

DROWNINGS — WATER SAFETY PLANS

Statement by Minister for Sport and Recreation

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [2.07 pm]: On Monday, the 2018–19 “National Drowning Report” was released. Sadly, there was a 10 per cent increase in the number of drownings in Australia last year, with drowning remaining a significant issue within the Australian community. In Western Australia, 32 people drowned from July 2018 to June 2019, representing a seven per cent increase from last year. Of these, 81 per cent were male and 16 per cent were aged between 15 to 24 years. People were 2.3 times more likely to drown in regional and remote areas than in the Perth metropolitan area. The most common locations where drowning has occurred include oceans and harbours at 28 per cent; rivers, creeks and streams at 22 per cent; and swimming pools at 13 per cent. The top three activities associated with drowning are boating at 28 per cent, swimming and recreating at 25 per cent, and falling into water at nine per cent.

The state government and Royal Life Saving have co-invested in a range of water safety strategies to address four national water safety plans in Western Australia since 1997, with the aim of preventing loss of life and promoting safe participation in water-related activities. The most recent two-year investment has been focused on supporting Royal Life Saving Society WA to lead efforts to ensure all primary-aged schoolchildren in WA have basic swim and survival skills; to provide safe aquatic venues across the state; and to ensure that at-risk populations gain water safety knowledge and swimming, survival and rescue skills. The long-term impact of this investment has been significant, and although I am pleased we are making progress in WA in the areas we have been working on with Royal Life Saving, it is clear from the broader picture of the figures released on Monday that there is more to be done. So as the weather begins to heat up and we head out onto the water, please stay safe and know your limits. As a country of water lovers, we need to avoid complacency and stay alert around all bodies of water. I particularly urge young men, who are vastly over-represented in these statistics, to avoid risky behaviour that can stem from drug and alcohol use around water. No family should have to experience losing a loved one to drowning.

Following the report, I wish to share Royal Life Savings’ three key messages from the finding and ask that members pass them along to family and friends. The first is the importance of parental supervision and enrolling children in lifesaving programs as summer approaches; the second is highlighting the risks posed to young adult males and the importance of limiting alcohol consumption and knowing your limitations; and the third is the importance of wearing a lifejacket, given boating is the activity most frequently associated with drowning. Together we can get this down to zero.