

# Perceptions of water safety and use of aquatic areas in rural and remote locations in NSW

NSW Water Safety Taskforce

**SafeWaters**

A NSW GOVERNMENT WATER SAFETY INITIATIVE

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Report for NSW Water Safety Taskforce

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# 1 Introduction

In March 2002 the NSW Water Safety Taskforce commissioned The Hunter Valley Research Foundation (HVRF) to undertake a study of "Perceptions of water safety and use of aquatic areas in rural and remote locations in NSW".

The research program used a community-based telephone survey methodology to achieve the following objectives:

- describe the types of locations that people residing in the rural and remote areas of NSW, as defined by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA), use for water-related recreational purposes and the frequency with which they attend these locations;
- obtain information about the perceptions of risk and attitudes to water safety of people residing in rural and remote locations; and
- identify preferred communication media for the target group to receive water safety messages.

This report presents the results of the survey. A description of the survey methods is provided in section two. Section three contains a discussion of the main results. Concluding remarks are provided in section four. A copy of the survey questionnaire is contained in Appendix 1, a profile of respondents is provided in Appendix 2 and detailed frequency tables can be found in Appendix 3. The open ended responses for question 19 are available upon request from the Executive Officer.



# 2 Methods

## Survey methods

### 2.1 Survey methods

#### Data collection instrument:

A questionnaire was developed in consultation with representatives from the NSW Water Safety Taskforce. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1.

#### Data collection:

Using the structured questionnaire, the survey was administered on the HVRF Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The questionnaire was loaded into a computer program that guided each interviewer through the interview process. The CATI program stored the collected information in an ASCII text file, which was loaded into database and analytical programs. The CATI system had built in quality control checks to ensure that the answers entered were not outside pre-programmed limits.

The data was collected between 26 March and 22 April 2002.

Data collection took place as follows:

#### Sample selection:

A two-stage random process was used to obtain a community sample. Contact telephone numbers were obtained by random selection from the electronic white pages on compact disc. Within the household, a further selection was made of persons over 15 years based upon the most recent birthday.

As part of the HVRF's standard CATI system, all information from every call attempt was recorded. The information was stored in the response rate database and provides a coded response for every call made. At least six call attempts were made to contact the household and identify the respondent. Once contacted and the respondent identified, at least five further call attempts were made to complete the interview. Call attempts were made on different days and at different times, including mornings, evenings and weekends so that contact opportunities with households and the identified respondent were maximised.

The HVRF used an answering machine strategy, which instructed interviewers to leave scripted messages on answering machines on selected call attempts. Part of the

strategy was to leave the HVRF's 1800 free call number that enabled respondents to speak directly to the Survey Supervisor. When a respondent used the "\*10#" method of missed call telephone number retrieval to contact the HVRF, the respondent's number was recorded by an interviewer for an immediate call back to prevent the respondent incurring STD costs.

A demographic profile of respondents is presented in Appendix 2.

A total of 500 telephone interviews were completed in the study area. The study area was defined as those postcodes within NSW that were described by the Australian Commonwealth Department of Health & Aging – Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) (<http://www.health.gov.au/ari/aria.htm>) as having an ARIA score higher than 3.51 and subsequently categorised as either:

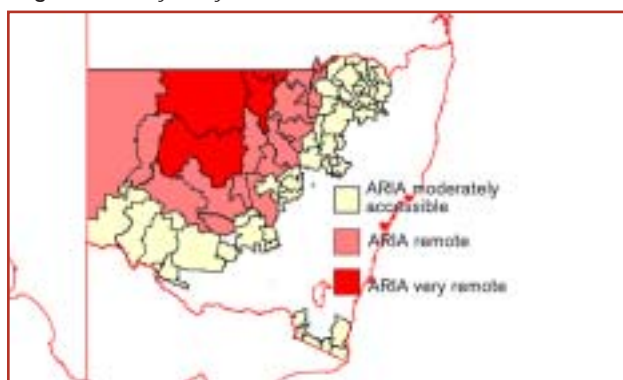
Moderately Accessible (ARIA score >3.51 – 5.80, 53 postcodes in NSW) – significantly restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction;

Remote (ARIA score >5.80 – 9.08, 16 postcodes in NSW) – very restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction, or;

Very Remote (ARIA score >9.08 – 12, four postcodes in NSW) – very little accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction.

A map of the study area is displayed below.

Figure 1 Survey study area



# 2 Methods

## Survey methods

The total sample of 500 completed interviews was divided proportionally into the three ARIA groups with 300 interviews in the Moderately Accessible region, 100 interviews in the Remote region and 100 interviews in the Very Remote region. The overall results were then statistically weighted (using 1996 Census information) to more accurately represent the population of the overall study area.

A survey of 500 residents in the study area will provide a statistical accuracy of  $\pm 4.5\%$  for a response of 50% at a confidence level of 95%. Practically, this means that if 50% of the 500 persons surveyed said that they had been swimming in a dam on private property in the last six months, the true proportion of all persons in the study area who would give the same answer (if all people were interviewed) would be between 45.5% and 54.5%, 95 times out of 100.

### Response rate:

A response rate of 74.5% was obtained for the survey.

### Data handling and analysis:

All data collection, coding and analysis was carried out by HVRF using dBase and SPSS/PC statistical analysis software. The survey data was weighted by household size and then by respondent age and sex based on the 1996 Australian Census of population and housing.

### Statistical significance:

Statistical significance in this report is at the 95% level of confidence. A difference that is statistically significant is probably a true difference as the likelihood that the change is due to sampling error is less than 5%.

All contact numbers	N	N as % of total	N % of eligible
<b>Final outcome</b>			
<b>Ineligible</b>			
Business	10	1.0%	
Disconnected	113	11.0%	
Fax	23	2.2%	
Call back (exhausted attempts or time)	21	2.0%	
Unavailable during survey period	34	3.3%	
Unsuitable (not in age group/population)	36	3.5%	
No answer	71	6.9%	
Answering machine	46	4.5%	
Engaged	2	0.2%	
NES	3	0.3%	
<b>Total ineligible</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>34.9%</b>	
<b>Eligible</b>			
<b>Completed interview</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>48.5%</b>	<b>74.5%</b>
<b>Refusals</b>			
Household refusal	67	6.5%	10.0%
Personal refusal	103	10.0%	15.4%
Terminated interview	1	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Total refusals</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>16.6%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>100%</b>	

### Response rate:

$$= \frac{\text{No. completed interviews}}{\text{No. completed} + \text{No. refusals} + \text{No. terminated}}$$

$$= \frac{500}{500 + 170 + 1}$$

$$= 74.5 \%$$

Statistical testing was undertaken to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the ARIA regions, the genders, and the age groups. Pearson's Chi-squared, one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests of significance were applied where appropriate to test for differences.

# 2 Methods

## Explanatory notes

### 2.2 Explanatory notes

In the report and tables that follow, a number of conventions has been established for the purpose of presenting the survey results. These are explained in the Scales and Reporting sections below.

**Scales:**

Respondents were presented in the survey with a five-point scale for the assessment of:

- agreement with a series of risk factors for drowning;
- frequency of personal safety behaviours.

The scales were constructed as follows:

<p><b>Agreement</b></p> <p>1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree</p> <p><b>Non-response</b></p> <p>For respondents who could not provide a rating on this scale, <i>don't know</i> and <i>refused</i> options were available.</p>	<p><b>Frequency</b></p> <p>1=always 2=mostly 3=sometimes 4=rarely 5=never</p> <p><b>Non-response</b></p> <p>For respondents who could not provide a rating on this scale, three non-response options were available: <i>not applicable/not appropriate</i>, <i>don't know</i> and <i>refused</i>.</p>
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**Reporting:**

Results from these scales are presented in two formats: breakdowns and scores.

**Breakdowns:**

The scales are grouped as follows and reported as the percentage of respondents falling into each category:

<p><b>Agreement</b></p> <p>Agree Strongly agree or agree (a score of 1 or 2) Neutral Neither (a score of 3) Disagree Disagree or strongly disagree (a score of 4 or 5) No response Non-response as detailed above</p>	<p><b>Frequency</b></p> <p>Mostly Always or mostly (a score of 1 or 2) Sometimes Sometimes (a score of 3) Rarely Rarely or never (a score of 4 or 5) No response Non-response as detailed above</p>
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**Scores:**

The numeric values from the scales (1 to 5) were converted to an overall average (mean) score for all responses to each of the questions. This score is calculated only for those respondents who answered using the standard response scale. It does not include those who answered *don't know*, *not applicable* or *refused*.

Results add up to 100% where relevant results are presented in tabular form. Some slight variations occur due to rounding off.

# 2 Methods

## Explanatory notes

An example of the calculation of an agreement score follows. The Frequency scores use the same method.

Response Scale	Number of Responses	Response Scale x Number of Responses	SCORE
1=strongly agree	70	1 x 70	The score is calculated by dividing 1390 by the number of responses used (in this case 460 not 500): 1390/460
2=agree	100	2 x 100	
3=neither	80	3 x 80	
4=disagree	170	4 x 170	
5=strongly disagree	40	5 x 40	
Don't know	40	Not included in calculation	Score = 3.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1390</b>	

To obtain a score of 1.0, **all** respondents who gave the item a rating would have had to answer *strongly agree* or *never* as applicable.

### Interpretation:

In interpreting the agreement scores, it should be remembered that:

- the lower the score, the greater the agreement;
- an agreement score lower than 3 indicates that, on balance, respondents agreed with the statement.

Interpretation of the frequency scores requires some care as three items are potentially negative behaviours. In general,

- the higher the score, the less likely a respondent is to undertake this behaviour;
- a score greater than 3 indicates that, on balance, respondents are less likely to behave in this manner.

When interpreting the results, the breakdown and the score need to be considered together, not individually. The following table illustrates this by giving an example of two contrasting breakdowns that result in the same agreement score.

Statement	Agreement rating				
	Score	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%
Statement A	3.0	22.7	22.1	22.3	33.0
Statement B	3.0	44.5	4.3	41.2	10.0

For Statement A there is a relatively even spread across the response categories, resulting in a score of 3.0. However, although the statement scores are equal, there is a strong polarisation of views in the responses for Statement B with almost half the population in disagreement with the statement. The interpretation for each of these statements is very different, despite the fact that they received the same agreement score.

# 3 Results

## Use of aquatic facilities

### 3.1 Use of aquatic facilities

In order to develop a profile of aquatic facility usage, respondents were asked about their use of beaches, public swimming pools, private swimming pools, dams on private properties, dams accessible to the general public, lakes, rivers, creeks or streams, in the past six months.

Initially, respondents were asked if they had been in or on the water at a pool, beach, lake, river, creek or dam in the past six months.

- More than half of the respondents (59.4%) had used an aquatic facility in the past six months.

**Table 1** *Use of aquatic facilities*

Have you been in or on the water at a pool, beach, lake, river, creek or dam in the past 6 months?	%
Yes	59.4
No	40.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

When the results for this question were analysed by age group, a statistically significant difference was found. Respondents who were older than 45 years old were less likely to have been in or on the water in the past six months than respondents from the younger age groups.

**Table 1a** *Use of aquatic facilities by age group*

Have you been in or on the water in the past 6 months?	15–20 yrs	21–25 yrs	26–35 yrs	36–45 yrs	46–55 yrs	56–65 yrs	66 yrs and over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	95.1	81.6	76.7	70.1	47.9	39.7	20.3
No	4.9	18.4	23.3	29.9	52.1	60.3	79.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Those respondents who indicated that they had visited an aquatic facility in the last six months were then presented with a list of aquatic facilities and asked whether they had visited them.

- The most popular aquatic facilities were river/creek/stream (53.5%), followed by beach (45.7%), public swimming pool (45.5%) and private swimming pool (40.7%);
- The least popular aquatic facilities were dam on a private property (19.8%), dam accessible to the general public (20.8%) and lake (27.0%).

**Table 2** *Type of aquatic facility used*

Have you been in or on the water at a river/creek/stream in the past 6 months?	Had used	Not at all	Don't know/refused
	%	%	%
River/creek/stream	53.5	44.5	2.0
Beach	45.7	52.7	1.5
Public swimming pool	45.5	53.4	1.1
Private swimming pool	40.7	57.8	1.5
Lake	27.0	71.1	1.9
Dam accessible to the general public	20.8	77.8	1.3
Dam on a private property	19.8	78.4	1.9

**NB** Frequencies are expressed as a percentage of respondents who had been on or in the water in the past 6 months.

# 3 Results

## Use of aquatic facilities

### 3.1.1 Frequency of use

Those respondents who had visited an aquatic facility in the last six months (59.4% of all respondents) were asked to indicate how frequently they had visited each of the listed aquatic facilities during summer. The results in Table 3 show:

- the most popular frequency of use for each of the aquatic facilities was 1–3 times during summer;
- the most frequently used aquatic facilities (one or more days a week) were river/creek/stream (20.7%), public swimming pool (17.4%), private swimming pool (17.0%) and beach (14.0%);
- the least frequently used aquatic facilities (one or more days a week) were lake (7.3%), dam on a private property (5.5%) and dam accessible to the general public (3.8%).

**Table 3** Frequency of aquatic facility use

Frequency of use	River/ Creek/ Stream %	Beach %	Public swimming pool %	Private swimming pool %	Lake %	Dam accessible to the public %	Dam on private property %
Every day	2.4	3.9	2.0	4.6	1.3	1.1	1.5
3–6 days a week	6.7	6.3	5.8	5.5	2.3	1.7	1.0
1–2 days a week	11.6	3.8	9.6	6.9	3.7	1.0	3.0
1–2 times a month	9.9	9.5	9.9	7.6	6.2	3.8	7.0
1–3 times during summer	22.9	22.2	18.2	16.1	13.5	13.2	7.3
Not at all	44.5	52.7	53.4	57.8	71.1	77.8	78.4
Don't know	1.3	1.5	0.8	1.5	1.9	1.3	1.2
Refused	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**NB** Frequencies are expressed as a percentage of respondents who had been on or in the water in the past 6 months.

# 3 Results

## Use of aquatic facilities

### 3.1.2 Time of day most visited

Those respondents who had visited an aquatic facility in the last six months were asked to indicate the time of day they had most visited the aquatic facilities they had used during summer. The results in Table 4 show:

- the most popular time of day to visit a river/creek/stream was 12pm–3pm (32.2%), followed by 3pm–6pm (27.3%);
- the most popular time of day to visit a beach was 9am–12pm (35.0%), followed by 3pm–6pm (26.5%);
- the most popular time of day to visit a public swimming pool was 3pm–6pm (43.1%), followed by 9am–12pm (24.5%);
- the most popular time of day to visit a private swimming pool was 3pm–6pm (41.5%), followed by 12pm–3pm (35.0%);
- the most popular time of day to visit a lake was 9am–12pm (35.6%), followed by 12pm–3pm (33.8%);
- the most popular time of day to visit a dam accessible to the public was 12pm–3pm (34.7%), followed by 9am–12pm (31.4%);
- the most popular time of day to visit a dam on private property was 3pm–6pm (26.9%), followed by 12pm–3pm (25.9%).

**Table 4** Time of day of aquatic facility use

Time of day most visited	River/ Creek/ Stream %	Beach %	Public swimming pool %	Private swimming pool %	Lake %	Dam accessible to the public %	Dam on property %
Before 9am	6.7	15.0	9.0	1.8	10.2	15.4	14.9
9am–12pm	23.8	35.0	24.5	11.6	35.6	31.4	21.9
12pm–3pm	32.2	23.0	20.3	35.0	33.8	34.7	25.9
3pm–6pm	27.3	26.5	43.1	41.5	13.3	12.5	26.9
After 6pm	6.6	0.6	2.4	7.4	7.0	5.0	5.2
Don't know	3.4	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.0	1.1	5.2
Refused	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**NB** Frequencies are expressed as a percentage of respondents who had actually visited the facility in the past 6 months.

# 3 Results

## Use of aquatic facilities

### 3.1.3 Usual length of stay

Those respondents who had visited an aquatic facility in the last six months were asked to indicate their usual length of stay at the aquatic facilities they had used during summer. The results in Table 5 show:

- the most popular usual length of stay at a river/creek/stream was 1–2 hours (29.2%), followed by more than 4 hours (27.4%);
- the most popular usual length of stay at a beach was 1–2 hours (37.7%), followed by 2–4 hours (26.3%);
- the most popular usual length of stay at a public swimming pool was 1–2 hours (47.8%), followed by 30 minutes–1 hour (28.0%);
- the most popular usual length of stay at a private swimming pool was 30 minutes –1 hour (37.4%), followed by 1–2 hours (27.8%);
- the most popular usual length of stay at a lake was more than 4 hours (35.6%), followed by 1–2 hours (28.0%);
- the most popular usual length of stay at a dam accessible to the public was more than 4 hours (57.2%), followed by 2–4 hours (24.8%);
- the most popular usual length of stay at a dam on private property was 1–2 hours (45.1%), followed by 30 minutes–1 hour (17.7%).

**Table 5** Usual length of stay at aquatic facility used

Usual length of stay	River/ Creek/ Stream %	Beach %	Public swimming pool %	Private swimming pool %	Lake %	Dam accessible to the public %	Dam on property %
Less than 30 minutes	6.8	2.4	2.6	13.2	1.6	1.7	8.7
30 minutes –1 hour	15.5	25.8	28.0	37.4	8.1	5.1	17.7
1–2 hours	29.2	37.7	47.8	27.8	28.0	11.1	45.1
2–4 hours	20.3	26.3	18.7	13.7	26.7	24.8	15.1
More than 4 hours	27.4	7.9	2.9	7.9	35.6	57.2	7.7
Don't know	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6
Refused	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**NB** Frequencies are expressed as a percentage of respondents who had actually visited the facility in the past 6 months.

# 3 Results

## Use and safety features of private swimming pools

### 3.2 Use and safety features of private swimming pools

#### 3.2.1 Use of private swimming pools by pool owners

Respondents were asked about private swimming pools at their home.

The results in Table 6 indicate that approximately one tenth of all respondents (11.0%) had a swimming pool at home. Those respondents who had private swimming pools were then asked about their usage. Key findings from Table 6 include:

- almost six out of ten respondents (59.8%) who had a pool at their home indicated that they would use the pool at least once a week during summer;
- respondents who used their pool less than three days a week were more likely to report usage on weekend days rather than weekdays.

**Table 6** Use of private swimming pools by pool owners

<b>Private swimming pools</b>	<b>%</b>
Have a swimming pool at home	11.0
<b>Use of private pool during summer (as a percentage of respondents who had a swimming pool)</b>	<b>%</b>
Every day	26.4
3–6 days a week	19.2
1–2 days a week	14.2
1–2 times a month	4.3
1–2 times during the summer	20.4
Don't use the pool/don't know	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>%</b>
Every day	26.4
3–6 days a week	19.2
Less than 3 days a week—usually weekdays	0.0
Less than 3 days a week—usually weekends	18.4
Less than 3 days a week—either/both weekdays and weekends	20.5
Don't use the pool/don't know	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>



# 3 Results

## Use and safety features of private swimming pools

### 3.2.2 Safety features of private swimming pools

Respondents who had private swimming pools at their home (11.0% of all respondents) were asked about the safety features that they had in place.

The results in Table 7 indicate that the large majority of respondents who had a swimming pool at home did have the pool fenced from the house (90.1%), and had a self-closing gate installed (75.5%).

**Table 7** Safety features of private swimming pools

Pool safety features	Yes
(as a percentage of respondents who had a swimming pool)	%
Pool fenced from house	90.1
Self-closing gates installed	75.5

### 3.2.3 Compulsory fences for private swimming pools

All survey respondents, regardless of whether they had a swimming pool at home or not, were asked for their opinion on whether they felt pool fences should be made compulsory.

The large majority of respondents (94.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed that pool fences should be made compulsory for all private swimming pools.

The mean score for this question was 1.3, which is closest to strongly agree.

**Table 8** Compulsory pool fences

Pool fences should be made compulsory for all private swimming pools	%
Strongly agree	80.8
Agree	13.6
Neither agree nor disagree	3.0
Disagree	1.2
Strongly disagree	1.0
Don't know	0.4
Refused	0.0
Total	100
<b>Mean score</b>	<b>1.3</b>

**Explanatory notes:**

1. The mean score represents the mean or average level of frequency on a five-point scale where 1 represents strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree. Therefore, the closer the score is to 1, the more they agree with the statement.
2. Non-responses are not included in the calculation of the mean score.



# 3 Results

## Rating of own swimming ability

### 3.3 Rating of own swimming ability

All respondents were asked to rate their own swimming ability on a six-point scale.

The largest proportion of respondents rated their swimming ability as good (28.6%), followed by moderate (25.8%) and very good (21.8%).

Slightly less than one in ten respondents (8.5%) indicated that they couldn't swim.

**Table 9** Personal rating of own swimming ability

Rating	%
Very good	21.8
Good	28.6
Moderate	25.8
Weak	9.4
Very weak	5.6
Can't swim	8.5
Don't know	0.4
Refused	0.0
Total	100
<b>Mean score</b>	<b>2.7</b>

**Explanatory notes:**

1. The mean score represents the mean or average level of frequency on a six-point scale where 1 represents very good and 6 is can't swim. Therefore, the closer the score is to 1, the stronger the respondent rates their swimming ability.
2. Non-responses are not included in the calculation of the mean score.

When the results for this question were analysed by age group, a statistically significant difference was found. Respondents who were younger than 36 years old were more likely to have rated their swimming ability as being stronger than respondents from the older age groups.

**Table 9a** Personal rating of own swimming ability by age group

Rate swimming ability	15–20 yrs %	21–25 yrs %	26–35 yrs %	36–45 yrs %	46–55 yrs %	56–65 yrs %	66 yrs and over %
Very good	41.5	55.3	36.8	13.6	12.7	10.2	2.9
Good	39.0	28.9	42.5	37.5	26.8	11.9	10.0
Moderate	17.1	7.9	14.9	30.7	36.6	25.4	35.7
Weak	2.4	7.9	2.3	6.8	11.3	22.0	14.3
Very weak				8.0	1.4	13.6	12.9
Can't swim			3.4	2.3	11.3	16.9	22.9
Don't know				1.1			1.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Mean score</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.0</b>

**Explanatory notes:**

1. The mean scores represent the mean or average level of frequency on a six-point scale where 1 represents very good and 6 is can't swim. Therefore, the closer the score is to 1, the stronger the respondent rates their swimming ability.
2. Non-responses are not included in the calculation of the mean scores.

# 3 Results

## Rural property profile

### 3.4 Rural property profile

A series of questions was asked to develop a profile of the respondents who lived on rural properties in the study area.

#### 3.4.1 Living on a rural property

Just over one third of the survey respondents (34.6%) indicated that they did live on a farm, farmlet or rural property.

**Table 10** *Live on a farm, farmlet or rural property*

Do you live on a farm, farmlet or rural property?	%
Yes	34.6
No	65.4
Don't know	0.0
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

When the results for this question were analysed by age group, a statistically significant difference was found. Respondents between the ages of 21 and 45 years old were more likely to have lived on a farm, farmlet, or rural property than respondents from the other age groups. Respondents from the 15–20 years age group were the least likely to have lived on a rural property.

**Table 10a** *Live on a farm, farmlet or rural property by age group*

Do you live on a farm, farmlet or rural property?	15–20 yrs	21–25 yrs	26–35 yrs	36–45 yrs	46–55 yrs	56–65 yrs	66 yrs and over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	16.7	47.4	41.9	44.8	35.2	29.8	20.3
No	83.3	52.6	58.1	55.2	64.8	70.2	79.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



# 3 Results

## Rural property profile

### 3.4.2 Size of property

Those respondents who indicated that they did live on a rural property (34.6% of all respondents) were asked to indicate the approximate size of their property. All responses were recorded verbatim (regardless of measure used) and then converted into hectares.

The largest proportion of respondents who lived on a rural property lived on one that was between 1,001–10,000 hectares in size (26.8%). The next largest proportion lived on a property between 101–1,000 hectares (23.4%), followed by 10 hectares or less (19.4%).

The average rural property size for the study area was 3,145 hectares.

**Table 11** *Approximate size of property*

Hectares	%
10 hectares or less	19.4
11–100	17.4
101–1,000	23.4
1,001–10,000	26.8
More than 10,000	11.8
Don't know/not sure	1.1
Refused	0.0
Total	100
<b>Average size</b>	<b>3,145 ha</b>

When the results for this question were analysed by region, a statistically significant difference was found. Respondents who lived on rural properties in the very remote region were more likely to live on a larger property than respondents who lived on rural properties in the other two regions.

**Table 11a** *Average property size by ARIA region*

	Moderately Accessible	Remote	Very Remote
Size of property (ha)	1,444.2 ha	7,028.2 ha	19,898.2 ha

### 3.4.3 Commodities produced

Respondents who lived on a rural property were asked to indicate the main agricultural commodities produced on their property. The respondents were able to nominate up to five commodities.

Sheep–wool/meat (34.7%) and cattle–meat (34.1%) were the commodities that were stated most often by respondents from rural properties. They were closely followed by wheat/grain (29.6%) and to a lesser extent by cattle–dairy (17.3%) and hobby farm/lifestyle property (14.4%).

**Table 12** *Commodities produced*

Commodities	%
Sheep–wool/meat	34.7
Cattle–meat	34.1
Wheat/grain	29.6
Cattle–dairy	17.3
Hobby farm/lifestyle property	14.4
Cotton	5.5
Fruit	4.9
Horses	2.4
Pigs–meat	2.0
Vegetables	2.0
Chickens–eggs/meat	0.4
Animals–other	5.3
Other	5.1
Refused	0.0

**NB** Respondents were able to make up to five responses therefore the total will not add up to 100%.

# 3 Results

## Rural property profile

### 3.4.4 Number of dams on property

Respondents who lived on a rural property were asked to indicate the approximate number of dams on their property.

The largest proportion of respondents (46.7%) indicated that they had between 1–5 dams on their property. The next most frequent responses were 0 (18.7%) and 6–10 (15.8%).

The average number of dams per rural property in the study area was 5.7.

**Table 13** *Number of dams on property*

Number of dams	%
0	18.7
1–5	46.7
6–10	15.8
11–20	12.0
More than 20	5.4
Refused	0.0
Total	100
<b>Average no.</b>	<b>5.7</b>

When the results for this question were analysed by region, a statistically significant difference was found. Respondents who lived on rural properties in the very remote region were more likely to have more dams on their property than respondents who lived on rural properties in the other two regions.

**Table 13a** *Average number of dams on property by ARIA region*

	Moderately Accessible	Remote	Very Remote
Average no. of dams on property	5.4	4.7	17.8

### 3.4.5 Distance from dwelling to nearest dam

Those respondents who lived on rural properties and had dams on their property were asked to indicate the distance from their dwelling to the nearest dam. All responses were recorded verbatim (regardless of measure used) and then converted into metres.

The largest proportion of rural respondents with dams on their property lived between 101–500 metres (43.7%) from the nearest dam on their property. The next most frequent response was more than 1,000 metres (18.6%).

The average distance between the rural dwelling and the nearest dam was 1,037 metres.

**Table 14** *Distance from dwelling to nearest dam*

Metres	%
50 m or less	8.8
60–100	11.7
101–500	43.7
501–1,000	11.7
More than 1,000	18.6
Don't know/not sure	5.6
Refused	0.0
Total	100
<b>Average distance</b>	<b>1,037 m</b>



# 3 Results

## Rural property profile

### 3.4.6 Fencing around dwelling and gates

Those respondents who lived on a rural property were asked about safety features around their dwelling.

Approximately three quarters of respondents (74.7%) on rural properties had a fence around their house that would prevent children wandering away.

Those respondents who indicated that they did have a fence were asked whether the fence had a gate or gates that were self-closing and self-latching. Just over half of these respondents (55.1%) had a fence fitted with self-closing/latching gate(s).

**Table 15** Fencing around dwellings and gates

	Yes %	No %	Don't know %
Is there a fence around your house which could prevent young children from wandering away?	74.7	24.6	0.7
Does this fence have a gate, or gates, which are self-closing and self-latching?	55.1	44.9	0.0

### 3.4.7 Children under five years visiting the property

Respondents living on rural properties were asked to indicate the number of children under five years of age that had visited their property in the past three months.

The results in Table 16 show that approximately one quarter of respondents (25.3%) living on rural properties had 6 or more children under the age of five years visit their property in the last three months. The next most frequent responses were 0 (17.9%), 4 (14.4%) and 3 (12.4%).

**Table 16** Number of children under five years of age visited the property in the past three months

Number of children	%
0	17.9
1	11.5
2	11.7
3	12.4
4	14.4
5	6.9
6 or more	25.3
Don't know/not sure	0.0
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>



# 3 Results

## Drowning prevention

### 3.5 Drowning prevention

To obtain an indication of community perception of the incidence and prevention of drownings in NSW, respondents were asked a series of short questions.

#### 3.5.1 Perceived change in number of drownings in NSW

Respondents were asked to state if they believed the number of drownings in NSW had changed over the past four years.

The results in Table 17 show the respondents were reasonably well divided between an increase (24.9%), no change (23.6%) and a decrease (19.4%) in the number of drownings. Almost one third of respondents (32.2%) were unsure whether there had been any change.

**Table 17** *Perceived change in the number of drownings in the past four years*

Change in the number of drownings	%
Increased	24.9
Hasn't changed much	23.6
Decreased	19.4
Don't know/not sure	32.2
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 3.5.2 Perceived changes in community awareness of water safety

Respondents were asked to state if they believed there had been a change in community awareness of water safety in the past four years.

The largest proportion of respondents (58.9%) believed that community awareness of water safety had increased. Just under one third (29.7%) of respondents felt that there hadn't been much change (Table 18).

**Table 18** *Perceived change of community awareness of water safety in the past four years*

Change in community awareness of water safety	%
Increased	58.9
Hasn't changed much	29.7
Decreased	3.3
Don't know/not sure	7.8
Refused	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>



# 3 Results

## Drowning prevention

### 3.5.3 Prevention of drownings

To gauge the community's perception of attempts to prevent drownings in NSW, respondents were asked to identify the proportion of drownings that they think could be prevented and any change in the effort to reduce potential cases.

The results in Tables 19 and 20 indicate the following:

- more than eight in ten respondents (79.0%) perceived that between 50 and 100 per cent of all drownings could be prevented;
- over three quarters (79.0%) of the respondents believe more is being done to prevent drownings compared to four years ago.

**Table 19** Perceived proportion of drownings in NSW that could be prevented

Proportion of drownings that could be prevented	%
Nearly all of them	29.0
More than half	24.4
About half	25.6
Less than half	6.2
Hardly any	1.5
Don't know/not sure	13.2
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 20** Current efforts to prevent drownings compared to four years ago

Current efforts to prevent drownings	%
More being done	79.0
Hasn't been much change	9.0
Less being done	3.7
Don't know/not sure	7.9
Refused	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

When the results for this question were analysed by age group, a statistically significant difference was found. Respondents who were between 21–25 years old were most likely to believe that the majority of drownings could be prevented. Respondents who were older than 55 years were more likely to believe that less than half of all drownings could be prevented.

**Table 20a** Perceived proportion of drownings in NSW that could be prevented by age group—mean scores

What proportion of drownings in NSW could be prevented?	15–20 yrs	21–25 yrs	26–35 yrs	36–45 yrs	46–55 yrs	56–65 yrs	66 yrs and over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Mean scores	2.3	1.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.7	3.7

**Explanatory notes:**

1. The scores represent the mean or average level of frequency on a five-point scale where 1 represents nearly all of them and 5 is hardly any. Therefore, the closer the score is to 1, the greater the proportion of drownings that are believed to be preventable.
2. Non-responses are not included in the calculation of the mean scores.

# 3 Results

## Drowning prevention

Respondents were asked to nominate what they thought would be the most effective way of reducing the number of drownings in NSW. This was an unprompted, open-ended question and responses were coded into common themes during analysis.

The results from this question are summarised in Table 21. Key observations from this table are as follows:

- Continuing education and awareness programs were the major focus in an effort to reduce the number of drownings. Approximately one in three respondents (33.2%) recommended further water safety education aimed at either children (8.0%) or the wider community (25.2%).
- The need for further education and awareness was highlighted by an additional group of respondents who believed water safety messages should be advertised more (5.7%).
- Ensuring both children and adults learn to swim (28.6%) was also seen as an effective way of reducing the number of people in NSW who drown.
- Improving pool safety, incorporating better and enforced fencing of pools (8.4%) was another suggestion made to reduce the number of drownings.

A copy of the open-ended responses can be supplied by the NSW Water Safety Taskforce upon request.

**Table 21** Recommended strategies to reduce the number of people who drown in NSW

Ways to reduce drownings	%
Water safety education and awareness—general	25.2
Learn to swim—children	15.8
Learn to swim—general	12.8
Pool safety/better and enforced fencing of swimming pools	8.4
Water safety education—children	8.0
Supervision of children around water	6.6
More advertising	5.7
Greater personal responsibility	3.7
More information for tourists and non-English language signs	1.3
More people to do first aid and CPR courses	1.3
Don't go near water/ban swimming	1.0
More beach patrols	0.8
Better public safety signs	0.7
Fines for not obeying signs or lifesavers	0.2
Don't mix alcohol and swimming	0.2
Swim between the flags and listen to lifesavers	0.1
Don't swim alone	0.3
Other	1.5
Don't know/not sure	6.3
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>



# 3 Results

## Personal experience with a drowning or rescue from the water

### 3.6 Personal experience with a drowning or rescue from the water

All respondents were asked whether they had any personal experience with either a drowning or rescue from the water.

#### 3.6.1 Personal experience with either a drowning or rescue from the water

Almost three quarters of respondents (72.4%) had no personal experience with either a drowning or a rescue from the water. Approximately 20% of respondents had an experience with a rescue from the water and 7% had a personal experience with a drowning.

**Table 22** Personal experience with either a drowning or rescue from the water

Personal experience	%
No	72.4
Yes—rescue from the water	20.2
Yes—drowning	7.3
Don't know/not sure	0.0
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 3.6.2 Drowning or rescue from a water incident details

Those respondents who had been involved with either a rescue from the water or a drowning (27.5% of all respondents) were asked to indicate the gender of the person(s) involved, the approximate age(s) (at the time) of the person(s) involved in the incident, and the location of the incident. If a respondent had more than one experience the most recent experience was referred to. Up to three responses were provided for gender and age of the persons involved to allow for incidents where more than one person was rescued or drowned.

It is important to note that the location of an incident was not required to have occurred within the study area, nor in recent times. Therefore caution should be used when interpreting the results as the incidents may have occurred outside the defined study area and some time ago. Some incidents reported involved childhood experiences, or occurred at locations well beyond the study area.

The results from Tables 23, 24 and 25 reveal that:

- Approximately two thirds (67.0%) of the persons involved in either a drowning or rescue from the water were male.
- More than one third (37.5%) of those people who were rescued or drowned were 5 years of age or younger. The next most represented age groups were 6–10 years (28.7%), and 11–15 years (21.8%).
- The beach (26.9%) or a river/creek/stream (24.7%) were the two most likely locations for an incident to have occurred. The next most likely locations were public swimming pool (15.5%), private swimming pool (11.9%), lake (8.5%) and dam on a private property (8.0%).



# 3 Results

## Personal experience with a drowning or rescue from the water

**Table 23** Gender of the person(s) involved in either a drowning or rescue from the water

Gender	%
Male	67.0
Female	43.7
Don't know/not sure	0.0
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 24** Age of the person(s) involved in either a drowning or rescue from the water

Age (years)	%
5 years and under	37.5
6–10	28.7
11–15	21.8
16–20	7.6
21–40	6.5
41–60	6.3
Older than 60 years	1.6
Don't know/not sure	0.1
Refused	0.0

**Table 25** Location of the drowning or rescue from the water

Location	%
Beach	26.9
River/creek/stream	24.7
Public swimming pool	15.5
Private swimming pool	11.9
Lake	8.5
Dam on a private property	8.0
Dam accessible to the general public	1.6
Other	1.0
Don't know/not sure	1.9
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>



# 3 Results

## Practising safe behaviours

### 3.7 Practising safe behaviours

To assess general attitudes towards water safety and other personal safety issues, respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they practise a series of 22 behaviours.

Frequencies and agreement scores recorded by respondents are summarised in Tables 26 and 27. The scores were converted from frequencies on a 1 (always) to 5 (never) scale. Care should be taken when interpreting the scores.

Most of the items were positive behaviours, however three of the items asked about behaviours which are often seen to be negative. A full frequency table is contained in Appendix 3.

An examination of the information provided in Tables 26 and 27 suggests:

- Scores for the positive behaviours fell in a range between 1.1 and 2.8. This indicates that on average, respondents practised these behaviours in the range between always and some of the time.
- The two behaviours which received scores closest to the top of the scale and were carried out almost always by all respondents were:
  - check for traffic, left and right, before crossing the street
  - ensure that young children are constantly supervised when they are in the water.
- Scores for the three negative behaviours fell in a range between 3.7 and 4.8. This indicates that on average, respondents practised these more risky behaviours in the range between rarely and never.
- There were however a small group of respondents in each survey who indicated they did undertake these potentially negative behaviours on a frequent basis. In particular, drink and drive (4.1%—always/mostly/sometimes), and swimming alone in the surf, lake or

river (15.6%—always/mostly/sometimes). The latter result reflects the relatively lower level of concern associated with swimming alone as a risk factor that may increase the chances of drowning.

- No response was given by over 20% of the respondents to several of the behaviours. In general, these behaviours related to situations that were not applicable to them (particularly given the respondents' rural and remote locations), such as:
  - Avoid travelling on public transport alone at night (52.7%).
  - Swim between the flags when at the beach (42.5%).
  - Avoid swimming near board riders (42.1%).
  - Swim at patrolled beaches (39.7%).
  - Ensure everyone has a lifejacket if out on a boat (31.6%).
  - Check for submerged objects in rivers, lakes or dams before diving in (29.8%).
  - Wear shoes when walking on the beach (26.2%).
  - Check the depth of water before jumping or diving in (23.9%).
  - Check for and be aware of strong currents in rivers or at the beach (23.3%).



# 3 Results

## Practising safe behaviours

**Table 26** Reporting of personal safety behaviours

Personal behaviours	Frequency of Behaviour			
	Always or mostly %	Sometimes %	Never or rarely %	No response %
<b>Positive behaviours</b>				
Check for traffic, left and right, before crossing the street	98.4	1.0	0.6	0.0
Ensure that young children are constantly supervised when they are in the water	84.3	1.0	0.0	14.7
Swim between the flags when at the beach	52.7	2.9	2.0	42.5
Check the temperature of the bath water before getting in	81.3	1.7	5.0	11.9
Ensure everyone has a lifejacket if out on a boat	62.5	3.2	2.7	31.6
Check for submerged objects in rivers, lakes or dams before diving in	62.0	2.5	5.6	29.8
Keep a good eye out when others are in the water	83.0	5.7	3.1	8.3
Check for and be aware of strong currents in rivers or at the beach	67.0	3.8	5.7	23.3
Check the depth of water before jumping or diving in	67.1	3.2	5.7	23.9
Avoid swimming near board riders	48.7	3.0	5.3	42.1
Take regular breaks when driving long distances	76.5	8.0	5.0	10.4
Avoid being in dangerous areas alone	79.0	7.0	7.6	6.3
Lock your car up	74.9	8.0	11.4	5.7
Swim at patrolled beaches	45.7	6.0	8.5	39.7
Avoid talking on the phone during a thunderstorm	68.2	12.7	18.9	0.2
Check who is around before drawing money from an ATM	56.4	5.8	20.2	17.5
Avoid travelling on public transport alone at night	32.3	3.1	11.9	52.7
Wear sunscreen when outdoors	53.1	15.3	30.6	0.9
Wear shoes when walking on the beach	36.2	9.6	28.1	26.2
<b>Negative behaviours</b>				
Walk alone after dark	22.5	18.6	58.9	0.1
Swim alone in the surf, lake or river	7.1	8.5	65.5	19.0
Drink and drive	1.3	2.8	88.7	7.1

# 3 Results

## Practising safe behaviours

**Table 27** Mean scores for personal safety behaviours

Personal behaviours	Mean Score
<b>Positive behaviours</b>	
Ensure that young children are constantly supervised when they are in the water	1.1
Check for traffic, left and right, before crossing the street	1.1
Swim between the flags when at the beach	1.3
Check the temperature of the bath water before getting in	1.3
Ensure everyone has a lifejacket if out on a boat	1.3
Check for submerged objects in rivers, lakes or dams before diving in	1.4
Keep a good eye out when others are in the water	1.4
Check for and be aware of strong currents in rivers or at the beach	1.5
Check the depth of water before jumping or diving in	1.5
Avoid swimming near board riders	1.6
Take regular breaks when driving long distances	1.6
Avoid being in dangerous areas alone	1.6
Lock your car up	1.7
Swim at patrolled beaches	1.8
Avoid talking on the phone during a thunderstorm	2.1
Check who is around before drawing money from an ATM	2.2
Avoid travelling on public transport alone at night	2.2
Wear sunscreen when outdoors	2.6
Wear shoes when walking on the beach	2.8
<b>Negative behaviours</b>	
Walk alone after dark	3.7
Swim alone in the surf, lake or river	4.4
Drink and drive	4.8

**Explanatory notes:**

1. The mean scores represent the mean or average level of frequency on a 5 point scale where 1 represents always and 5 is never. Therefore, the closer the score is to 5, the less likely a respondent is to undertake this behaviour.
2. Non responses are not included in the calculation of mean scores.

# 3 Results

## Practising safe behaviours

When the results for these statements were analysed by gender a number of statistically significant differences were found. Female respondents were more likely to practise the positive behaviours, and less likely to practise the negative behaviours listed below, than the male respondents (Table 27a).

**Table 27a** Mean scores for personal safety behaviours by gender

	Male	Female
<b>Positive behaviours</b>		
Keep a good eye out when others are in the water	1.6	1.3
Check the depth of water before jumping or diving in	1.6	1.3
Avoid swimming near surfboard riders	1.8	1.3
Avoid being in dangerous areas alone	1.8	1.3
Swim at patrolled beaches	2.0	1.5
Avoid talking on the phone during a thunderstorm	2.5	1.8
Avoid travelling on public transport alone at night	2.6	1.8
Check who is around before drawing money from an ATM	2.4	1.9
Wear sunscreen when outdoors	3.0	2.1
<b>Negative behaviours</b>		
Walk alone after dark	3.0	4.4
Swim alone in the surf, lake or river	4.1	4.6

**Explanatory notes:**

1. The mean scores represent the mean or average level of frequency on a five-point scale where 1 represents always and 5 is never. Therefore, the closer the score is to 5, the less likely a respondent is to undertake this behaviour.
2. Non-responses are not included in the calculation of mean scores.



# 3 Results

## Practising safe behaviours

When the results for these statements were analysed by age group, a number of statistically significant differences were found. Respondents in the 15–20 years age group were less likely to practise the positive behaviours listed below, than the respondents from the older age groups (Table 27b).

**Table 27b** Mean scores for personal safety behaviours by age group

	15–20 yrs	21–25 yrs	26–35 yrs	36–45 yrs	46–55 yrs	56–65 yrs	66 yrs and over
<b>Positive behaviours</b>							
Ensure everyone has a lifejacket if out on a boat	2.3	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.1
Check the temperature of the bath water before getting in	2.1	1.4	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.1
Check for submerged objects in rivers, lakes or dams before diving in	2.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.2
Keep a good eye out when others are in the water	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.3
Check the depth of water before jumping or diving in	2.1	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.7	1.8
Check for and be aware of strong currents in rivers or at the beach	2.3	1.8	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.3
Avoid swimming near surfboard riders	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.2
Take regular breaks when driving long distances	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.3
Lock your car up	2.2	1.5	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.3
Avoid talking on the phone during a thunderstorm	2.9	2.1	2.5	1.8	2.1	2.2	1.8
Check who is around before drawing money from an ATM	2.7	2.0	2.8	1.9	2.0	1.4	1.8

**Explanatory notes:**

1. The mean scores represent the mean or average level of frequency on a five-point scale where 1 represents always and 5 is never. Therefore, the closer the score is to 5, the less likely a respondent is to undertake this behaviour.
2. Non-responses are not included in the calculation of mean scores.

# 3 Results

## Communication of water safety messages

### 3.8 Communication of water safety messages

To assess the most effective ways of communicating water safety messages to the respondents, a series of short questions was asked about preferred communication media and access and usage of the Internet.

#### 3.8.1 Preferred medium for receiving water safety messages

Almost six in ten respondents (57.7%) preferred to receive water safety messages through the television. The next most popular medium was through schools (19.7%), followed to a lesser extent by newspapers (5.3%), all media sources (5.0%), radio (3.9%) and TV & schools combined (3.2%).

**Table 28** Preferred medium for receiving water safety messages

Preferred medium	%
Television	57.7
Schools	19.7
Newspapers	5.3
All media sources	5.0
Radio	3.9
Television and schools combined	3.2
Magazines	0.9
Web sites	0.7
Other	3.8
Don't know/not sure	2.8
Refused	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>



# 3 Results

## Communication of water safety messages

### 3.8.2 Access to and use of the Internet

Respondents were asked whether they had personal access to the Internet, and whether they had accessed a web page.

Almost two thirds (62.2%) of respondents had personal access to the Internet at home or through another location.

However, less than half (47.6%) of the respondents had actually accessed a web page.

**Table 29** Access to and usage of the Internet

	Personal access to the Internet at home or through another location %	Personally accessed a web page on the Internet %
Yes	62.2	47.6
No	37.8	52.3
Don't know/not sure	0.0	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



When the results for these statements were analysed by age group, a number of statistically significant differences were found. Respondents who were older than 55 years were significantly less likely to have access to the Internet, or to have personally accessed a web page (Table 29a).

**Table 29a** Access to and usage of the Internet by age group

	15–20 yrs %	21–25 yrs %	26–35 yrs %	36–45 yrs %	46–55 yrs %	56–65 yrs %	66 yrs and over %
Do you personally have access to the Internet either at home or through another location? – % Yes	87.8	78.9	81.4	74.7	54.9	36.8	26.1
Have you personally ever accessed any web page on the Internet? – % Yes	75.6	81.6	64.0	60.9	40.8	17.2	8.7

## 4 Conclusion

The results from this survey provide a range of community perceptions and behaviours in relation to water safety issues in rural and remote NSW. With almost six in ten respondents indicating that they had visited an aquatic facility in the past six months, water safety issues continue to be important for NSW residents living in rural and remote locations.

The most popular aquatic facility used was a river/creek/stream, closely followed by the beach, and public and private swimming pools. Dams were used by about one fifth of respondents who had used an aquatic facility. Given the location of the majority of respondents those people who had used a beach in the past six months were most likely to have done so while visiting a coastal area during summer. This particular result indicates that beach safety education is as important in rural areas as it is in coastal areas.

The respondents who had used an aquatic facility were not frequent users of the facilities. The largest proportion of respondents tended to use each of the aquatic facilities listed about one to three times during summer.

The most popular time to visit an aquatic facility varied depending upon the type of facility. Beach and lake had the highest proportion of visitors between 9am–12pm. River/creek/stream, and dam accessible to the public were most popular between 12pm–3pm. Both public and private swimming pools, and dams on private properties were most popular between 3pm–6pm.

The most popular length of visit to an aquatic facility varied depending upon the facility. Private swimming pools were most visited for 30 minutes–1 hour. River/creek/stream, beach, public swimming pool and dams on private properties were most likely to be visited for 1–2 hours. Lake and dam accessible to the public were most likely to be visited for more than 4 hours.

Approximately one tenth of the survey respondents had a private swimming pool. Of those respondents nine in ten had the pool fenced from the house, and just over seven in ten had self closing gates installed.

Approximately one third of respondents lived on a rural property. The “average” rural property was 3,145 hectares in size, produced sheep for wool/meat or cattle for meat, had 5.7 dams, the nearest dam being located approximately 1,000 metres from their dwelling. It must be noted that the largest proportion of rural respondents lived between 101–500 metres from the nearest dam on their property. Almost three quarters of rural property dwellers had a fence around their dwelling that would prevent children wandering away, and just over half of these fences were installed with a self-closing and self-latching gate. Over one quarter of respondents living on rural properties had six or more children under five years of age visit their property in the three months prior to the survey.

More than one quarter of respondents had a personal experience with either a rescue from the water or a drowning. The incidents referred to by the respondents usually involved a male, under 11 years of age, at either a beach or a river/creek/stream.

The majority of respondents agreed that more was being done when compared to four years ago; eight in ten respondents believed that more than half the drownings that occur in NSW could be prevented. Water safety education and awareness programs were nominated as the most effective way of reducing the number of drownings. Making sure people and children learn to swim was also encouraged.

The majority of respondents indicated that they practised the positive personal behaviours listed in the survey always or some of the time, and the negative personal behaviours never or rarely. However it should be noted that slightly more than one in ten respondents indicated that they do swim alone in the surf, lake or river and did not always swim at a patrolled beach.

Television was nominated as the most preferred medium for receiving water safety messages. Almost two thirds of respondents had access to the Internet, though less than half of the respondents had actually accessed a web page.

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire

## Perceptions of water safety and use of aquatic areas in rural and remote locations in NSW questionnaire

### INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon/evening my name is \_\_\_\_\_ from the Hunter Valley Research Foundation in Newcastle. We are conducting a survey on behalf of the NSW Water Safety Taskforce about community safety issues.

May I speak to the person in your household who had the last birthday, and is 15 years or older.

[IF RESPONDENT IS NOT AT HOME, ARRANGE A SUITABLE TIME TO CALL BACK]

[WHEN RESPONDENT ON PHONE REPEAT INTRODUCTION IF REQUIRED]

The interview will only take about 10 minutes. It is voluntary and no information is stored which identifies you in any way.

**Q1** Have you been in or on the water, at the pool, beach, lake, river, creek or dam IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS?

[1. YES 2. NO 3. DON'T KNOW 9. REFUSED]

IF Q1>1 SKIP TO Q2

!RANDOM

**Q1a** How often have you been in or on the water at the following locations in the last 6 MONTHS. Using the scale...

1 Every day

2 3–6 days a week

3 1–2 days a week

4 1–3 times a month

5 1–3 times during summer

6 Not at all

[DO NOT READ 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

# Beach

# Public swimming pool

# Private swimming pool

# Dam on a private property

# Dam accessible to the general public

# Lake

# River/creek/stream

IF Q1A1<6

**Q1b** What time of day did you most often visit the BEACH in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it ...?

1 Before 9am

2 9am–12pm

3 12pm–3pm

4 3pm–6pm

5 After 6pm

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

**Q1c** How long did you usually stay when visiting the BEACH in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Less than 30 minutes
- 2 30 minutes–1 hour
- 3 1–2 hours
- 4 2–4 hours
- 5 More than 4 hours

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q1AP2<6

**Q1b** What time of day did you most often visit the PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Before 9am
- 2 9am–12pm
- 3 12pm–3pm
- 4 3pm–6pm
- 5 After 6pm

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q1c** How long did you usually stay when visiting the PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Less than 30 minutes
- 2 30 minutes–1 hour
- 3 1–2 hours
- 4 2–4 hours
- 5 More than 4 hours

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q1AP3<6

**Q1b** What time of day did you most often visit the PRIVATE SWIMMING POOL in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Before 9 am
- 2 9am–12pm
- 3 12pm–3pm
- 4 3pm–6pm
- 5 After 6pm

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q1c** How long did you usually stay when visiting the PRIVATE SWIMMING POOL in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Less than 30 minutes
- 2 30 minutes–1 hour
- 3 1–2 hours
- 4 2–4 hours
- 5 More than 4 hours

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q1AP4<6

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

**Q1b** What time of day did you most often visit the DAM ON A PRIVATE PROPERTY in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Before 9am
- 2 9 am–12pm
- 3 12 pm–3pm
- 4 3 pm–6pm
- 5 After 6pm

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q1c** How long did you usually stay when visiting the DAM ON A PRIVATE PROPERTY in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Less than 30 minutes
- 2 30 minutes–1 hour
- 3 1–2 hours
- 4 2–4 hours
- 5 More than 4 hours

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q1AP5<6

**Q1b** What time of day did you most often visit the DAM ACCESSIBLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Before 9am
- 2 9am–12pm
- 3 12pm–3pm
- 4 3pm–6pm
- 5 After 6pm

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q1c** How long did you usually stay when visiting the DAM ACCESSIBLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Less than 30 minutes
- 2 30 minutes–1 hour
- 3 1–2 hours
- 4 2–4 hours
- 5 More than 4 hours

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q1AP6<6

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

**Q1b** What time of day did you most often visit the LAKE in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Before 9am
- 2 9am–12pm
- 3 12pm–3pm
- 4 3pm–6pm
- 5 After 6pm

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q1c** How long did you usually stay when visiting the LAKE in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Less than 30 minutes
- 2 30 minutes–1 hour
- 3 1–2 hours
- 4 2–4 hours
- 5 More than 4 hours

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q1AP7<6

**Q1b** What time of day did you most often visit the RIVER, CREEK OR STREAM in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Before 9am
- 2 9am–12pm
- 3 12pm–3pm
- 4 3pm–6pm
- 5 After 6pm

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q1c** How long did you usually stay when visiting the RIVER, CREEK OR STREAM in the last 6 MONTHS? Was it...?

- 1 Less than 30 minutes
- 2 30 minutes–1 hour
- 3 1–2 hours
- 4 2–4 hours
- 5 More than 4 hours

[DO NOT READ 7=DIDN'T VISIT 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q2** How would you rate your own swimming ability? Using the following scale:

- 1 Very good
- 2 Good
- 3 Moderate
- 4 Weak
- 5 Very weak
- 6 Can't swim

[DO NOT READ 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

**Q3** Do you live on a farm, farmlet or rural property?

[1.YES 2.NO 3.DON'T KNOW 9.REFUSED]

IF Q3>1 SKIPTO Q11

**Q4** What is the approximate size of the property that you live on?

[RECORD DETAILS INCLUDING MEASURE USED IE ACRES/HECTARES/SQ.KM]

**Q5** What are the MAIN COMMODITIES that are grown or raised on your property?

[ENTER AS MANY AS APPLY–PROMPT IF NECESSARY]

- 1 Sheep–wool/meat
- 2 Cattle–dairy
- 3 Cattle–meat
- 4 Pigs–meat
- 5 Chickens–eggs/meat
- 6 Horses
- 7 Wheat/Grain
- 8 Cotton
- 9 Fruit
- 10 Vegetables
- Other specify below:

**Q6** How many dams are there on your property?

[ENTER No. OF DAMS 999=DON'T KNOW/NOT SURE]

IF Q6>0

**Q7** What is the approximate distance from your house to the nearest dam?

[RECORD DETAILS INCLUDING MEASURE USED IE METRES/FEET/YARDS/KM]

**Q8** Is there a fence around your house, which would prevent young children from wandering away?

[1. YES 2. NO 3. DON'T KNOW 9. REFUSED]

IF Q9=1

**Q9** Does this fence have a gate or gates, which are self closing and self latching?

[1. YES 2. NO 3. DON'T KNOW 9. REFUSED]

**Q10** Do you have a swimming pool at your home?

[1. YES 2. NO 3. DON'T KNOW 9. REFUSED]

IF Q11>1 SKIPTO Q13a

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

**Q11** Is the pool fenced from the house?

[1. YES 2. NO 3. DON'T KNOW 9.REFUSED]

**Q12** Are there self closing gates installed?

[1. YES 2. NO 3. DON'T KNOW 9. REFUSED]

**Q12a** Using the scale where

1=STRONGLY AGREE

2=AGREE

3=NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

4=DISAGREE

5=STRONGLY DISAGREE,

how strongly do you agree or disagree that...

Pool fences should be made compulsory for all private swimming pools

[DO NOT READ 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q11>1 SKIPTO Q16

**Q13** How often would you use the family pool in summer?

[READ SCALE]

1 Every day

2 3–6 days a week

3 1–2 days a week

4 1–2 times a month

5 1–2 times during summer

[DO NOT READ 7=DON'T USE THE POOL 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

IF Q14=3.OR.Q14=4.OR.Q14=5

**Q14** When you do use the pool is it usually on weekdays or the weekend?

1 Weekdays

2 Weekends

3 Either/both weekdays and weekends

[DO NOT READ 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

**Q15** Over the past 4 years, do you think that community awareness of water safety has increased, decreased or hasn't changed much?

1 Increased

2 Decreased

3 Hasn't changed much

[DO NOT READ 8=UNSURE 9=REFUSED]

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

**Q16** What proportion of drownings in NSW do you think could be prevented?

[READ SCALE]

- 1 Nearly all of them
- 2 More than half
- 3 About half
- 4 Less than half
- 5 Hardly any

[DO NOT READ 8=UNSURE 9=REFUSED]

**Q17** Compared to 4 years ago, do you think MORE or LESS is being done to prevent drownings or near drownings?

- 1 More being done
- 2 Less being done
- 3 Hasn't been much change

[DO NOT READ 8=UNSURE 9=REFUSED]

**Q18** Thinking about the number of drownings that do occur in NSW, over the last 4 years, do you think the number of drownings has increased, decreased, or hasn't changed much?

- 1 Increased
- 2 Decreased
- 3 Hasn't changed much

[DO NOT READ 8=UNSURE 9=REFUSED]

**Q19** What do you think would be the most effective way of reducing the number of people who drown in NSW?

[99=DON'T KNOW/CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING]

**Q20** Have you had any personal experience with somebody either drowning or needing to be rescued from the water?

- 1 Yes–Drowning
- 2 Yes–Needing to be rescued from the water
- 3 No

[DO NOT READ 8=UNSURE 9=REFUSED]

IF Q21<3

**Q21** Could you please tell me the following details of the incident:

[REFER TO MOST RECENT INCIDENT IF MORE THAN ONE]

a) Age of the person(s) who drowned/needed to be rescued

[99=DON'T KNOW]

b) Gender of the person(s) who drowned/needed to be rescued

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

[1. MALE 2. FEMALE 8. DON'T KNOW 9. REFUSED]

c) And where did the incident happen. Was it at the...

- 1 Beach
- 2 Public swimming pool
- 3 Private swimming pool
- 4 Dam on a private property
- 5 Dam accessible to the general public
- 6 Lake
- 7 River/creek/stream
- Other: [PLEASE SPECIFY]

RANDOM

**Q22** The next question asks how often you do certain things. The scale is:

- 1=Always
- 2=Mostly
- 3=Sometimes
- 4=Rarely
- 5=Never

Could you tell me how often you...[ITEM]...

[DO NOT READ 7=NOT APPLICABLE/NOT APPROPRIATE 8=DON'T KNOW 9=REFUSED]

- Swim between the flags when at the beach
- Walk alone after dark
- Wear sunscreen when outdoors
- Swim at patrolled beaches
- Lock your car up
- Avoid being in dangerous areas alone
- Swim alone in the surf, lake or river
- Check the depth of water before jumping or diving in
- Drink and drive
- Check for and be aware of strong currents in rivers or at the beach
- Check the temperature of the bath water before getting in
- Avoid talking on the phone during a thunderstorm
- Check for submerged objects in rivers, lakes or dams before diving in
- Wear shoes when walking on the beach
- Keep a good eye out when others are in the water
- Avoid travelling on public transport alone at night
- Check for traffic, left and right, before crossing the street
- Check who is around before drawing money from an ATM (automatic teller machine)
- Ensure everyone has a lifejacket if out on a boat
- Take regular breaks when driving long distances

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

Ensure that young children are constantly supervised when they are in the water  
Avoid swimming near surfboard riders

**Q23** How would you prefer water safety messages to be given to YOU?

- 1 Television
- 2 Radio
- 3 Newspapers
- 4 Magazines
- 5 Web sites
- 6 Schools
- Other: [PLEASE SPECIFY]

Finally a few questions to help classify your answers

**Qsex** What is your sex? [OBSERVE OR ASK]

- 1 Male
- 2 Female [9=REFUSED]

**Qage** What AGE group are you in?

- 1 15–20
- 2 21–25
- 3 26–35
- 4 36–45
- 5 46–55
- 6 56–65
- 7 66 and over

[DON'T READ 9=REFUSED]

**Qpers** How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

[99=REFUSED]

**Qperu15** How many of those people are aged under 15 years?

[99=REFUSED]

**Q8** How many children under 5 years of age live at your household?

[ENTER No. OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS]

[8=8 OR MORE 9=DON'T KNOW/NOT SURE]

IF Q3=1

**Q8a** How many children under 5 years of age have visited your property in the past 3 months?

[ENTER No. OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS]

[8=8 OR MORE 9=DON'T KNOW/NOT SURE]

# Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire continued

**Qpostcode** What is your postcode?

POSTCODE [DON'T KNOW=0 AND ENTER SUBURB NAME]

[TYPE IN SUBURB OR TOWN ONLY IF POSTCODE UNKNOWN]

SUBURB/TOWN

**Qeduc** What is the highest level of education you have COMPLETED?

- 1 Never attended school, some primary school
- 2 Completed primary school
- 3 Some high school
- 4 School certificate/Intermediate/Year 10/4th form
- 5 HSC /Leaving/Year 12/6th form
- 6 TAFE certificate/diploma
- 7 University, CAE or other tertiary institution degree
- OTHER [TYPE IN ANSWER]

qeduc,c,80,0,0,7

**Q24** Do you personally have access to the Internet either at home or through another location?

[1. Yes 2. No 9. Don't know/not sure]

**Q25** Have you personally ever accessed any web page on the Internet?

[1. Yes 2. No 9. Don't know/not sure]



# Appendix 2 Survey respondents

## Sample demographics

<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Highest level of education completed</b>		<b>%</b>	
Male	51.3	Never attended school/some primary school		0.9	
Female	48.7	Completed primary school		2.4	
<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>	Some high school		17.9	
15–20 years	9.2	School certificate/intermediate/year 10/4th form		35.0	
21–25 years	8.5	HSC/leaving/year 12/6th form		16.6	
26–35 years	19.1	TAFE certificate/diploma		13.2	
36–45 years	19.3	University/CAE/other tertiary institution degree		12.4	
46–55 years	15.8	Don't know/not sure		1.0	
56–65 years	12.8	Refused		0.5	
66 years and over	15.4	<b>Total respondents</b>		<b>500</b>	
<b>Number of people in respondent household</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Postcode</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Postcode</b>	<b>%</b>
1	9.6	2880	10.3	2711	1.1
2	36.6	2550	9.0	2869	1.0
3	19.0	2680	7.9	2347	0.9
4	17.8	2360	5.6	2403	0.9
5	10.9	2548	3.7	2668	0.9
6 or more	5.9	2400	3.5	2823	0.9
<b>Number of people in respondent household aged under 15 years</b>	<b>%</b>	2390	3.4	2839	0.9
0	62.5	2877	3.0	2825	0.8
1	15.0	2671	2.8	2844	0.8
2	14.7	2669	2.6	2361	0.7
3	5.5	2549	2.4	2829	0.7
4	1.2	2627	2.3	2873	0.7
5	1.0	2835	2.3	2397	0.6
6 or more	0.0	2821	1.9	2359	0.5
<b>Number of children in respondent household aged under 5 years</b>	<b>%</b>	2357	1.7	2395	0.5
0	85.5	2404	1.7	2736	0.5
1	9.9	2551	1.7	2875	0.5
2	3.7	2824	1.7	2409	0.4
3	0.7	2831	1.7	2632	0.4
4	0.1	2715	1.6	2874	0.4
5	0.0	2827	1.6	2878	0.4
6 or more	0.0	2840	1.6	2879	0.4
		2843	1.6	2396	0.3
		2675	1.5	2828	0.2
		2388	1.4	2405	0.1
		2834	1.4	2672	0.1
		2832	1.2	2733	0.1
		2836	1.2	2737	0.1
		2402	1.1	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
		2648	1.1		

## Appendix 3 Frequency tables

Usual Behaviour	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not Applicable/ Appropriate	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Swim between the flags when at the beach	48.0	4.7	2.9	0.6	1.4	42.5	0.0
Walk alone after dark	15.2	7.3	18.6	13.7	45.2	0.1	0.0
Wear sunscreen when outdoors	35.6	17.5	15.3	14.9	15.7	0.9	0.0
Swim at patrolled beaches	40.2	5.5	6.0	4.6	3.9	39.4	0.3
Lock your car up	66.8	8.1	8.0	5.8	5.6	5.7	0.0
Avoid being in dangerous areas alone	66.2	12.8	7.0	3.3	4.3	6.3	0.1
Swim alone in the surf, lake or river	4.5	2.6	8.5	10.2	55.3	19.0	0.0
Check the depth of water before jumping or diving in	60.4	6.7	3.2	1.4	4.3	23.9	0.0
Drink and drive	1.1	0.2	2.8	10.3	78.4	7.1	0.0
Check for and be aware of strong currents in rivers or at the beach	57.5	9.5	3.8	2.0	3.7	23.3	0.3
Check the temperature of the bath water before getting in	79.3	2.0	1.7	0.2	4.8	11.9	0.0
Avoid talking on the phone during a thunderstorm	51.3	16.9	12.7	4.7	14.2	0.1	0.1
Check for submerged objects in rivers, lakes or dams before diving in	57.7	4.3	2.5	1.9	3.7	29.5	0.3
Wear shoes when walking On the beach	27.4	8.8	9.6	8.2	19.9	26.1	0.1
Keep a good eye out when others are in the water	67.1	15.9	5.7	1.4	1.7	7.9	0.4
Avoid travelling on public transport alone at night	27.2	5.1	3.1	2.2	9.7	52.7	0.0
Check for traffic, left and right, before crossing the street	95.5	2.9	1.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0
Check who is around before drawing money from an ATM	47.0	9.4	5.8	6.4	13.8	17.4	0.1
Ensure everyone has a lifejacket if out on a boat	60.0	2.5	3.2	1.2	1.5	31.6	0.0
Take regular breaks when driving long distances	59.4	17.1	8.0	1.4	3.6	9.8	0.6
Ensure that young children are constantly supervised when they are in the water	81.5	2.8	1.0	0.0	0.0	14.7	0.0
Avoid swimming near board riders	43.1	5.6	3.0	0.4	4.9	42.1	0.9

**Prepared by**  
**NSW Water Safety Taskforce 2003**

**Members of the NSW Water Safety Taskforce**

Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association

Austswim NSW

Community Relations Commission

Farmsafe NSW

Kellogg Australia

Municipal Employees Union

NSW Department of Education and Training

NSW Department of Health

NSW Department of Local Government

NSW Department of Sport and Recreation

NSW Fisheries

NSW Local Government and Shires Association

Premier's Department

Surf Life Saving NSW

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia (NSW Branch)

Waterways Authority