



## OPEN WATER SURVIVAL PROGRAMME

1 - 3 Days

Recommended For Years 5 - 8

Summer

### OVERVIEW

The Aqua Skills *Open Water Survival Programme* introduces safety and survival skills to students as preparation for pursuits in Outdoor Recreation and any water based activity. It focuses on situations that will confront students when they are exposed to hazards associated with open water; rivers, lakes & the sea. It is generally run as single days or consecutive days, but can be run as an overnight camp or day camp.

Aqua Skills presents students with real life scenarios. Highly controlled activities enable students to learn about high-risk open water environments; whilst feeling comfortable, safe and in control.

The programme offers a level of excitement that will be remembered well into adult life, ensuring lifelong learning.

Other programmes are available for other age groups.

During the year July 1999 to June 2000, 296 people drowned in Australia (55 in Victoria). Some interesting facts are as follows :

#### Australia Wide

- ❖ 79% of drowning victims were over the age of 5 yrs
- ❖ 50% of drownings occurred in Waterways (rivers, lakes, & dams,)
- ❖ 14% of drownings occurred in the Sea (oceans and bays).
- ❖ Total open water drownings, including ponds and quarries, was 174 people (59% of all drownings)
- ❖ 60% of drownings occurred when the victim did not enter the water intentionally (ie. fell in, capsized boat or washed overboard). 92% of these people were fully clothed

#### Victoria

- ❖ 69% of drowning victims were over the age of 5 yrs (an alarming 31% were under 5 yrs)
- ❖ 31% of drownings occurred in Waterways (rivers, lakes, & dams,)
- ❖ 31% of drownings occurred in the Sea (oceans and bays).
- ❖ Total open water drownings, including ponds and quarries, was 36 people (65% of all drownings)
- ❖ 71% of drownings occurred when the victim did not enter the water intentionally (ie. fell in, capsized boat or washed overboard). 92% of these people were fully clothed.

Phone via ROAM Adventures 1300 65 22 77

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*(Sources – "The National Drowning Report 2000", published by The Royal Life Saving Society Australia, and "The Victorian Drowning Summary 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000", published by The Royal Life Saving Society Australia, Victoria Branch Inc.)*

A significant number of drowning victims were aged between 20 – 60 years. The increase in water safety programmes in schools, community clubs and water safety organisations is reducing the number of drownings between the ages of 6 – 19 years.

In their 1977-78 report, the Victorian branch of the Royal Life Saving Society stated that "although people learn swimming and water safety skills in the protected environment of suburban swimming pools, the reality is that people drown with clothes on in locations that are isolated or not patrolled or supervised, often in adverse weather conditions and this reinforces the need for individuals to learn personal survival skills and to adopt prudent and safe practices".

As the *new generation* of water safety conscious child enters adult life, the number of adult drownings will decrease.

An important component of the Aqua Skills Water Safety Programmes is to train children to feel "undressed" without correct personal safety equipment (appropriate buoyancy vests, helmets, footwear, and thermal protection). Just as children and adults instinctively reach for the seat belt when they enter a motor vehicle, they should feel the same instinct to reach for their appropriate safety equipment before undertaking a water based recreational activity or being involved in some other pursuit near water.

The *Open Water Survival Programme* will challenge children to experience unfamiliar situations and experience many forms of water craft, such as, river sleds, rafts, body boards and rescue boards.

The *Open Water Survival Programme* incorporates land based theory topics on reading water, basic meteorology and barotraumas, first aid in survival situations, use of PFD's, hypothermia, sunburn and using the "buddy system".

Children who feel uncomfortable participating in an activity may learn through observation and participating from a land base.

This programme has up to three days of instruction; one at a river location, one at the beach, and an optional river journey.

Following are four optional programmes. It is recommended that session one (inland water) and two (sea) are completed before undertaking additional activities in session three (sailing, rafting or canoeing) and four (snorkling).

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## Learning Outcomes

**Course Name** Open Water Survival Programme

**Course Code** OWSP OW3

Aqua Skills has aligned Learning Outcomes and Course Material with a number of sources so that the *Open Water Survival Programme* will articulate to the advanced Aqua Skills course, *Advanced Water Survival and Rescue Techniques*, designed for ages 16 – 20 years. The *Advanced Water Survival and Rescue Techniques* course may lead to formal qualifications in modules from the Australian National Training Authority's registered National Outdoor Recreation Industry Training Package, and from the newly developed Community Recreation Training Package.

<b>Description</b>	This module covers knowledge and skills to respond safely and appropriately in open water environments, in order to avoid hazards, and to self-rescue.
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ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
1. Demonstrate knowledge of open water hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The potential hazards when pursuing an activity in or near open water (inland &amp; sea) are identified</li><li>b. Safe surfing locations are identified through knowledge of different types of waves and their impact on surf safety</li><li>c. Distinguishing features of rips, gutters and sweeps are identified and used to determine the most suitable surfing venue</li></ul>
2. Demonstrate defensive swimming techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The correct body position to minimise entrapment is adopted following craft capsize</li><li>b. The ability to set a ferry glide angle, in moving water and rips, in order to reach the bank, eddy or safer water, is demonstrated</li><li>c. In moving inland water, breaking in and out of eddies in order to get to the shore, is demonstrated</li></ul>
3. Demonstrate self rescue techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The ability to get back to the shore in surf and bays is demonstrated, using aids and without aids.</li><li>b. The ability to actively free oneself from river hazards are identified and demonstrated in simulations</li><li>c. The ability to wade across a swift current of mid-thigh depth, alone and using support or assistance, is shown in order to self rescue</li></ul>
4. Demonstrate assisted rescue techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Resources such as throw bags and rope coils are thrown in a manner to reach a swimmer in moving water</li><li>b. Towing techniques in the sea and flat or moving water are demonstrated</li></ul>

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5. Demonstrate water craft capsize and re-entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The craft is exited in a controlled manner following capsize</li><li>b. Equipment is recovered, if safe to do so</li><li>c. A variety of re-entry techniques is identified</li><li>d. Method of re-entry is chosen after consideration of physical ability, type of craft and situational variances</li><li>e. Deep water re-entry techniques are demonstrated</li></ul>
6. Apply strategies to ensure personal safety from environmental hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Planning is undertaken for sun safety, hydration, hypothermia, windburn, marine stingers and drowning</li><li>b. Weather conditions are sourced and assessed to enable selection of a location to suit personal skill level</li><li>c. Clothing suitable for the prevailing and expected conditions is selected</li><li>d. Safety equipment is worn / used in accordance with sate / territory legislation and weather and environmental conditions</li></ul>
7. Demonstrate basic water safety communication methods and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Demonstrate use and meaning of verbal calls, hand signals, whistles, radios</li><li>b. Knowledge of collision and water traffic regulations is demonstrated</li><li>c. Terminology of parts of water craft is demonstrated</li><li>d. Clear, concise directions are given to a capsized person and others assisting a rescue</li></ul>

**EVALUATION** After the trial programmes were run, surveys of students, parents and teaching staff provided feedback. Comments were extremely positive (a summary is available for viewing, if required).  
NOTE : This was a Year 8 programme.

Comments included :

- Parents *I encourage the Thursday / Friday activities. They taught new skills and experiences to ...  
The water safety courses are excellent opportunities to develop life skills  
I think the last three days certainly excited ... (the course was part of an activities week)  
The water safety activities were fantastic. ... came home buzzing with excitement.  
Open water activities were well run and very enjoyable*
- Students *The Yarra was the thrill of my week. We learnt river survival skills  
I enjoyed the river and beach outings as they enriched me on the many dangers that I  
could possibly encounter whilst in the water.  
While this was educational in many ways, I also found it extremely fun!*
- Staff *Thursday / Friday activities were excellent - built on skills very helpful for Year 9 activities  
Water activities were much better than last years O.E activities*



## Programme Details

### Session 1      **Rivers, Waterways, Dams & Lakes (River Awareness & Defensive Swimming)**

- 1.1 River Awareness (Moving Water)
  - Eddies, Waves, Holes, Ledges
  - Snags, Overhanging Vegetation & Wire Fences
  - Slippery Rocks & Weir Walls
  - Dangers on River Banks
  - Electrical Storms
  - Rough *Horseplay*, Water Fights & Pushing others into Water
  - Buoyancy Vests & Helmets
  - Coldness / Appropriate Dress
  - Approaching Trapped / Stranded Swimmer / Foot Entrapment
  - Hand signals
  
- 1.2 Float Position & Swimming Strainers in Moving Water
  - Entering Water
  - Defensive Swimming
  - Practice approaching and Swimming over a Strainer
  - Solo Wading with Paddle Support
  
- 1.3 Crossing Moving Water
  - Team Wading Skills
  - Double Crossings
  - In-line Crossings
  - Circle Crossings
  - Pyramid Crossings
  
- 1.4 Craft Safety
  - Buoyancy Vests (Helmets, if necessary)
  - Bow Lines
  - Grab Loops
  - Capsized Craft – Flootation
    - Remain with Craft
    - Self-rescue

### Session 2      **Surf Activities (Body Boards & Rescue Boards)**

- 2.1 Checking for Environmental Hazards
  - Before entering the water, identify all hazards
  - Check rips from a high point
  - When in the water, feel for any undertows or currents

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- Discuss how to identify safe swimming areas
- Why should we swim between the flags
  
- 2.2 Being Sun Smart
  - Discuss the need to slip, slop, slap and wrap
  - Use of shade and headwear where possible for out-of-water activities
  - Use of sunscreen, long sleeved shirts or wetsuit
  - Re-application of sunscreen after a period in the water
  
- 2.3 Surf Swimming Skills
  - Wading
  - Dolphining
  - Swimming
  - Diving under waves
  - Body surfing
  
- 2.4 Board Paddling Skills, Rescue Board or Surf Board
  - Paddling a rescue board
  - Piercing waves on a rescue board
  - Rolling the board back to the surface after the wave has passed
  
- 2.5 Surf Survival Skills
  - Identifying and aligning paddling or swimming with a landmark
  - Checking for sandbars before diving under waves
  - When in difficulty – float on back and wave one arm
  - When diving, dive to the bottom and hold the sand

### Session 3

#### **Sea Craft (Sail Boats) – Optional White Water Rafting or Canoeing**

- 3.1 Sailing (using small sail boats, boat control, steering and rudder work)  
Covering all aspects of foreshore safety and sailboat safety, on and off the water.  
Demonstration of capsize, recovery and tow.
  - Capsize
    - stay with the boat
    - don't hang off boat
    - crew weight on centreboard to right vessel
    - "crew scoop" during righting of boat
    - bailing out
    - recovery of crew after righting of boat
  - Collision and water regulations
    - turn right, pass port to port
    - power gives way to sail
    - right of way for commercial vessels

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- Crew recovery procedures
  - maintain sight of crew overboard at all times
  - teamwork
  - approach and stop to leeward of crew member in water
  - Slow speed of approach
  - assist crew on board
- Main parts of the small boat
  - hull
  - gunwhale
  - centreboard
  - stern
  - bow
  - mast
  - stays
  - boom
  - boom vang
  - sails
  - rudder
  - tiller
  - tiller extension
- Risks
  - Sun burn
  - Windburn
  - Marine stingers
  - Drowning
  - Dehydration
  - Hypothermia
- Wind terminology
  - Wind aft
  - Up wind
  - Down wind
  - Wind abeam
  - Head to wind
  - Windward
  - Leeward

## **Session 4**

### **Marine Activities (Snorkelling)**

- 4.1 Checking snorkelling equipment for fit, suitability and condition
- Entry & exiting the water
  - Communication with Buddy
  - Marine life study

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## Open Water Survival Programme

### Details

#### ACCOMMODATION

This programme is generally run as day activities; however an overnight camp can also be valuable. On over night programmes, students are normally accommodated in tents in the local camping ground or in bunkroom accommodation. If camping, coach companies will supply tents and catering. As this programme is normally run during the summer, camping provides an interesting dimension the programme.

#### LOCATION

The river component is generally undertaken on some *moving* water on the Yarra River at Pound Bend, near Templestowe or Warrandyte. In regional areas and others states and countries, the programme will need a location with some interesting water flow and features.

The surf and beach components are generally run on Port Philip Bay, Point Leo, Anglesea or Torquay. These locations are selected for their moderate surf beaches, that are suitable for body boarding and rescue boards, and their sheltered bays for sailing and snorkelling (if these components are included in the course).

#### ACTIVITIES

**River Safety** can be undertaken on any moving water, however, a location where a variety of river conditions is preferred, such as small rapids, flat ponds and gravel races. All students wear buoyancy vests, helmets, and wetsuits (if required).

**Snorkelling** is usually undertaken in a bay that is reasonably sheltered. A small reef on the shore is ideal as it provides an interesting location to explore marine life. Instruction is provided before students enter the water and a number of learning activities are performed to ensure students have fun and fully understand the correct usage of snorkelling equipment.

The **Body Boarding and Rescue Boarding** is conducted on a Surf beach. A range of activities ensures that students understand the correct and safe use of this equipment.

**Evening Activities** will be discussed with the School's programme coordinator. Activities may range from archery and walks to problem solving challenges and team activities, campfire evenings, or theme programmes emphasising music, art, the natural environment or other topic.

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