



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – DECEMBER 4, 2008

Tragic Drowning Reminder re Rural Water Safety

FARM OWNERS are being urged to beef up their water safety measures, after the death of an 18-month-old at a property at Kingaroy on Wednesday.

Drowning deaths now occur more frequently in rural waterways than any other location. Toddlers have drowned in rivers, lakes, dams, as well as water troughs and irrigation channels.

“As the mercury rises into summer, young children will increasingly be drawn to bodies of water including dams and families need to be on high-alert to protect their children and grandchildren,” Royal Life Saving Queensland Executive Director Michael Darben said.

“People on properties are in a difficult situation because in most cases it is impossible to fence dams, water troughs and lakes so young children can’t access them. But that doesn’t mean families can’t put in place safety measures that will protect young lives.

“Royal Life Saving suggests creating a child-safe area close to the home. This is an area that is enclosed and keeps the children close to the home and away from any water bodies.

“Many families don’t know that children drown silently and in less than a minute. So if you’re busy doing any other activity near water, like cleaning out troughs or repairing nearby fences, keep your children away. Because literally in that minute where you’re distracted your child could drown without you hearing a thing.”

Royal Life Saving is also reminding all parents that older siblings should not be entrusted with the responsibility of looking after younger children. Older children are not equipped with the skills to perceive and respond to an emergency situation, nor should they be given this responsibility.

Royal Life Saving has created a water safety checklist for parents on rural properties. Some of the key points are:

- Fill in unused ditches, sheep dips
- Cover or place lids on wells and tanks
- Ensure someone is designated to ‘Keep Watch’ over children

- Ensure others on the farm (eg. farm workers, visitors) are alert to “Keep Watch” for children who may wander off near water - especially at peak times when parents may get distracted (eg. harvesting, stock movement, BBQs with visitors)
- Create a child safe area to keep the child in a safe supervised area away from water bodies

For a copy of the fact sheet go to: www.royallifesaving.com.au

For further information, or to set up an interview please contact:

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Background:

Royal Life Saving Society Australia has been serving Australia for over 110 years and is the leading water safety, swimming and lifesaving education organisation in Australia. Royal Life Saving is dedicated to turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers. Royal Life Saving has branches in every State and Territory in Australia.

For more information about Royal Life Saving, visit our website at www.royallifesaving.com.au