

SECONDS COUNT – BE A SUPERHERO

Child drowning facts and figures

Queensland Family & Child Commission



The Queensland Family and Child Commission collects and analyses information about every child death in Queensland. We do this to identify how we can keep our children safer and help make Queensland the safest place to bring up a child. Keeping our children safe is everyone's business.

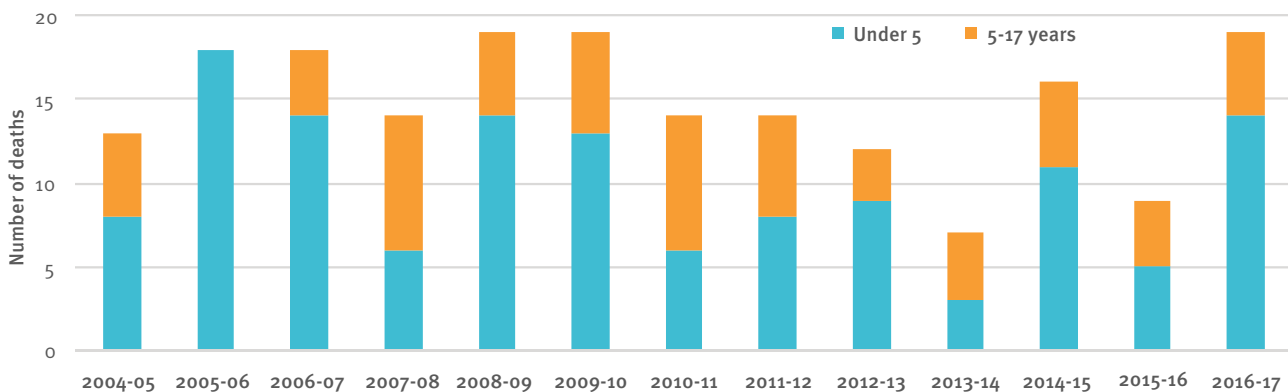
Trends

On average, **10 children under the age of 5** drown in Queensland each year. An average of 5 children aged 5-17 years drown each year.

The Queensland Child Death Register records all child deaths in Queensland. Between July 2004 and June 2017, there were 192 drowning deaths of children aged between 0 and 17 years. That's an average of 14.8 deaths each year (1.4 deaths per 100 000 population 0–17 years).

During 2016–17 alone, 19 children drowned, up from 9 drowning deaths in 2015–16.

Figure 1: Drowning deaths of children and young people in Queensland



National comparison

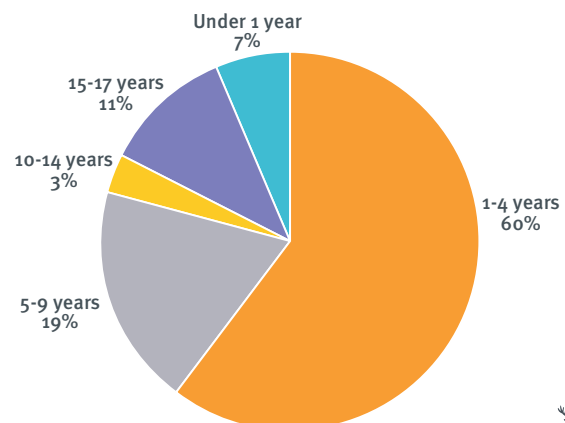
In 2015, Queensland had the highest number and rate of child drownings of any Australian state or territory.¹ Queensland's rate of child drowning was 1.8 deaths per 100 000 population aged 0–17 years, whereas rates in all other jurisdictions were under 1.0 death per 100 000.

By age

Children under the age of five are particularly vulnerable. As illustrated in Figure 2, children aged 1–4 years make up 60% of all child drownings while a further 7% are aged under 1.

Figure 2: Drowning deaths by age

Drowning deaths in the 5 year period to June 2017



1. Source: Data provided by members of the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (ANZCDR&PG)

Child drowning facts and figures

Children aged under 5

In the last 5 years, 42 children aged under 5 drowned in Queensland. As indicated in Figure 3, 50% of these deaths occurred in swimming pools.

Compliant pool fencing is an important way to protect young children. In the last year, no children drowned in pools with compliant fencing and where the gate had not been propped open.

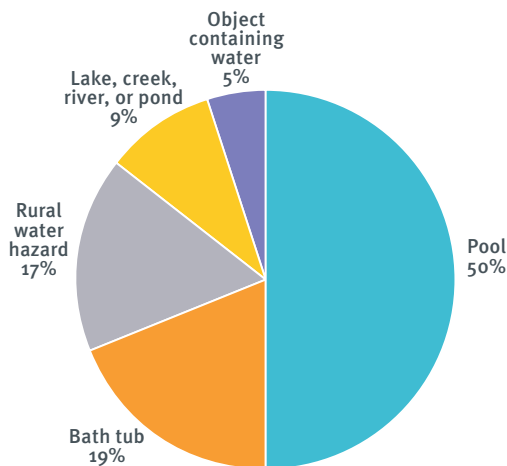
Even pools in disrepair pose a risk to young children, reinforcing the need for compliant fencing.

Pools aren't the only risk to children under 5 years, with 19% of drownings occurring in bath tubs and 17% in rural water hazards (such as dams and water troughs).

We must be vigilant whenever and where ever children can access any body of water.

Figure 3: Drowning hazards for under 5s

Drowning deaths of children aged under 5 in the 5-year period to June 2017



Risk Factors

- Leaving children unsupervised for any period of time, even just for a few moments, when they are known to be in a pool or a bath tub
- Inadequate supervision of children when they are known to be in or around water
- Failing to have a pool fence that meets the legislative requirements
- Keeping the pool gate propped open
- Having objects nearby that children can climb to open the pool gate

Key prevention messages

- Compliant pool fencing saves lives
- In the last year (2016-17), not one child drowned in a pool that had a compliant pool fence with the gate latched
- Reliance on pool fences alone is not enough to prevent children accessing pools
- Children need to be continuously and actively supervised by a capable supervisor when in or near water
- For children under the age of 5, this means being within arms reach at all times
- The presence of other children or the use of flotation devices should not take the place of active adult supervision
- Children need to be taught water safety and awareness
- This means teaching children how to swim, educating children about the risks of water hazards and reinforcing rules about entering pool areas
- Remove toys from in and around the pool area to reduce the temptation for children to gain access to the pool
- Having multiple barriers between children and a water hazard may help prevent children from accessing water without the knowledge of an adult
- Have a safe play area for children away from pools or other water hazards
- Never leave children unsupervised in the bath
- Be aware of children's access to non-pool water hazards, particularly bath tubs, buckets of water, or other bodies of water

Data for prevention activities

The QFCC collects, analyses and publishes information about child deaths to help prevent future deaths and serious injuries. We work with researchers and other agencies to raise community awareness and develop prevention programs and policies, by identifying risk factors, trends and emerging safety hazards.

The QFCC can provide detailed child death data to researchers and organisations, at no cost – please email child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au

Reports on child deaths and 13-year data tables can be found at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/child-death-reports-and-data-o

