

ALCOHOL & INJURY RISK AT A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL LEAVERS' FESTIVAL

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CONTEXT & AIMS

- Alcohol is a significant contributor to unintentional drownings, with 10-30% of drowned persons consuming alcohol prior to the fatal drowning event.
- In Australia, Leavers' Festivals have become an institution for young people to celebrate the completion of secondary school¹.
- However, such events facilitate risk taking behaviour including hazardous consumption of alcohol by young people in attendance.
- Campaigns such as 'Don't Drink & Drown' from the Royal Life Saving Society Western Australia (RLSSWA) target young people to reduce alcohol consumption during aquatic activities².
- This research investigated intended and actual alcohol consumption, particularly during aquatic activities, at a School Leavers' Festival in the coastal town of Dunsborough in the South-West region of Western Australia (WA).

RESULTS

- Overall, 29% of participants consumed alcohol around a waterway while at Leavers' (Table 1)
- Aquatic-based behaviour while consuming alcohol included swimming and surfing.
- Males were significantly more likely to have consumed alcohol than females (males 43.0%: females 17.8%, $p < 0.001$).
- Age was significant for intention to drink (17 years 87%: 18 years 94%, $p = 0.004$).
- Median of intended consumption was 7-9 standard drinks. This differed significantly from reported actual consumption (5-6 standard drinks, $p = 0.001$)
- 9 out of 10 were aware of Don't Drink and Drown

Table 1: Alcohol consumption, reported behaviour during aquatic activities and awareness of Don't Drink and Drown

	n	%
Consumed alcohol around a waterway (n=530)		
Yes	156	29.4
No	374	70.6
Activity at time of consumption (multiple response)		
Land activities	93	62.0
Swimming	70	46.7
Surfing	19	12.2
Operating a watercraft	13	8.7
Watersports	14	9.3
Other	15	9.6
Had heard of Don't Drink and Drown campaign (n=513)		
Yes	464	90.4
No	49	9.6

METHODS

- This was a cross sectional study conducted in November 2016, over a four day period during the School Leavers' Festival.
- Participants were recently graduated Year 12 WA students attending the South West School Leavers' Festival.
- This was a paper-based intercept survey which took between 5-10 minutes to complete.
- An Australian Standard Drink (an alcohol beverage containing 10 gms of alcohol) was used to calculate intake.
- The overall sample was n=549

CONCLUSIONS

- Rates of alcohol consumption were high, however, participants reported drinking less alcohol than they had intended prior to starting celebrations, and were doing so away from aquatic activities.
- Leavers had reasonable awareness and knowledge of the risks associated with alcohol consumption and aquatic activities, which may reflect the impact of education campaigns.
- Knowledge however, is not always translated into non-risky aquatic behaviour.

MORE INFO?

www.rlsswa.com.au

REFERENCES

1. Government of Western Australia. Leavers WA 2016. Perth, Western Australia: Department of Emergency Services; 2016
2. Royal Life Saving (n.d.) Don't drink and drown. Retrieved from <https://royallifesavingwa.com.au/programs/dont-drink-and-drown>