

24 September 2010

Kim M. W. Parkinson
Coroner
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 1, 436 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, VIC, 3000



200 The Boulevard
Port Melbourne VIC 3207
PO Box 353
South Melbourne DC VIC 3205
Tel (03) 9676 6900
Fax (03) 9681 8211
mail@lifesavingvictoria.com.au
www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au
ABN 21 102 927 364

Dear Coroner Parkinson,

Investigation into the death of Daryl Rolton, Court Ref: 1473/09

Thank you for providing a copy of the finding referenced above and received on 28 June 2010.

Life Saving Victoria's mission is to prevent aquatic related death and injury in all Victorian communities and has the vision that all Victorians will learn water safety, swimming and resuscitation, and be provided with safe aquatic environments and venues.

Please find below Life Saving Victoria's response to the discussion of alcohol related drowning and recommendations:

Recommendation 1 "...that State and Local Government provide funding to life saving organisations, to enable them to continue to promote public safety messages as to the danger of alcohol related drowning, specifically in country and regional areas.":

1. Life Saving Victoria agrees with the Coroner's recommendation. Alcohol remains a significant contributing factor in drowning deaths with an average of 19% of drowning incidents attributable to alcohol use in Victoria over 2000-2010. A recent NSW study also found that for the 18 to 34 age group, close to 1 in 2 male drowning deaths were linked to alcohol.

Life Saving Victoria has previously put together a proposal for a public awareness campaign focussing on reducing alcohol related drowning called 'Don't Drink and Drown'. This is based on the 'Don't Drink and Drown' program developed and run by the Royal Life Saving Society of Western Australia (RLSSWA). It is an education and awareness raising campaign that aims to reduce the number of those who consume harmful levels of alcohol and participate in recreational aquatic activity, and therefore to reduce the number of alcohol related drowning deaths. However, this program remains unfunded in Victoria, and therefore is limited in its capacity to promote the dangers of alcohol use around water.

Evaluation of the program in Western Australia in 2007 found that the program successfully increased awareness of the risk of drowning after consuming alcohol, increased knowledge of the dangers associated with consuming harmful levels of alcohol and participating in aquatic recreation, and also changed individuals' intentions towards drinking for some aquatic activities. If this program were to receive funding, it would be possible to expand promotion of the public safety messages through similar successful medium as RLSSWA, in particular focussing on country and regional areas. These include a mass media campaign, promotions and activities at youth and other community events, promotion at waterside pubs and clubs, and presentations at schools and educational institutions. This is one way that Life Saving Victoria aims to target this issue, and ultimately reduce drowning deaths at inland waterways within country and regional Victoria. This is also in line with recommendation 2.2 from the Australian Rural and Remote Water Safety Plan 2010-2015 Draft (RLSSA), to "develop programs that aim to reduce alcohol related drowning deaths in rural and remote areas".

2. Life Saving Victoria also has a continuing focus of promoting general water safety messages within regional areas, in particular through the Open Water Learning Experience (OWLE). This program reaches school students from Years 3-10 in regional areas of Victoria, offering familiarisation and practical activities for the students within their local open water environments. The program focuses on water safety and teaches students how to use potentially lifesaving skills. The program is run in a range of aquatic environments including rivers, lakes, dams, beaches and pools. On average, over 7,000 students in regional areas participate in the OWLE program each year, increasing their skills, knowledge and understanding of water safety. Through learning these skills, the OWLE program will provide students with skills that could potentially save them in dangerous situations, including risk-taking behaviours such as alcohol consumption. Due to the success and history of this program, Life Saving Victoria believes it would be a perfect avenue to reach and expand its delivery to the risk-taker market, especially in regional areas and deliver key 'Don't Drink and Drown' messages, if further funding became available from State and Local Government.
3. Life Saving Victoria has proposed several steps for the future to prevent alcohol related drowning, including within country and regional Victoria. However, these projects can only go ahead if funding is available. In addition to the previously mentioned steps, Life Saving Victoria will continue to provide relevant messages targeted at young male risk-takers; investigate the provision of professional lifeguard services at new high-risk sites; liaise with alcohol regulators regarding the responsible serving of alcohol in water-related environments and conduct research into the effects of legal and illegal drugs in relation to water-related accidents and drowning.

Life Saving Victoria is committed to the prevention of aquatic related death and injury and as such we look forward to a continuing collaborative approach with the coroner, all levels of Government, and related organisations to prevent deaths of a similar nature occurring.

Yours sincerely,



Guy Britt
General Manager- Business Development