



The Coalition's Policy to Reduce Drownings

August 2013

Key Points

Australians are a water-loving people but our love of the water is not without risk and unfortunately not without tragedy.

There were 284 drowning deaths in Australian waterways in 2011-12, including 55 drowning deaths at our beaches and 104 across our inland waterways.

Investing in water safety to provide safer water environments can save lives.

The Coalition will provide a \$15 million boost to support Australia's peak water safety agencies in their efforts to promote water safety and reduce drowning deaths in identified priority areas.

The Coalition will provide an additional \$8 million to assist surf life saving clubs across Australia to purchase much needed equipment and we will provide \$2 million to extend Surf Life Saving Australia's Beach Drowning Black Spot Reduction Programme.

We will work with Surf Life Saving Australia to ensure our surf life saving clubs are better equipped to do their vital work.

The Coalition is also committed to promoting water safety and reducing drowning across regional and rural Australia.

The Coalition will provide an additional \$4 million to support Royal Life Saving Society – Australia's work to reduce drowning in inland waterways, including rivers, creeks and lakes.

The Coalition's commitment will support expanded community education programmes which target water safety and provide assistance to targeted disadvantaged communities through the Royal Life Saving Community Development Model.

Finally, the Coalition will provide \$1 million to the Australian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety (AUSTSWIM), which is Australia's leading provider of swim teacher training and accreditation. This will assist AUSTSWIM to promote access to quality and accredited swimming and water safety teachers amongst targeted population groups, including remote and disadvantaged communities and people with a disability.

The Coalition will work with Royal Life Saving Society – Australia and AUSTSWIM to ensure our commitment is focussed on delivering real outcomes and direct benefits for regional Australia.

This funding package will be provided over five years and is in addition to existing funding arrangements between the Australian Government and Australia's peak water safety agencies.



Introduction

The Coalition's Policy to Reduce Drownings has been developed in response to strategies developed by Australia's three leading water safety organisations – Surf Life Saving Australia, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia and AUSTSWIM. The Coalition's plans are consistent with the goals of the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015.

The Coalition knows that Australians are a water loving people. We know that being in and around the water is an important part of our way of life and the Australian culture. We want people to enjoy water activities in a safe environment.

We don't want to prevent people enjoying the water but we do want to ensure people can enjoy the water in a safe and responsible way.

The Coalition supports the Australian Water Safety Council's goal to reduce drowning deaths by 50 per cent by 2020. We have worked with Australia's key water safety agencies to identify priority areas we need to address in order to have a real impact on promoting water safety and reducing drowning.

Beaches and inland waterways are identified as high risk locations for drowning deaths in the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015. Together these locations accounted for half of all drowning deaths in Australia between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2011.

According to Royal Life Saving Society – Australia's National Drowning Report 2012 there were 284 drowning deaths in Australian waterways in 2011-12, including 55 drowning deaths at our beaches and 104 in our inland waterways.

Surf Life Saving Australia is Australia's major beach and coastal water safety organisation.

There are approximately 100 million individual visits to Australian beaches each year.

Looking after the safety and welfare of all visitors to our beaches is the world's largest volunteer water safety organisation.

Over 165,000 Australians are members of the 310 surf live saving clubs across Australia.

Each year surf live savers perform 15,000 rescues and 65,000 emergency care treatments.

It is estimated that surf life savers save approximately 600 lives a year on our beaches.



Despite the best efforts of Australia's proud surf life saving community, tragedies continue to unfold at our beaches each year. There were 55 drowning deaths at our beaches last year.

Surf life saving's core function is to save lives and the Coalition wants to ensure that our surf life saving clubs are better equipped to reduce Australia's coastal drowning toll.

As well as being Australia's major coastal water safety and rescue authority, Australia's network of surf life saving clubs are also a real focus for community engagement. They serve as a hub for a variety of activities and programmes that unite communities and build social cohesion.

The Coalition is committed to supporting organisations that support our communities.

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia is Australia's foremost advocate for drowning prevention and the promotion of water safety.

It is responsible for important and well known water safety education and advocacy programmes, including *Keep Watch*, *Swim and Survive* and the *Bronze Medallion*.

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia's particular focus is on drowning prevention in inland waterways and swimming pools and is well placed to provide targeted education and awareness programmes to promote water safety in these areas.

AUSTSWIM is Australia's leading provider of quality training of teachers in swimming and water safety.

It trains and accredits around 10,000 teachers of swimming and water safety every year and operates a rigorous accreditation process underpinned by a strong code of conduct.



The Plan

1. Beach Safety Equipment Fund

The Coalition will provide Australian surf life saving clubs with \$8 million of additional funding over five years to purchase vital safety equipment.

This funding package equates to an additional \$1.6 million per year for five years, providing on average approximately \$5,000 per year to each of the nation's 310 surf life saving clubs. This funding will be directed towards the purchase of vital rescue equipment, first aid and medical supplies.

The Coalition acknowledges that equipment deficiencies are greater at some clubs compared to others and will work with Surf Life Saving Australia to ensure that priority is given to clubs in most urgent need of new or upgraded equipment.

2. Beach Drowning Black Spot Reduction Programme

The Coalition will provide \$2 million to Surf Life Saving Australia so they are able to extend their efforts to reduce beach drowning at identified black spots.

The Beach Drowning Black Spot Reduction Programme uses targeted infrastructure, additional resources and services to tackle the incidence of drowning in identified high risk areas and areas of projected population increase.

The funding will assist Surf Life Saving Australia extend coastal public risk assessments to provide evidence and data for site specific intervention strategies and programmes.

3. Inland Waterways Drowning Prevention Fund

The Coalition's commitment to promote water safety and reduce drowning across our inland waterways is an important part of our commitment to rural and regional Australia.

We understand the needs of regional Australia and we are committed to ensuring regional Australia has fair access to important basic services like health, education and infrastructure such as roads and telecommunications.



The Coalition is committed to promoting water safety across our inland waterways because we are committed to delivering a fair go to all Australians – no matter where they live.

Regional Australia makes an important contribution to our national economy and is a crucial part of our identity as a nation.

The Coalition's Inland Waterways Drowning Prevention Fund will focus on delivering real outcomes for regional Australia by supporting our peak water safety agencies to promote water safety and reduce drowning.

The Coalition will provide \$4 million to support Royal Life Saving Society – Australia's work to reduce drowning in inland waterways.

Drowning in Australia's rivers and inland waterways has been a consistent challenge for water safety agencies.

The Coalition's commitment will support Royal Life Saving Society – Australia to build and expand a River Drowning Black Spot identification programme. Royal Life Saving Society – Australia will investigate high risk inland waterways and expand community education and awareness programmes that target alcohol consumption, safe use of watercraft and practical life saving skills in rural and remote areas.

Our commitment will also support the expansion of Royal Life Saving Society – Australia's *Swim and Survive* lessons to children in populations who are known to miss out, including indigenous and disadvantaged communities. This is delivered through the Royal Life Saving Community Development Model.

We will also provide \$1million to AUSTSWIM to promote access to quality and accredited swimming and water safety teachers amongst targeted population groups, including disadvantaged communities and people with a disability.

The Coalition's commitment to AUSTSWIM will enable it to extend its programme of subsidised swim and water safety teachers of people with a disability, to those willing to teach in rural, remote and indigenous communities and identified migrant populations.

Our support will also enable AUSTSWIM's continued development of education and training materials for candidate management, accreditation and assessment, as well as online learning material to ensure more communities can access quality teachers of swimming and water safety.



COST

The Coalition's Policy to Reduce Drownings is capped at \$15 million and will be provided over five years.

Our support is in addition to existing funding arrangements between the Australian Government and Australia's peak water safety agencies.



Hope.
Reward.
Opportunity.



THE NATIONALS *for Regional Australia*

For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to
www.realsolutions.org.au