and amenities blocks that have the potential to endanger swimming pool users.

Research also indicates that in many cases poor design and/or construction methods contribute to increasing cost and complexity to the community throughout the swimming pool's operational life. Newly built swimming pools, using substandard plant and equipment, have resulted in considerable additional infrastructure as well as operational costs. This places further burden on both the workforce and the community.

Participants in the research were highly supportive of the simple notion that swimming pools in remote communities must be considered 'commercial' facilities and that the supplementation of home swimming pool plant and equipment during the design and construction process should be eliminated.

5.4. Guidelines for Remote Swimming Pools

Key Stakeholders questioned the need for specific guidelines covering the context and the sustainability of swimming pools in remote areas. The current version of the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation provides an important basis for safety and operation, although some advantages in having a contextualised version were identified.

A tailored set of Guidelines for Remote Swimming Pools would provide supportive mechanisms for those managing swimming pools in remote areas. While the core content of these documents should be based on the current Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation, a degree of contextualisation that looks at factors such as the operational environment, user profiles and service delivery should be considered.

5.5. Construction Guidelines for Swimming Pools in Remote Areas

Lessons learned from a number of recently constructed swimming pools, as well as issues expressed by key stakeholders, point to the need for better planning of all future design, construction and tendering arrangements. There is also a need to collaborate across jurisdictions, as work in the area of remote swimming pool construction continues in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

Long delays in construction and in some cases the immediate requirement for significant retro-fitting of newly constructed swimming pools places considerable pressure on community, Shire Council and Government resources. These delays have also been responsible for eroding wider community support.

The harsh operational environment, coupled with the remoteness of some swimming pools, necessitates more than the construction of a domestic swimming pool solution in the overwhelming majority of situations. Failures and/or excessive running costs impact significantly on the sustainability of these and future swimming pools.

Construction guidelines would greatly assist key stakeholders, particularly those at Shire Council and local community levels, throughout the process of planning and monitoring the construction of a new swimming pool. Consideration to the development of an approved or preferred supplier panel to guide communities in the selection of the range of suppliers required to construct and maintain these swimming pools should be given.

5.6. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

9. Governments facilitate the development of asset management planning systems, tools and training to enhance Shire Council abilities to manage the short, medium and long term requirements of swimming pools in remote areas.
10. Funding is allocated to bring all existing swimming pools up to a designated safety standard, including safety signage, chemical storage, security, surveillance and amenities.
11. Specific Guidelines for the Management of Swimming Pools in Remote Areas be developed.
12. Specific guidelines for the Design and Construction of Swimming Pools in Remote Areas are developed as a high priority.
13. A panel of approved suppliers of swimming pool related services be identified to ease the burden and create efficient service provision.
14. Funding for swimming pools is linked to safety benchmarks, as well as commercial construction standards.

6. SOCIAL CAPACITY

Swimming pools are known to contribute to community wellbeing and the development of social infrastructure through the provision of programs, recreational activities, events and employment pathways for young people.

Several programs have attempted to support community outcomes beyond those directly attributable to swimming pool programming.

These include:

- Knowledge Transfer and Exchange across Communities
- Supporting Community Role in Decision Making
- Delivering Support Programs
- Youth, Family and Aged Specific Programming
- Employment Pathways

One such program was the Nauiyu Aquatic Recreation Project that was conducted from 2007 to 2009 in the community of Nauiyu Nambiyu. The project was funded by the Department of Health and Ageing Building Healthy Communities Program and sought to increase physical activity through swimming pool use. Key strategies included the employment of a local person to facilitate a community based project committee and stimulate collaboration across key community agencies. Whilst a range of external factors impacted negatively on the project, there was strong community support for the program.

Prior to the discussion of these points, a snapshot is provided of key points identified in the community surveys and stakeholder meetings.

6.1. Snapshot of community surveys and stakeholder meetings

In the area of social capacity the following points are highlighted from the community surveys and stakeholder meetings:

- 0/18 swimming pools have training and development plans
- 6/18 swimming pools did not have qualified staff
- 10/18 swimming pools are sole operators, and have no access to relief staff
- The most commonly mentioned barrier to more sustainable practice was access to qualified staff, followed by irregular operating hours and poor signage
- School groups are the primary users in 9/18 swimming pools (use of formal learn to swim programs?)
- 1/18 swimming pool is accessed by the health clinic

6.2. Knowledge transfer and exchange across communities

Over the past five years, RLSSA has facilitated a network of swimming pool managers and other interested parties. This remote swimming pools network aims to increase support and exchange information across the Territory wide swimming pool workforce, including those contributing to the swimming pool through community governance, health, education and youth programming.

Having facilitated the 3rd Remote Pools Conference as part of this research, RLSSA and attendees see value in continuing to support such activities.

Key benefits include: identification of good practice case studies; fostering of formal and informal networks across communities; and targeting of specific skills and programs.

6.3. Supporting community roles in decision making

Many participants in the research cited a shift in community decision making away from those directly involved in or benefiting from the swimming pool. Much of this is a factor of recent local government changes, and will likely be rectified in the coming year with the involvement of local boards to facilitate communication and decision making.

Community participation in decision making impacts on swimming pool outcomes, and incorporating the swimming pool into local board agendas should be facilitated. Strategies to increase participation of representatives from key community demographics may also support wider success in this area.

6.4. Delivering Support Programs

Patterns of operation for swimming pools varied greatly from those which are almost never open, to those which provide a full program targeting all aspects of their community. Some swimming pool opening times are limited to those connected to school or sport and recreation program use, while others provide wider activities targeting vacation, families and aged care.

Formal learn to swim is a traditional but important function that swimming pools provide to communities across Australia. Only four of the 18 swimming pools provide for this activity outside of those lessons provided by the school or as part of the after school sport and recreation program.

Communities gave many examples of groups that visited the community, in some cases using the swimming pool, for short term activities. While these activities are always well received, work must be undertaken to increase more sustainable systems that expand everyday service provision to community members.

6.5. Youth, Family and Aged Specific Programming

Where a community has a youth or specific population based program, the swimming pool can provide a convenient venue for diversionary, celebratory or learning based activities. There is limited evidence to show that these facilities are being used by all such groups, although there are several very positive model programs identified throughout the research.

These programs include:

- Strategies to involve members of the aged care program in Wadeye
- Aqua aerobics program in Wadeye
- Youth initiatives implemented by the Royal Life Saving Society – Northern Territory
- Various Children's water safety programs and swimming carnivals
- Family fun days conducted as part of the Nauiyu Aquatic Recreation program

6.6. Leadership and Employment Pathways

Swimming pools represent an underutilised learning environment for those entering, participating in or re-entering the workforce. While it must be recognised that ongoing funding for full and part-time positions remains a difficult issue, there are many examples where swimming pools have provided a pathway to more positive employment outcomes for Indigenous people.

Two such examples are the leadership program being implemented in Ngukurr, where individuals participate in a mentoring based program and in Nguu where previously employed local people have been mentored into specific swimming pool management roles with the support of the Tiwi Islands Shire Council, and its previous iterations.

INDIGENOUS POOL MANAGERS

Most communities strive towards filling positions such as swimming pool manager with local labour. The communities on the Tiwi islands are fortunate enough to have a number of local people involved as swimming workers, including pool management responsibilities at the swimming pools in Nguu and Pirlangimpi.

This system follows a targeted strategy of succession planning by local government authorities since the swimming pool was first opened in Nguu. This strategy carried the goal of ensuring a employment pathways for local people at the swimming pool and resulted in the first remote Indigenous swimming pool manager in Australia.

Critical to their success is the support provided by the local Shire Council staff. Ensuring that employment pathways are provided for local people into a range of swimming pool roles is critical to continuity of service

Other opportunities were identified in areas to build leadership focused partnerships linking school and early childhood education to swimming pool services. As these two areas come under the auspice of the Northern Territory Government, key stakeholders, including RLSSA must work with government to strengthen social infrastructure between these important groups at a regional and community level.

6.7. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

15. Informal and formal networking and knowledge sharing activities be facilitated to increase focus on good practice, support positive solution making and wider Shire Council and community support for swimming pool outcomes.
16. Local boards and/or service delivery groups take a greater or rigorous interest in swimming pools to their utilisation and ensure that it meets community needs.
17. Community development service providers and swimming pool operators work together to utilise swimming pools in targeting and collaborating across areas such as youth outreach, education, early childhood, leadership, disability, aged care, health and wellbeing.
18. Further research be undertaken into the social and economic benefits of swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities and how they can be realised, including through identification and sharing of best practice models, pilot projects and participatory research.
19. Operational plans and related workforce development strategies are developed in such a way as to maximise local employment in the swimming pool. Options could include funding for mentoring programs and development of innovative employment pathway programs.

7. CONCLUSION

All participants in this research supported the overarching principle there was great potential for swimming pools in remote communities to positively impact upon the health, social and economic well being of Indigenous Territorians. While further research will assist to strengthen this position, data collected in this investigation illustrates that there is a willingness among stakeholders to identify and implement strategies that strengthen the sustainability and impact of swimming pools in remote areas.

A coordinated approach to managing swimming pools across the Northern Territory is not only urgently required but also widely supported by participants in this investigation. Coordination in key areas such as the facilitation of business and operational planning, improvement of safety and risk management compliance, and development of programs that build employment pathways, support educational outcomes and strengthen social capacity.

This report makes 19 separate recommendations across the key areas of Sustainability and Funding, Management and Planning, Infrastructure and Social Capacity. Royal Life Saving intends to work with all key stakeholders towards achieving these recommendations.

8. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are listed within each section below, or can be considered in detail as part of the discussion contained previously in this report.

Recommendations relating to Sustainability and Funding

1. Governments work together with key stakeholders including community members, Shire Councils, peak bodies and non-government organisations to develop a coordinated approach to the sustainable management and safe operation of swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities across the Northern Territory.
2. Shire Councils reprioritise the swimming pool as a core community service and reflect this in planning and budgetary processes.
3. Territory and Federal Governments identify funding streams that encourage increased service levels, building local capacity to manage and utilise swimming pools.
4. A cost benefit analysis assessing the potential social and health impact that swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities have on government expenditure is undertaken.

Recommendations relating to Management and Planning

5. Governments/Peak bodies work in collaboration with key stakeholders to develop templates and processes that facilitate business and operational planning in a manner that reduces barriers due to weaknesses in literacy.
6. Business and operational plans be developed, implemented and monitored in each of the Shire Councils where swimming pools exist.
7. Shire Councils, swimming pool owners/operators undertake annual Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments, and implement swimming pool improvement plans as part of a safety maintenance program.
8. Governments fund the investigation of innovative water and energy saving technologies, community education and awareness in order to improve sustainable practice and reduce ongoing operational expenses.

Recommendations relating to Infrastructure

9. Governments facilitate the development of asset management planning systems, tools and training to enhance Shire Council abilities to manage the short, medium and long term requirements of swimming pools in remote areas.
10. Funding is allocated to bring all existing swimming pools up to a designated safety standard, including safety signage, chemical storage, security, surveillance and amenities.
11. Specific Guidelines for the Management of Swimming Pools in Remote Areas be developed.
12. Specific guidelines for the Design and Construction of Swimming Pools in Remote Areas are developed as a high priority.

13. A panel of approved suppliers of swimming pool related services be identified to ease the burden and create efficient service provision.
14. Funding for swimming pools is linked to safety benchmarks, as well as commercial construction standards.

Recommendations relating to Social Capacity

15. Informal and formal networking and knowledge sharing activities be facilitated to increase focus on good practice, support positive solution making and wider Shire Council and community support for swimming pool outcomes.
16. Local boards and/or service delivery groups take a greater or rigorous interest in swimming pools to their utilisation and ensure that it meets community needs.
17. Community development service providers and swimming pool operators work together to utilise swimming pools in targeting and collaborating across areas such as youth outreach, education, early childhood, leadership, disability, aged care, health and wellbeing.
18. Further research be undertaken into the social and economic benefits of swimming pools in remote Indigenous communities and how they can be realised, including through identification and sharing of best practice models, pilot projects and participatory research.
19. Operational plans and related workforce development strategies are developed in such a way as to maximise local employment in the swimming pool. Options could include funding for mentoring programs and development of innovative employment pathway programs.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors of this report wish to acknowledge the support of all participants in this research, including those who gave up their time to participate in meetings, workshops and to explain the issues that impacted on their ability to achieve best practice.

Thank you also to the staff at the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs who have assisted in this project.

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11. APPENDIX 1 – Community Data

Community	Shire Council /MMT	Age of Pool - yrs	Population
Alyangula	East Arnhem	20 - 45	956
Areyonga	MacDonnell	10	247
Batchelor	Coomalie	53	481
Borrooloola	Roper Gulf	0	773
Gunbalanya	West Arnhem	14	881
Jabiru	West Arnhem	27	1,135
Kintore	MacDonnell	1	350
Maningrida	West Arnhem	2	2,068
Naiyu Nambiyu	Victoria River - Daly	21	395
Nguiu	Tiwi Island	8	1,265
Ngukurr	Roper Gulf	11	916
Nhulunbuy	East Arnhem	38	4,112
Peppimenarti	Victoria River - Daly	3	185
Pirlangimpi	Tiwi Island	14	368
Santa Teresa	MacDonnell	37	542
Tennant Creek	Barkly	42	2,919
Wadeye	Victoria River - Daly	4	1,627
Yuendumu	Central Desert	0	686
Total			19,906

APPENDIX 2 - List of Organisations Consulted

Alyangula
 GEMCO
 ESS Support Services
 East Arnhem Shire Council (EASC)
 Alyangula Area School
 Angurugu Clinic
 Angurugu School
 Umbakumba School
 MacDonnell Shire Council (MDSC)
 Areyonga School
 Coomalie Council
 Roper Gulf Shire Council
 Macarthur River Mine
 West Arnhem Shire Council (WASC)
 Nauiyu Nambiyu
 Victoria Daly Shire Council (VDSC)
 Tiwi Islands Shire Council (TISC)
 Xavier College
 Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School
 Roper Gulf Shire Council (RGSC)
 Nhulunbuy Corporation
 Nhulunby Primary School
 Yirrakala School
 Yirrakala Homeland school
 Barkly Shire Council (BSC)
 ITEC Employment
 Tennant Creek High School
 Tennant Creek Primary School
 Our Lady Sacred Heart School, Wadeye

APPENDIX 3 - List of Acronyms

AFSA	Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment
CEC	Community Education Centre
CEO	Chief Executive Office
DEEWR	Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations
DET	Department of Education and Training
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing
DHF	Department of Health and Families
EASC	East Arnhem Shire Council
FaHCSIA	Dept of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
GBM	Government Business Manager
GSPO	Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LGANT	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
MDSC	MacDonnell Shire Council
MSDS	Material Safety Data Sheet
NT	Northern Territory
PIRA	Pools In Remote Area
RGSC	Roper Gulf Shire Council
RLSSA	Royal Lifesaving Society of Australia
TISC	Tiwi Islands Shire Council
VDSC	Victoria Daly Shire Council
WASC	West Arnhem Shire Council



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74

PEOPLE DROWNED IN NT
WATERWAYS BETWEEN
1 JULY 2002 TO 30 JUNE 2011

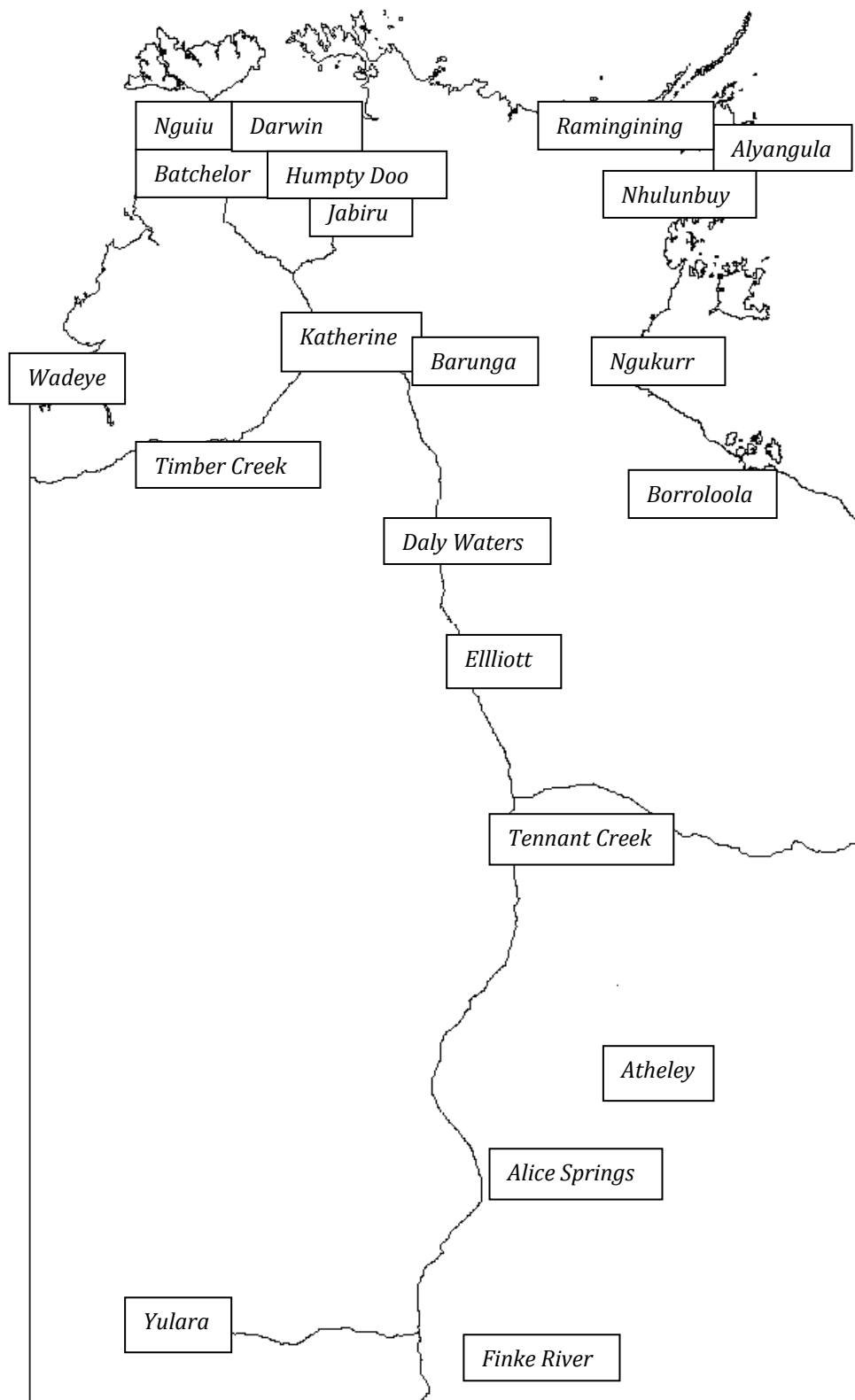


NORTHERN TERRITORY
9 YEAR
DROWNING
REPORT.
A CALL FOR CHANGE



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Some of the Locations Where Drowning Deaths Occurred July 2002 to June 2011



Contents

Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) NT Branch Inc.....	3
Executive Summary	4
How This Report Was Compiled	5
Daniel Browne: A Personal Story of Loss.....	6
Number of Drowning Deaths and Rate over Time	7
Drowning Deaths by Sex and Age Group.....	7
Location of Drowning Deaths	8
Time of Year.....	8
Activity Prior to Drowning	9
Alcohol Usage by Age Group	10
Status within the Coronial System	10
Resident and Non-Resident Drowning Deaths by Age	11
Recommendations.....	12

Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) NT Branch Inc

Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) NT Branch Inc has a proud history of serving communities, families and individuals across the Northern Territory. Whether you live in a city, town, regional or remote community, Royal Life Saving is the leading water safety education and training provider. Our offices are in Darwin and Alice Springs but our services of providing face-to-face education and training extend to all locations.

Royal Life Saving NT formed a stand-alone Branch of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia in 1965 and since then has played a critical role in reducing drowning deaths in the Territory, particularly in under five-year-olds, through raising water safety awareness and equipping children with water safety and swimming skills.

Royal Life Saving Society NT believes that everyone can be a lifesaver. Through innovative training practices, such as the e-learning course First Aid-in-a-box, we are continuing to find new ways to serve our community and help Territorians develop the skills to save lives. Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) NT Branch Inc is an Incorporated Entity (A 1328) and a Public Benevolent Institution.

This nine-year report covers 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011.

Executive Summary

Drowning is a significant and long-term health, recreation and community issue in the Northern Territory; per capita the Northern Territory records more drowning deaths than any other State or Territory in Australia.

Despite reductions in the number of drowning deaths in some age groups during the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011, the Territory still lags behind the rest of Australia in reducing the incidence of drowning.

The drowning deaths documented in this report are not attributable to a single factor or circumstance. There are, however, several contributing factors which urgently need to be addressed if the Territory is to reduce this toll. Specific recommendations to reduce the number of lives lost to drowning in the Northern Territory are included at the end of this report.

These were the key findings of the research undertaken:

- 74 deaths were recorded over the nine-year period
- 84% of those who lost their lives were males.
- 50% of those who drowned lost their lives in rivers and creeks, with 15% directly related to flooding
- One-third of all deaths occurred in January and February.
- 82% of those who drowned came from the Northern Territory.
- Almost one-quarter of those who drowned were aged 25 to 34 and all of those were males.
- 80% of those who drowned were from regional and remote locations
- 38% of those who drowned were indigenous
- Alcohol was present in 51% of drowning deaths of people aged 15 and over in the Northern Territory

The only age group to record a sustained reduction in drowning deaths in this period is the 0-4 age group which has been actively targeted through the successful Water Safety Awareness Program and pool fencing legislation.

The only age group to record a sustained reduction in drowning deaths in this period is the 0-4 age group which has been actively targeted through the successful Water Safety Awareness Program and pool fencing legislation.

Drowning in the Northern Territory has become a silent epidemic, sadly the people who lose their lives don't understand; the environmental conditions in the Territory; that combining alcohol and water-based recreational activities such as boating is dangerous; that older, less physically fit people are more at risk than young men.

Royal Life Saving acknowledge the suffering of the family and friends of all those who lost their lives to drowning and extend our deepest sympathies.

How This Report Was Compiled

This report was compiled from numerous publically available sources, including media reports, and the data collated and cross-checked by staff of the Royal Life Saving Society. All recorded deaths included in this report have been verified as far as possible.

Previous readers of the annual reports produced by the Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) NT Branch Inc will note some differences in the figures included here. The annual reports are traditionally compiled at the end of each financial year for the previous financial year with a key source being the National Coroners Information System (NCIS). Because of the time it takes to investigate each individual death that means often cases are still open at the time the annual report is released.

Where new information has come to light in the time since our annual report was released we have included it in the data in this report. Where there is a discrepancy between the annual report and this nine-year report, this report should be used as the authoritative report.

Examples of circumstances where a death previously classed as a drowning has been removed include where the coroner's findings have determined there may have been foul play or self-harm involved in the death; or where an underlying condition, such as a heart condition, was found later to be the primary cause of death.

Similarly, deaths have been added in some years because additional information about individual cases has become available.

As part of Royal Life Saving Society – Australia's agreement with the NCIS, no identifying information about individual cases can be included. This is especially important in the Northern Territory where a close sense of community means that individuals are more readily identifiable even where detailed information isn't included. The only exception to this is where the family of Daniel Browne specifically agreed to be part of this report.

Our aim is not to cause any further distress to the families and friends of those included in this report. We simply wish to prevent any more Territory families from suffering a similar loss.

It should be noted that despite the cause of death in a crocodile attack usually being drowning, all deaths involving crocodiles have been excluded from this report.

Daniel Browne: A Personal Story of Loss

Julie Turner's son, Daniel Browne, 13, drowned at White Rocks Water Hole, Rapid Creek on 16 February 2009. She shared her family's story of loss in the hope of preventing other drowning deaths.

Daniel was the youngest of six children. He was born in Adelaide and moved to Darwin when he was six weeks old. To stop mum and dad arguing over a name for the new baby, Daniel's name was chosen by his oldest siblings.

Everybody said he was a gentle giant who always smiled. He was happy-go-lucky, very loving and caring. He always put other people first. He was wiser than his years. He was always a good kid that told us where he was going. He'd come home first to touch base.

On that afternoon, straight after school Daniel and about 20 of his school mates went for a swim, without my knowledge. Not one of these kids knew how to do CPR.

It wasn't until other kids arrived (after Daniel was pulled unconscious from the water) that they could try to save him. From what I heard one of those three boys who tried to save Daniel was deeply traumatised by it all. He suffered from a deep depression. We nominated them for a Pride of Australia award. We know they did everything they could to save Daniel.

From what the police told me, the accident happened at 4pm. By 4.30pm they were at the front door to say they had to pick me up to take me to the hospital. We got to the hospital quickly but the ambulance didn't arrive until 5.15pm, I was panicking saying: where are the ambos? But they'd had to stabilise him first. Afterwards when I read the autopsy report I found out they'd worked on him for about 90 minutes, they didn't give up on him. They'd got his pulse back only to lose it again. It was touch-and-go.

(Julie had already lost Daniel's sister in tragic circumstances). I could sense my daughter's presence in the room as they worked on Daniel. I kept telling her it wasn't his time, to leave him with us.

We lost Daniel five or six times before he passed away.

The doctors kept saying, 'Julie we're losing him. Julie, we're losing him.'

They said when one of the readings (on the monitors measuring Daniel's wellbeing) got to 39 all hope was lost. So I told Daniel to run to his sister, I was hugging Daniel saying 'you can go home now, I'm letting you go now boy. Mum will be alright.' I looked up and the reading went to 39; I know that's the exact moment he was gone.

Twelve doctors were working on him, but there was no more they could do. He passed away at about 8.30 that evening.



Number of Drowning Deaths and Rate over Time

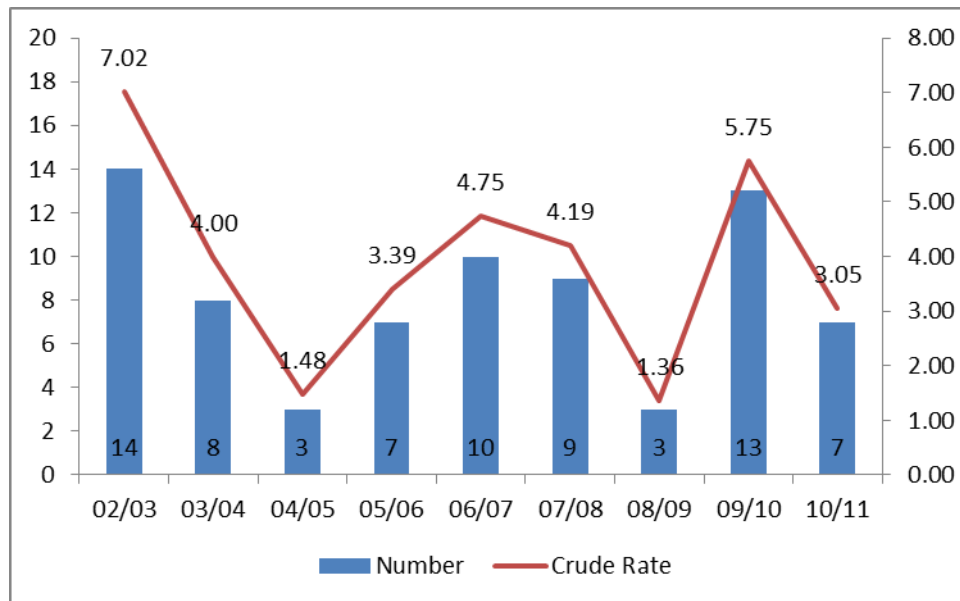


Figure 1 Number and rate over time, Northern Territory 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011

- There were 74 people who drowned in the Northern Territory over the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011. Of these, 62 were male (84% of the total).
- The crude rate per 100,000 population ranged from 7.02 in 2002/03 to 1.36 in 2008/09. (Figure 1)

Drowning Deaths by Sex and Age Group

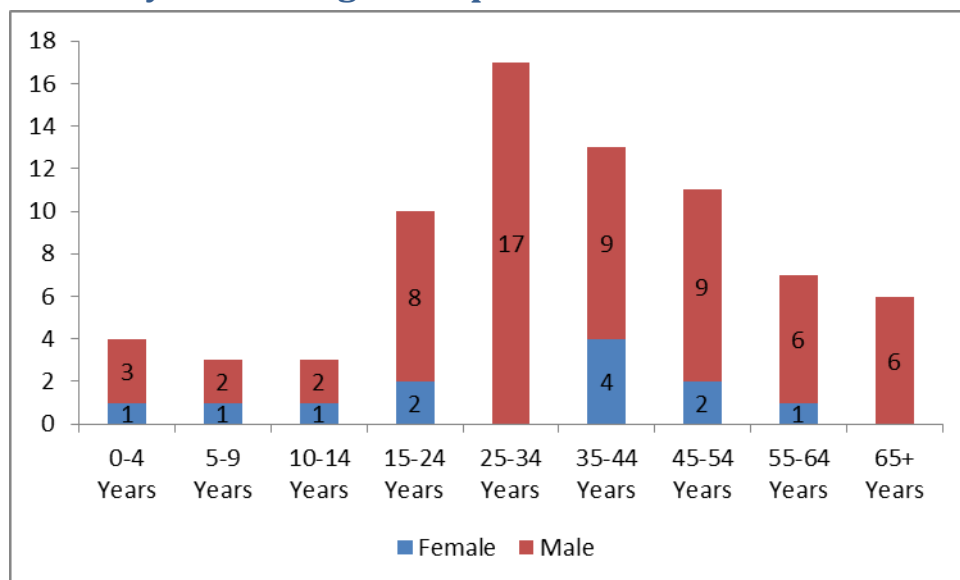


Figure 2 Drowning Deaths by Sex and Age Group, Northern Territory 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011 (N=74)

- The average age at death was 36 years with females being slightly younger (average age 30 years) than male (average age 36 years), 84% of all drownings were male
- The most common age group was the 25-34 years age group (Figure 2).

Location of Drowning Deaths

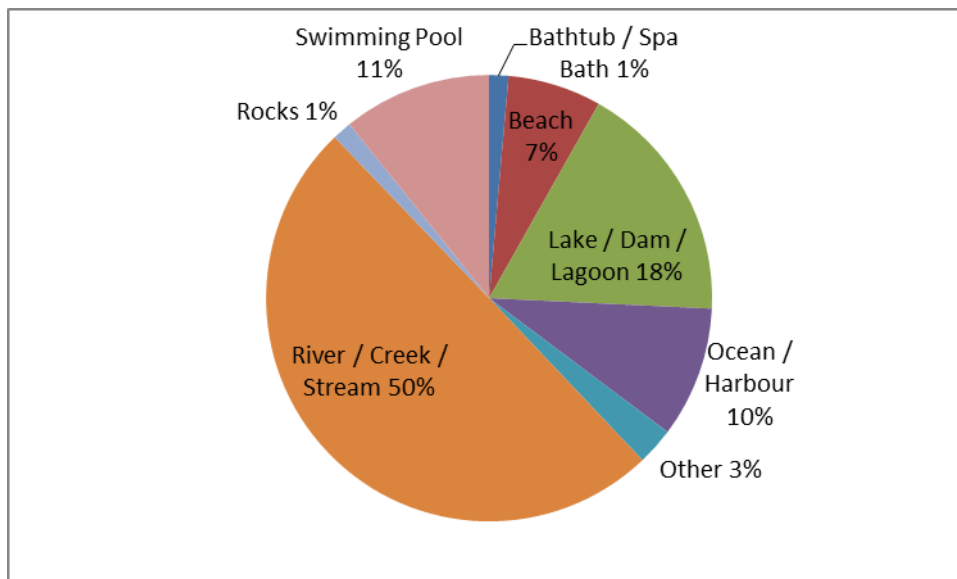


Figure 3 Location of Drowning Deaths, Northern Territory 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011 (N=74)

- The most common location where people drowned was in rivers and creeks (50%), followed by lakes, dams and lagoons (18%)
- More than one-in-ten deaths occurred in a swimming pool. This includes both public and privately-owned pools.
- 80% of all drowning deaths in this period occurred in regional and remote locations.

Time of Year

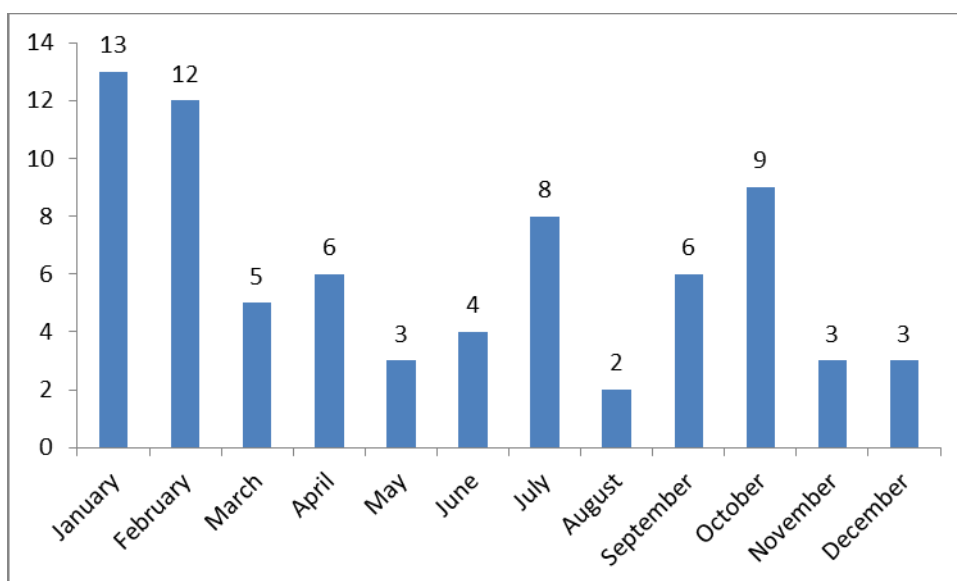
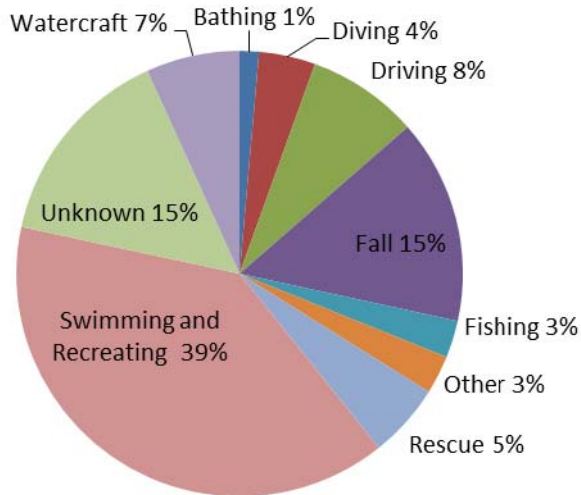


Figure 4 Time of year (month), Northern Territory 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011 (N=74)

- One-third (34%) of all drowning deaths in the Northern Territory occurred in January and February (Figure 4).

Activity Prior to Drowning



**Figure 5 Activity prior to drowning, Northern Territory
1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011 (N=74)**

- The most common activity prior to drowning was swimming and recreating in the water (39%), followed by falls (15%).
- A total 15% of all deaths were a directly related to flooding
- While as an activity driving seems to be incompatible with drowning deaths, too many Territory residents risk trying to cross roads that are flooded due to seasonal conditions. This accounted for 8% of all drowning deaths.
- When watercraft-based activities and the fishing categories are combined, they account for 10% of all deaths.
- Five per cent of those who drowned were participating in a rescue at the time they lost their lives.
- In a total 15% of all deaths there was no way of confirming the type of activity the person was engaged in prior to their death. (Figure 5).

Lack of Personal Flotation Devices (PDFs) Costs Lives

A routine fishing trip claimed the lives of three Indigenous men off the coast of the NT in 2006.

A group of five men was reported missing after failing to return from a fishing trip. Two men survived by swimming to mangroves where they sheltered until help arrived the following day. They had swum through crocodile and box jellyfish infested waters to safety.

The boat was located the following day but no trace of the remaining three men has ever been found. It is understood the men were all strong swimmers.

There were no lifejackets on board the vessel as it sunk and alcohol had been consumed onboard the boat before it sunk.

Nine children were left without their fathers as a result of the tragedy.

Alcohol Usage by Age Group

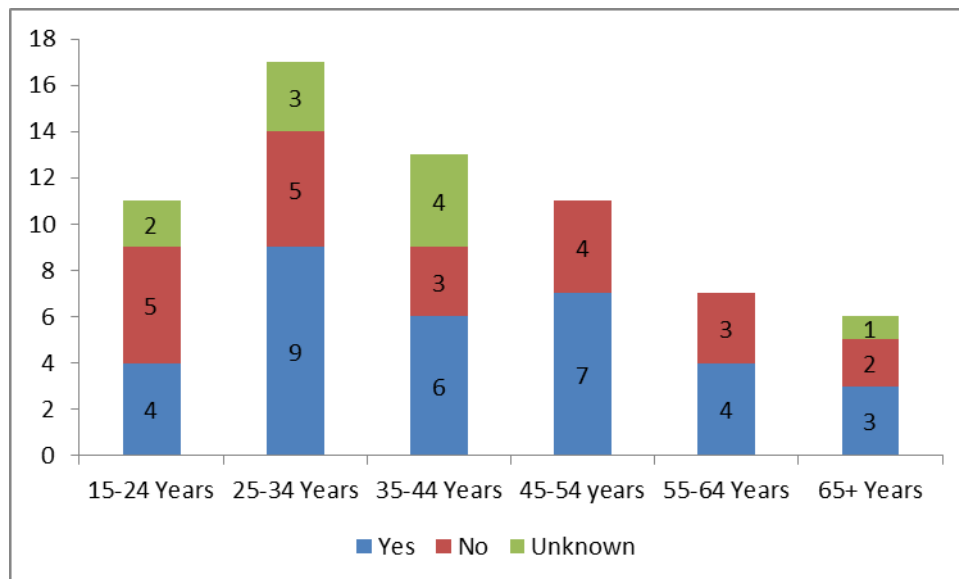


Figure 6 Alcohol usage by age group, Northern Territory 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011 (N=65)

- Alcohol was present in 51% of drowning deaths of people aged 15 and over in the Northern Territory.
- The largest number of cases (9) occurred in the 25-34 years age group.
- Proportionally, the presence of alcohol peaked in the 45-54 years age group with 64% of cases in this age group recording a positive alcohol reading (Figure 6).

Status within the Coronial System

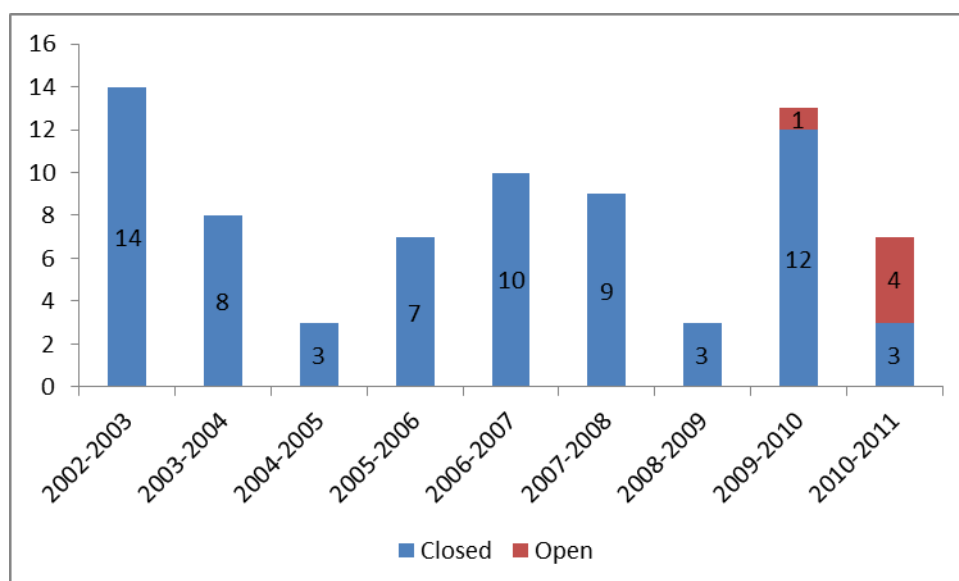


Figure 7 Open and Closed Case by financial years, Northern Territory 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2010 (N=74)

- The majority (93%) of cases were closed. Those cases which were not classified as closed predominately occurred in the past financial year (Figure 7).

Resident and Non-Resident Drowning Deaths by Age

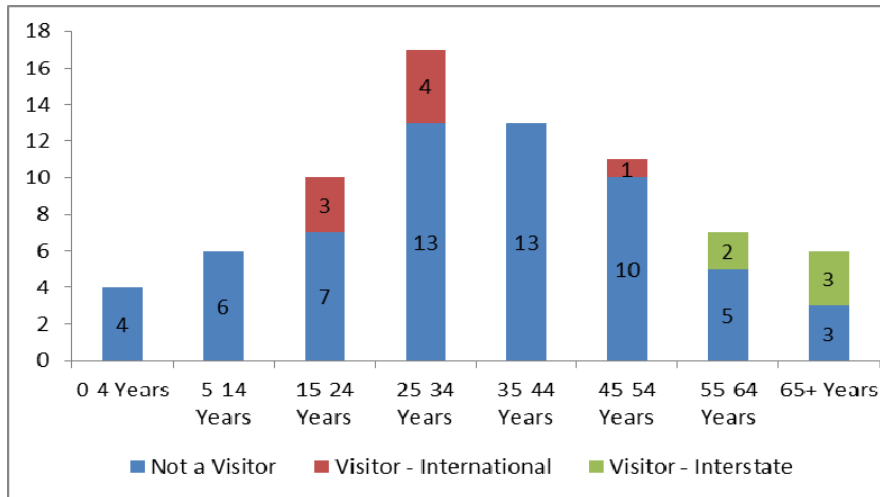


Figure 8 Visitor status by age group, Northern Territory 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2011 (N=74)

- The majority (82%) of people who drowned in the Northern Territory were from the Northern Territory.
- 10% were international visitors, most commonly aged between 15 and 34 years, with one aged 45-54 years.
- 6% were interstate visitors, aged over 55 years (Figure 8).

If it's flooded – forget it!

In 2010, a river in remote NT claimed the lives of two brothers from a desert community.

Media reports at the time suggested the older brother was swimming in the river when he got into trouble. His younger brother dived in, attempting to save his sibling. Both were washed away. It is understood another brother witnessed the tragedy. Despite two helicopters searching the length of the river, the younger man's body was never located.

The river where the tragedy occurred is an ephemeral river, running only about once every 10 years. When it is running, the river can swell to up to 1km wide.

This tragedy was a tragic reminder of our harsh and unpredictable environment and if it's flooded – forget it.

Recommendations

1. **The Water Safety Awareness Program needs to continue across the Territory and include funding for remote community access.** The only age group to record a sustained reduction in drowning deaths is the 0-4 age group which has been actively targeted through the successful Water Safety Awareness Program. This program provides practical information on emergency care, revival skills, water awareness and familiarisation and, when combined with active adult supervision and restricting a child's access to water, can help keep young children safe from drowning. The Royal Life Saving Society (Australia) NT Branch Inc believes the lives saved can be directly attributed to this targeted, government-funded program which has been delivered across the Northern Territory at no cost to families, allowing equity of access to all Territorians. What this demonstrates is that education is an effective means of reducing drowning deaths and that residents of the Northern Territory not only attend these programs when offered but they implement the lessons learned in their everyday lives.
2. **A Northern Territory school-based water safety and swimming program urgently needs to be implemented and monitored through accurate reporting.** While children in age groups that are directly supervised tend to stay safe (up to 13 years), the high numbers of teenagers and young adults documented in this report who drowned show the consequences of not providing water safety education to children. Given the well-documented inequality of access to health measures based on socio-economics, geographic location and family background, a program that gives all Territory children equal access to these skills is imperative to achieving the goal of saving lives. By offering these skills and knowledge to school-age children, large sections of the Territory community would benefit. This includes long-standing adult residents of the Territory who haven't re-visited the water safety lessons they learned as school children as well as new arrivals to the Territory. These new arrivals include communities as diverse as Defence Force families, mining families, migrants to Australia and those who are attracted to the Territory by the outdoors lifestyle it offers, including boating, fishing and swimming.
3. **A culture of water safety needs to be developed, fostered and respected.** As a community, we need to make small adaptations to our idyllic lifestyle to save lives. There is a reluctance to wear personal flotation devices (PDFs) for routine activities like boating. However on the water when things go wrong they tend to go wrong quickly, leaving no time to fit or find life jackets. Similarly, alcohol and water simply do not mix. Whether you are swimming, fishing, boating, camping around water or driving across rivers – you need to keep your wits about you to make the right decisions for yourself and your family. Royal Life Saving NT's call for change is to keep the lifestyle and fun while ensuring water safety is first for everyone, everywhere, everytime.

“Our People, Our Lifestyle, Our Water”

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