



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 1 DECEMBER 2008

FEARS OF WORST YEAR ON RECORD FOR QLD DROWNING DEATHS

The Royal Life Saving Society Queensland fears that this year could be the worst year on record for drowning deaths, after another spate of drownings over the weekend.

At least three people lost their lives in unrelated drowning incidents on Saturday and Sunday, leaving devastated families from Far North Queensland down to the NSW border.

“This is a terrible start to the summer season and our thoughts are with these families who have lost their loved ones in such tragic circumstances,” Royal Life Saving Queensland Executive Director Michael Darben said.

“As the leading water safety, swimming and lifesaving education organisation in Australia, it is very frustrating for us to see so many people losing their lives to drowning, because most drowning deaths are utterly preventable.

“If the horror spate of drowning deaths continues, this will be a record year for drowning deaths.”

Mr Darben said that based on the media reports, the three deaths should never have happened.

“We have three separate warnings today for Queenslanders,” Mr Darben said.

“Firstly, we are urging people of all ages when they’re using waterways that are shared between swimmers and boats to be well aware of where they are in the water at all times. Even if you’re on a boogie board or similar, it’s easy for a boat not to spot you until it’s too late.

“We are also urging people not to jump into bodies of water without checking the depth of the water and the current first. From a height, it’s never easy to tell how fast the water is flowing or what obstructions might be hidden away beneath the surface. Rocks, tree logs and other solid

natural materials can cause serious injuries which will incapacitate even the strongest swimmers.

“And finally, if you come to a river crossing, get out and check the depth of the water and the speed of the current before you attempt crossing in a car. Cars can be swept away in less than 50cm of water.”

Around Australia, the Royal Life Saving Society is aware of 58 drowning deaths since July 1, 2008.

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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. We achieve this through: education; training; health promotion; aquatic risk management; community development; sport and participation; advocacy; research; and international networks. 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