

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 6036/09

Inquest into the Death of LIANGWEI WANG

Delivered On: 20 April, 2011

Delivered At: Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000

Hearing Dates: 10 and 11 November 2010

Findings of: CORONER HEATHER SPOONER

Place of death/
Suspected death: In the sea off rocks at the end of Potters Hill Road,
San Remo, Victoria 3925

PCSU: Leading Senior Constable King Taylor

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 6036/09

In the Coroners Court of Victoria at Melbourne

I, HEATHER SPOONER, Coroner

having investigated the death of:

Details of deceased:

Surname: WANG
First name: LIANGWEI
Address: 41A Warpole Street, Kew, Victoria 3101

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 10th and 11th November 2010 at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was LIANGWEI WANG and death occurred on 30th December, 2009

at In the sea off rocks at the end of Potters Hill Road,
San Remo, Victoria 3925

from
1a. DROWNING

In the following circumstances:

1. Mr Wang was aged 43 years when he died. He was Chinese with little English language skills. Mr Wang had no family in Australia. He was apparently healthy prior to his demise.

Circumstances Surrounding Death

2. A police investigation was conducted into the circumstances surrounding the death. Leading Senior Constable Gough prepared the coronial brief and summary.

"At about 1.00pm on Wednesday the 30th of December 2009, WANG and his companion Ji LI arrived at the Potters Hill Road carpark, San Remo, to fish from the rocks down from the carpark. Two days earlier WANG had replied to an invitation, which LI had posted on a Chinese website inviting people to go fishing with him. They had not met prior to that day. On the trip down from Melbourne WANG had told LI that he was an expert fisherman and had fished off the rocks at Potters Hill Road previously.

They walked down to the beach and then onto the rock outcrop at the western end of the beach where CHEN and ZHANG were already fishing with several other members of their family. WANG and LI prepared their fishing rods and commenced fishing on a rock outcrop just in front of CHEN and ZHANG. The rock they were standing on was about 1-2 metres out of the water and directly onto the ocean. They fished for approximately 10 minutes without incident. There was a medium swell running at the time with the occasional wave breaking over the rock outcrop.

At about 1.30pm a larger than normal wave broke onto the rock where WANG and LI were fishing sweeping both of them off the rock into the water. LI was able to scramble back up onto the rocks but WANG was washed into the ocean. ZHANG and CHEN who witnessed what had happened ran over to the edge of the rock and attempted to help WANG who was struggling in the water about 3 metres from them. ZHANG, CHEN and LI attempted to help WANG by reaching out to him with their fishing rods but due to the turbulence caused by the breaking waves he had drifted away from the rock and was not close enough to grab onto their rods. WANG made three attempts to grab the rods but was unsuccessful and eventually went under the water and didn't surface again.

LI stood on the rocks looking for WANG for several minutes before deciding to call the police. Unable to find someone who could speak English, LI phoned a friend in Dandenong who in turn rang triple 000 in Melbourne and reported the matter.

Police arrived at the location approximately 30 minutes after WANG had been swept off the rock. Due to LI being unable to speak English it took several minutes for police to determine what had happened. LI led police to the location of the incident where there was still no sign of WANG. A search of the area and surrounds was then initiated.

At about 6.00pm WANG's body was located by a diver from the Police Search and Rescue Squad. WANG was positioned face down sitting on the ocean floor under a rock formation just in front of the rock where he was swept off. He was conveyed by watercraft to the Newhaven Pier where he was examined showing no signs of life."

3. There was no warning signage.

Evidence at Inquest

4. Four witnesses were called to give evidence at the Inquest:

Mr Ji Li told the inquest that although he had been rock fishing before this incident occurred, he had not previously fished from this location. Mr Wang had answered an invitation to go fishing on a Chinese website and indicated that he was an "expert at fishing." When they arrived they had a look and a chat about the waves. They observed other people rock fishing. He had never heard of anyone being washed off rocks and never thought of wearing any safety gear. Mr Li did not see the wave that hit him and Mr Wang. He was initially confused by the impact - he was submerged with water in his nose and it took a few seconds to clear his head before he realised that Mr Wang had been washed away. Other rock fishers came to his aid but they had nothing apart from their rods to rescue Mr Wang. In the past he had seen some warning signs with symbols that he understood. Had those signs been present at this location then he would have walked away. Since the incident he had been told that he should have worn a life jacket.

Mr Chen told the Inquest that he witnessed the incident unfold whilst also rock fishing close by. He indicated that there were no signs at the beach where the incident occurred. Irrespective, he also had little knowledge of English and could really only understand the signs that depicted warning symbols. Since the incident he had purchased a life jacket but rarely went rock fishing after witnessing the event.

Mr Zhang also saw the drama unfold from his position higher up on the rocks. He told the inquest that there were many rock fishers from many Asian countries including Korea, Cambodia and Vietnam. Experience had taught him that the waves can be dangerous and that you should not fish from a low spot on the rocks nor turn away from the sea. He had to move 100m away from the incident to get phone reception and understood that the police took some time to arrive because they were given the wrong location.

Senior Constable Gough told the Inquest about the number of people of Asian descent who fish at the Punchbowl and Potters Hill and the number of other deaths and near misses that had occurred with rock fishers. It was his opinion that fishermen from those communities do not have a "wave sense" nor a good understanding of how to read the ocean and rolling swell that crashed against the rocks. He highlighted that that there was more power in the swell near the rocks where the water was more shallow. He suggested more stringent conditions and requirements for obtaining fishing licences. As at the date of the Inquest he indicated that no signs had been erected at the Potters Hill location.

Post mortem Examination

5. An Inspection and external examination was performed by Dr Linda Isles, Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. She formulated the cause of death and in her report included the following comments:

"The deceased Liangwei Wang, aged 44 years, reportedly went fishing with a man that he had recently met on the Internet. He was fishing from rocks in San Remo when a large wave reportedly washed him off the platform where he was standing and into the sea. He had attempted to grab a rod jammed onto the rocks without success. He was subsequently observed to go under the water. External examination of his body demonstrates a number of abrasions about this man's forehead, upper face, back and right arm. Whilst these bruises and abrasions are non-specific, many of them do not show significant associated bruising and are consistent with being inflicted during this man's struggle to stay afloat and/or trauma to his body prior to recovery from the sea. On pathological grounds I cannot comment on the mechanism by which Mr Wang came to be in the water.

I have examined the post mortem CT scan and interpreted it to the best of my abilities. I am not a trained radiologist.

In the absence of a full post mortem examination, medicolegal issues that may arise at a later date may be unable to be addressed.

There is no evidence of alcohol or other common drugs or poisons in post-mortem toxicological studies."

Rock Fishing Warning

6. Following this and a further two rock fisher deaths¹, the Coroner issued a media release on 8 January 2010 urging caution whilst rock fishing. A copy of that press release is attached and marked with the letter 'A'.²

Safety Management Meetings

7. The Coroners Prevention Unit (CPU)³, were requested to prepare information regarding the three rock fisher deaths in 2009. They were also asked to co-ordinate and organise a fresh

¹Coroners Cases Nos: 3741/09 and 5959/09.

²'A' Media release, Coroners Court of Victoria.

³The Coroners Prevention Unit is a specialist service for coroners created to strengthen their prevention role and provide them with professional assistance on issues pertaining to public health and safety.

round of Rock Fishing Safety Management meetings that were convened by the Coroner on 14 April and 20 July 2010. Several key agencies participated.

8. A historical perspective was provided, which included the 2005 Detailed Proposal for Water Safety for Rock Fishers and the Angel Ring Pilot Project that was developed in response to earlier rock fisher deaths.⁴

9. It was apparent that this proposal should be updated with the assistance of the CPU. Following further discussions and submissions, a new Safety Management Plan for Rock Fishing has been prepared and this is attached and marked with the letter 'B'.⁵ With the support of the key stakeholders this Plan will hopefully guide future preventive strategies surrounding rock fishers.

10. The involvement and contribution of all participants, together with the CPU, in the development of this Plan is very much appreciated

Findings

I find that this unfortunate death occurred when Mr Wang was swept off rocks whilst rock fishing with a fishing companion.

Although Mr Wang apparently considered himself an expert fisherman, his actual level of awareness of risk is uncertain. There was no signage whatsoever to alert Mr Wang of the potential dangers of rock fishing from rocks at Potters Hill Beach.

I find that he failed to take any safety measures or equipment for rock fishing.

Had he been wearing a life jacket or buoyancy vest he may have survived.

⁴Coroners Findings Nos: 1565/05, 4203/05, 4751/05, 0015/06 and 1697/06.

⁵'B' Safety Management Plan for Rock Fishing dated 20 April 2011.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION

Pursuant to sections 67(3) and 72(2) of the Coroners Act 2008, I make the following Comments and Recommendation:

1. The three deaths of rock fishers in 2009⁶ were entirely preventable. They have once again highlighted the particular vulnerability of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, who are grossly over represented in rock fisher fatalities.
2. Appropriate signage is essential and the revised Safety Management Plan for Rock Fishing has highlighted several key safety factors for all those rock fishers who wish to participate in this extremely high risk sport. Foremost among them is wearing a personal floatation device (PFD), educating CALD communities, overcoming difficulties and delays in communicating with emergency services and locating and responding to rock fishing emergencies that occur in regional and/or remote locations.
3. I recommend that the Safety Management Plan for Rock Fishing be adopted by those agencies who participated in the safety management process including; Parks Victoria, Fisheries Victoria, Life Saving Victoria (LSV), VRFish, Australian National Sportfishing Association Limited (ANSA) and the Bass Coast Shire Council.

Signature:



Heather Spooner

HEATHER SPOONER
CORONER

20th April, 2011

⁶Coroners Case Nos: 3741/09, 5959/09 and 6036/09.

Distribution list:

For Information of:

The Hon Mr Robert Clark, Attorney General

The Hon Mr Nicholas Kotsiras, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

The Hon Mr Michael O'Brien, Minister for Energy and Resources

Mr Rob Spence, Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Association of Victoria

Mr Hakan Akyol, Interim Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission

Mr Neil Foster, Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority

Recommendation for response from the following:

Mr Michael Hodder, Director Field Services, Fisheries Victoria

Mr Dennis Ward, Risk Manager, Parks Victoria

Mr Nigel Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Life Saving Victoria

Mr Christopher Collins, Executive Officer, VRFish

Mr Brian Hayes, President, Australian National Sportfish Association (Victorian Branch)

Mr Allan Bawden, Chief Executive Officer, Bass Coast Shire Council

Dr Michael Kennedy OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

Mr Ian Nicklen, Acting Director, Department of Justice, Emergency Services Policy and Support

ATTACHMENT 'A'

MEDIA RELEASE

CORONER URGES CAUTION FOR ROCK FISHERS

Coroner Heather Spooner has today urged people to be vigilant by the sea after rock fishing claimed two Victorian lives in one week.

Coroner Spooner issued the public warning in a bid to prevent similar deaths as more people flock to popular rock fishing spots during the warmer summer months.

"Rock fishing is a popular activity that many people enjoy for fun and relaxation, but which can too often end in the tragic loss of life," she said.

On Christmas Day 2009, a 33-year-old Box Hill man died after rock fishing off Cape Schanck.

Just five days later on 30 December, a 43-year-old Kew man drowned after being washed in at San Remo.

Rock fishing also claimed the life of a third Victorian man, a 41-year-old from Springvale on 1 August 2009. He too had been rock fishing at San Remo.

According to national figures nine people died whilst rock fishing from July 2008 to June 2009.

In this financial year rock fishing has already claimed the lives of eight people across the country.

Coroner Spooner said in many cases these deaths could be prevented, providing people take the proper precautions.

"Fishing should not end in fatality and I would strongly encourage those planning to go rock fishing to take a few simple precautions and ensure they have the proper equipment," she said.

Coroner Spooner said the dangers associated with rock fishing could be reduced by;

- Always wearing a life jacket or buoyancy vest to help keep you afloat in the event of a fall or wash in
- Fishing at a location that has angel rings. Angel rings are life buoys installed at some popular fishing locations
- Using safety equipment such as ropes and other buoyant items
- Wearing appropriate footwear to reduce the chance of slipping or falling
- Ensuring you fish in a group. If someone is washed in, one person can stay and help while the other raises the alarm
- Wearing light clothing that does not restrict your ability to swim in the event that you do get washed in

She urged people to follow Royal Life Saving Australia advice in the event of a fall or wash in by;

- Swimming away from the rocks, and;
- Looking for a safe place to come ashore, or staying afloat until help arrives

Coroner Spooner said people should also pay close attention to the fishing environment before deciding whether to rock fish at a particular location in the first place.

"Rock fishing can be extremely dangerous and carry an unnecessary risk.

"Anybody contemplating rock fishing should do a thorough assessment of their fishing spot and be aware of unpredictable wind and tide changes which can affect the safety of their fishing spot in a short period of time," Coroner Spooner said.

For further information about rock fishing and water safety visit the Royal Life Saving Australia website at www.royallifesaving.com.au.

For further information about weather conditions and tidal changes visit the Bureau of Meteorology website at www.bom.com.au.

Sheree Argento
Publications and Communications Office
Ph 8688 0735

ATTACHMENT 'B'

SAFETY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ROCK FISHING

**Prepared by Coroners Prevention Unit
20 April 2011**

1. Background

Coroner Heather Spooner requested the Coroners Prevention Unit (CPU) to prepare information on the deaths in 2009 of three rock-fishermen in Victoria. Coroner Spooner had previously overseen the development of a rock fishing safety strategy in conjunction with Government and community stakeholders.

The CPU on behalf of the Coroner has been involved in a new round of safety management meetings which were convened to review the existing strategy, and to explore additional measures to address rock fishing safety. This revised Safety Management Plan is a synthesis of submissions received by the Coroner from stakeholders in this process. It identifies the key risks associated with rock fishing in Victoria, and puts forward measures to manage those risks. It is envisaged that this plan can be used to assist stakeholders with priority setting and strategic planning for rock fishing safety in the years ahead.

2. Safety Management Meetings

On 8 April 2010, Coroner Heather Spooner was accompanied by staff from CPU and Victoria Police members from the Police Coronial Support Unit (PSCU) and San Remo Police Station to view both the Punchbowl and Potters Hill Road rock outcrops in preparation of the Safety Management Meetings.

Coroner Spooner convened Safety Management meetings on 14 April 2010 and 20 July 2010. The participants who attended were representatives from Life Saving Victoria (LSV), Parks Victoria, peak fishing bodies VRFish and the Australian National Sportfishing Association (ANSA) Victorian branch, Victoria Police members from San Remo Police Station, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Fisheries Victoria and the CPU. Bass Coast Shire Council was also invited to make submissions.

Participants provided Coroner Spooner with an update on rock fishing safety initiatives undertaken since the last safety management process. A collaborative process was then undertaken to examine options for additional initiatives to address the key rock fishing safety risks.

Participants were invited to make submissions that addressed the following key safety issues that were identified by the Coroner, including any proposed strategies or actions which could be undertaken:

1. The wearing of a personal floatation device (PFD) when rock fishing;
2. Signage, access and placement of safety devices such as "Angel Rings";
3. Education and awareness raising of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities regarding rock fishing and water safety; and
4. Processes to review and evaluate these arrangements into the future.

Following the stakeholder meetings, CPU became aware that LSV and Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) had received funding through the Federal Government's "Coastal Blackspot" program to install emergency alarms and camera surveillance at Punchbowl and the Potters Hill Road beach.⁷ This funding was allocated during a limited window of opportunity following the stakeholder meetings, and therefore the project was not able to be considered by the participants, or included in the LSV submission to the Coroner.

The funding was directed towards operational projects in areas where drowning deaths had occurred. LSV and SLSA proposed the trial placement of remote emergency alarms and cameras to be installed at the Punchbowl area and Potters Hill Road Beach due to the lack of mobile phone or radio coverage and because of delays in notification of incidents to emergency services. The alarms are intended to be a push button system directly linked to "000" and cameras will be available to access by Victoria Police and lifesavers. The funding will also provide for a jet ski as a fast response vessel based at the nearby Woolamai Surf Lifesaving Club. It is proposed that these systems will be a trial with the view to future evaluation and consideration of placement at additional coastal sites.

LSV is in the process of consulting and engaging with relevant stakeholders in the first stage of their proposal and have undertaken to include the CPU in this course of action. The CPU will continue to participate with LSV in their stakeholder engagement to further the development of this initiative.

⁷Council of Lifesaving Operations; 2009/10 Annual Report.

The LSV submission noted their support for the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) emergency marker program to replace existing coastal numbering identification arrangements. CPU met with ESTA representatives to scope the nature of the project, and its applicability to rock fishing safety in Victoria. CPU concluded that the ESTA emergency marker project had substantial merit in regards to incident location by emergency services (see Rock Fishing Key Safety Factors).

3. Rock Fishing Key Safety Factors

Four key safety factors were identified by participants during the meetings;

The wearing of Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs):

All participants supported the wearing of PFDs whilst rock-fishing. A wide range of issues regarding PFDs were discussed, including whether to mandate their use, how to increase their availability/acceptability to rock fishers and additional advice to prevent subsequent injury on rock shelves when afloat amongst large waves.

CALD communities:

Individuals from CALD communities are strongly overrepresented in rock fishing fatalities in Victoria and other jurisdictions. Effective engagement with these communities is critical to promote rock fishing safety, and water safety awareness generally.

Contacting emergency services:

Contact with Emergency Services has been problematic due to limitations with language, mobile telephone coverage and open space location identification difficulties.

Locating an incident for emergency response:

Rock fishing deaths tend to occur in regional locations where the fishermen have travelled from elsewhere in the state and may not be familiar with their exact location. There have been numerous instances where the emergency services response has been delayed through the difficulty in determining the location of the incident. The timely dispatch of emergency services to the location of an incident is critical when dealing with rock fishing immersions.

4. Specifying Safety Priorities

Safety Priority - Personal Floatation Device (PFD)

Rationale:

The ability to remain buoyant after being washed into the ocean from a rock platform is a critical life-saving measure. The wearing of a PFD was considered to be a primary communication message to rock fishermen, and steps should be taken to increase the uptake and use of these safety devices.

Actions:

All stakeholders should ensure that the wearing of a PFD while rock-fishing is a prominent communication focus in all messaging, images and education activities.

Stakeholders are encouraged to explore further ways to encourage the wearing of PFDs during high risk aquatic pastimes. This can be encouraged through rock fishing seminars, making PFDs available at reduced cost through fishing equipment retailers or making PFDs a rental option from retailers in close proximity to known rock-fishing locations, such as San Remo.

Safety Priority - CALD community education

Rationale:

The CPU research showed individuals from CALD communities were over represented in rock fishing related fatalities. Engagement with CALD communities involves a range of challenges and opportunities which will require a collaborative approach by stakeholders.

Actions:

A substantial program of CALD community engagement should be undertaken by LSV in collaboration with the peak fishing bodies VRFish and ANSA to promote rock fishing safety. The use of rock fishing educational programs and demonstrations, cultural ambassadors and messaging in cultural-specific media should be explored. The establishment of agreed communication strategies at various times of the year, such as prior to summer may also assist in promoting rock fishing safety.

While specific funding for these activities are not currently available, stakeholders may wish to investigate funding sources such as Fisheries Victoria Recreational Fishing Grants Program,⁸ grants from the Multicultural Commission, and the Victorian Government's "Watch Around Water" campaign.

Safety Priority - Emergency Response Alarm Pilot Project

Rationale:

LSV and SLSA obtained funding from the Federal "Coastal Black-spot Funding" program for the trial placement of remote emergency alarms and cameras at known high risk rockfishing locations in order to gauge their effectiveness in reducing the incidence of fatalities.

⁸<http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/fisheries/recreational-fishing/fishing-grants-program>

Actions:

LSV and SLSA will coordinate the project, which will initially involve stakeholder consultation and the development of functional specifications for the system. Remote emergency alarms and cameras will be installed as a trial in the Punchbowl area and Potters Hill Road Beach at San Remo. These sites were selected due to the lack of mobile phone or radio coverage and because of delays in notification of incidents to emergency services. The alarms are intended to provide for a push button alarm directly linked to "000" and cameras available to emergency services and lifesavers. The remote alarm system would be complementary to ESTA's Emergency Marker project.

The cameras may also be used by researchers to investigate the patronage at rock fishing sites and the behaviour of rock fishers, including the frequency of wearing safety equipment and PFDs.

The funding also provides for the use of a jet ski as a fast response vessel to be based at the Woolamai Surf Life Saving Club.

It is envisaged that this trial will be evaluated by LSV with input from stakeholders, including those from the Coroner's Safety Management process. Should the trial be considered as effective in increasing rock fishing safety, further opportunities may be explored to expand the program to other high risk areas.

Safety Priority - Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority (ESTA) Emergency Markers

ESTA is a statutory authority with the responsibility to coordinate all "000" services in Victoria. These services will be centralised by 2012 for all emergency agencies.

Rationale:

CPU undertook enquiries in regards to the ESTA Emergency Marker project following the submission from LSV which noted their support for the project, and were seeking to assist in its implementation in coastal areas.

ESTA Emergency Markers are an open space location signage system which are managed centrally by ESTA and linked to their Computer-aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Each marker code is unique, and when provided by callers to "000" can instantly identify the exact location for the emergency services response, and also information regarding the directions to the site. Emergency Markers can be placed on the boundary of an open space (such as a car park) and also within the environment (i.e. at a rock platform or along a path).

The ability to identify the exact location of an emergency was considered a critical factor by the Safety Management Group. The responses to previous rock fishing incidents have been delayed due to difficulties in determining location. The use of local landmarks to identify location (such as the "Big Pink House" at the Punchbowl) will soon no longer be of use due to changes in Victoria's "000" arrangements. Regional police communications centres (D24's) will be discontinued by 2012,⁹ with all "000" calls directed to ESTA communications centres in several locations in the State. It is likely that ESTA operators will not be familiar with local landmarks at remote locations.

The current arrangement of beach location numbering used by coastal Victorian municipalities is considered limited. Each Council maintains a proprietary system of numbering, which is not integrated into the main ESTA CAD system.

Participation in the Emergency Markers program carries little cost and only requires land managers to provide ESTA with spatial co-ordinates from Geographic Positioning Systems (GPS) for the locations of the markers and some brief directions information. The Emergency Markers can be incorporated into existing signage designs or feature in a range of standardised formats.

According to ESTA, community understanding of the Emergency Marker program is currently limited, and further efforts need to be undertaken to promote the use of these systems in the event of emergencies in open space areas.

Actions:

Coastal land managers, including local Councils and Parks Victoria, should begin to implement the ESTA Emergency Markers program for coastal sites used for rock fishing. The current beach location numbering system should be superseded with this new state-wide approach. Signage will also need to be amended in line with the implementation of the program.

ESTA should seek to increase awareness of the Emergency Markers program amongst the Victorian community, including specific campaigns directed towards CALD communities and international visitors.

⁹ESTA 2010-2015, 5 Year Corporate Plan

Safety Priority -- Signage

Rationale:

High risk locations need appropriate signage detailing the potential hazards and risk associated with entry to that location by fishermen and others. Given that individuals from CALD communities are at increased risk from rock fishing, signage should be sufficient to communicate safety messages to those from different language/cultural backgrounds.

Actions:

Land managers, including Parks Victoria and local councils, should consider placement of appropriate signage in locations used for rock fishing at both the boundary and, where possible, inside the environment. Parks Victoria have already upgraded signage at the Punchbowl site at the commencement of the George Bass Coastal Walk and also within the area leading to the rock shelves.

A new Australian/New Zealand Standard specific to water safety signs and beach safety flags was introduced in December 2010.¹⁰ LSV have provided the following advice to land managers for the implementation of the new signage as it relates to aquatic waterways, both inland and coastal:¹¹

- New safety signage should be reflective of the symbol set outlined in the Standard
- Regardless of symbol set, the application should be consistent and ensure that the selected symbol/s is representative of the message being delivered and any ambiguity should be supplemented with textual wording.
- A widely accepted and recognised risk management process should be used in terms of aggregating the level of risk for open aquatic environments in order to aid with the design and installation of the safety signage program.
- Quantity, layout and overall style of composite signs should follow the principles laid out in the Standard. The National Aquatic and Recreational Signage Style Manual (NARSSM) is referred to in the Standard and is an accepted layout approach.
- Consideration may need to be given to amending viewing distance requirements regardless of symbol set selected and or environment type.

¹⁰AS/NZS 2416:2010

¹¹Newsletter Life Saving Victoria; March 2011 Edition

5. On-going Safety Actions

Angel Rings

The Safety Management Group considered that the placement of angel rings should continue at known rock fishing locations in conjunction with other safety messages. Issues relating to occupational health and safety will need to be considered with placement of angel rings at certain locations which are recognised as hazardous. Agencies tasked with placing angel rings at these locations should not expose their people to undesirable risks. Angel rings remain an accepted safety tool; however the messages should place wearing PFDs at the forefront of personal safety.

Coastal Risk Assessment

LSV should continue with their coastal risk assessment program and examine further funding opportunities as they arise for additional safety initiatives.

6. Alignment with Water Safety Strategies

This Safety Management Plan aligns closely with the majority of strategic goals of the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008-2011¹² (the Strategy) which seeks to reduce drowning deaths by 50% by 2020. The Strategy was developed by the Australian Water Safety Council which comprises representatives from State and Territory aquatic life saving agencies, aquatic recreation groups, safety organisations, other associated agencies and is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The Safety Management Plan aligns specifically to 8 of the 14 strategic goals noted in the Australian Water Safety Strategy (Appendix A).

¹²<http://www.watersafety.com.au/20082011Strategy/tabid/81/Default.aspx>

Appendices

Appendix A: Water Safety Strategic Goals

Goal 4 - Reduce rural and remote drowning deaths

The rate of drowning in rural and remote areas is more than double that of metropolitan or inner regional areas. Rock fishing deaths in Victoria have occurred exclusively in rural and remote locations.

Goal 7 - Reduce drowning deaths attributed to high risk recreational activities

Coastal rock fishing is identified in the Strategy as a high risk recreational activity. The Strategy and the Safety Management Plan both identify the need to increase access to drowning prevention education and skills for recreational fishermen.

Goal 8 - Reduce drowning deaths in high risk populations

The Strategy identifies CALD communities as being at increased risk of drowning and aquatic injury. Both the Strategy and the Safety Management Plan identify the need to have programs addressing drowning risk in CALD communities through a community development approach.

Goal 10 - Build systems to support safe aquatic recreation venues

The strategy recognises that many aquatic locations have safety issues, and promotes programs to minimise risk and research to understand the contribution of safe environments to drowning prevention. The Safety Management Plan seeks to enhance the safety of coastal areas used for rock fishing, and supports further research to better understand the role of countermeasures in the context of this activity.

Goal 11 - Strengthen the skills, standards and contribution of our drowning prevention people

Both the Strategy and the Safety Management Plan seek to strengthen the Australian culture of water safety through the promotion of water safety education to vulnerable groups in the community.

Goal 12 - Strengthen policies, legislation and standards related to water safety

The Safety Management Plan seeks to reduce the risk of drowning. It is intended that stakeholders can consider the Plan when reviewing the existing water safety arrangements and advocate for improved policy, legislation and standards where appropriate.

Goal 13 - Foster collaborative approaches to drowning prevention

Water safety is a broad issue that overlaps many areas of interest and jurisdiction. The Safety Management process used to produce the Plan has involved collaboration between the Coroners Court, State and Local Government agencies, and recreational interest groups towards a common goal.

Goal 14 - Extend the drowning prevention evidence base

The implementation of the Safety Management Plan presents the opportunity for further research into rock fishing safety. Ongoing monitoring at two rock fishing sites by the Remote Alarm Pilot Study will, for the first time, allow researchers to investigate the frequency of rock fishing, and the adoption of safety measures by rock fishermen.