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DON'T DRINK AND SWIM - AMA

The AMA is urging Australians to be careful when taking part in water recreation activities over the summer months, especially when alcohol is involved.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that relaxing and playing in the water is a great way to spend time over summer, but adding alcohol to the mix is fraught with danger.

“Every summer there are tragic instances where people are seriously injured and even killed in situations involving alcohol and water consumption,” Professor Owler said.

“Before entering the water, make sure you are aware of the risks.

“Engaging in any water activity while under the influence of alcohol can lead to serious injury or loss of life.

“Every year, doctors see serious spinal cord injuries and worse as a result of poor judgements, lack of understanding of the conditions, and alcohol misuse.

“Of the 350-400 cases of spinal cord injuries reported each year, nine per cent are directly attributable to diving in shallow pools or surf, or from surfing.

“Make sure you and those around you are not taking unnecessary risks and putting yourself in danger.”

According to the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia (RLSSA), 271 people drowned in Australian waterways between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015.

The largest number of drownings occur in December – January.

The RLSSA data show that:

- 99 (37 per cent) drowning deaths occurred in inland waterways;
- 55 (20 per cent) drowning deaths occurred at beaches;
- 36 (13 per cent) drowning deaths occurred in ocean/harbour locations;
- 63 people (23 per cent) were swimming and recreating immediately prior to drowning;
- 53 people (20 per cent) were using watercraft immediately prior to drowning; and
- 43 people (16 per cent) drowned as a result of falls into water.

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