



Troy Grant
Minister for Emergency Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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STAY SAFE IN OUR RIVERS THIS SUMMER

New research shows that 43 drownings occurred in the Nepean, Hawkesbury, Murrumbidgee and Macquarie rivers from 2005-2015, and 121 men between the ages of 25-34 lost their lives on our waterways over the same period.

Minister for Emergency Services Troy Grant and Member for Penrith Stuart Ayres recently visited Tench Reserve, on the banks of the Nepean, to release two new water safety reports by Royal Life Saving NSW and to flag the dangers in our rivers as the weather warms up.

Mr Grant said the findings from these two reports are confronting, and highlight the need for vigilance.

“The drowning statistics concerning our rivers are alarming and a stark reminder to us all to consider the dangers including strong currents, submerged objects and steep or crumbly banks,” Mr Grant said.

“Rivers are high risk locations for drowning and we need to ensure people take their safety as seriously as they would if heading to the beach.

“We want everyone to enjoy our renowned rivers to swim, boat or fish this summer season, but our message is simple: to stay safe, you must respect the river. Wear a lifejacket, avoid consumption of alcohol and drugs around waterways, never swim alone, and learn how to save a life.

Royal Life Saving NSW CEO Michael Ilinsky said the research shows just how treacherous our rivers can be.

“It is a common misconception that inland waterways are safer for swimming than our beaches,” Mr Ilinsky said.

“Just because you visit a river regularly does not mean you know what the conditions will be like next time you visit.

“Even seemingly calm waterways can be dangerous. You cannot always see how cold the water is or even judge the strength of the currents. Always enter the water slowly, feet first, and never dive in.”

Royal Life Saving NSW Respect the River messages are currently being played on TV, radio and across social media as part of this education initiative.

Mr Ayres said that the report into drownings of men aged 25-34 reinforced the dangers of alcohol and drug use in the water.

“We have lost the equivalent of a local cricket team each year for ten years, and nearly 40 per cent of the drownings involved alcohol and over 20 per cent involved drugs,” Mr Ayres said.

“It is tragic, but it isn’t rocket science – alcohol and drugs don’t mix with water. You can have fun in the water but the moment your judgement is impaired you are putting your life at risk, and the lives of others in danger too.”

The Royal Life Saving NSW ‘Don’t Let Your Mates Drink and Drown’ campaign will launch in early November across multiple media platforms.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government funded the research reports (and campaigns) as part of a \$585,000 Water Safety Fund community grant to Royal Life Saving NSW in 2017.

The NSW Rivers Research Report and the Drowning in NSW Waterways: Men aged 25 to 34 can be found at <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/facts-and-figures/research-and-reports/research-reports/drowning-data-reports>.

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