

# Bay of Plenty Water Safety Strategy

Te Rautaki Haumarū Wai a Waiariki  
2019 – 2023

He waka eke noa.

*A canoe which we are all in  
with no exception*

We are all in this together



**Sport Bay of Plenty**  
more people, more active, more often



**Water  
Safety**  
NEW ZEALAND

# Acknowledgements

The development of this strategy was based on contributions from a wide range of individuals and groups across that Bay of Plenty over an 18-month period. Our thanks to all those that have contributed their time and views to the development of this strategy.

Thanks also to Bay Trust for providing funding to help WSNZ facilitate the development of this strategy and to TECT for their funding for the initial investigation into water skills training in the Bay of Plenty which led to the initiation of the regional strategy development process.



# Bay of Plenty Water Safety Strategy 2019 – 2023

<p><b>What we are all about</b> (Our catch-phrase)</p>	<p>Everyone who plays on and around the water gets to come home</p>
<p><b>What we're ultimately aiming to see happen</b></p> <p><b>Our vision</b></p>	<p>Preventing drowning in our waters everyday</p>
<p><b>The role we play towards achieving this</b></p> <p><b>Our mission</b></p>	<p>To work collectively to prevent drowning and injury by fostering a greater understanding of, and respect for, water</p>
<p><b>Sub-regional focus areas</b></p> <p><b>Our Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Western Bay</b> Water Skills for Life and powered boating</p> <p><b>Eastern Bay</b> Water Skills for Life and Māori engagement</p> <p><b>Rotorua Lakes</b> Water Skills for Life and drowning prevention for migrant/tourists</p>
<p><b>Target Groups</b></p>	<p><b>Young people</b></p> <p><b>Males</b></p> <p><b>Māori</b></p> <p><b>Migrants and international visitors</b></p>

# Background

The Bay of Plenty regional water safety strategy is a series of actions focused on reducing drowning deaths and injuries and building a culture of safe enjoyment around water in the Bay of Plenty.

## Why this strategy?

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) is facilitating the development of the Bay of Plenty regional water safety strategy because it is consistent with two key objectives of the Water Safety Sector Strategy 2020, notably that:

- communities take the lead to promote the safe enjoyment of local water; and
- the sector works together to maximise its collective effort.

Regional water safety strategies identify the priority work streams and investment priorities for water safety in a region. Their aim is to:

- provide for a collective focus on, and agreed direction for, water safety activity in a region;
- ensure the needs, goals and aspirations of a region are reflected in water safety activity;

- allow greater community ownership of drowning prevention/water safety activities; and
- ensure there is regional leadership in both the development and implementation of water safety initiatives.

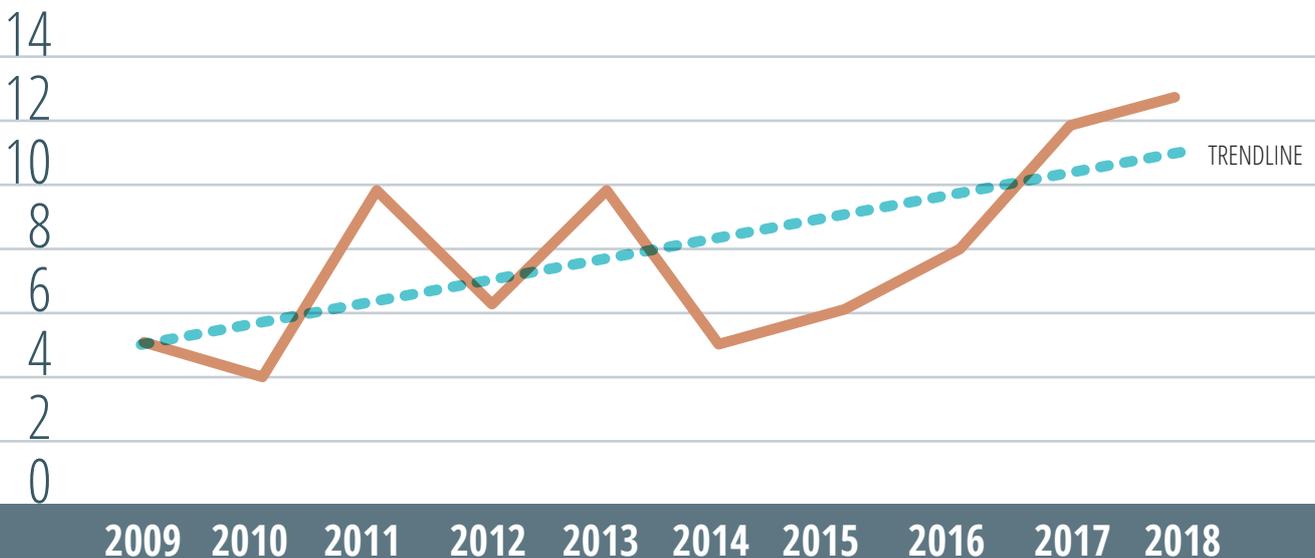
The Bay of Plenty Water Safety Strategy is also a way of communicating with the public and key stakeholders about the priority drowning prevention activities being undertaken in the Bay of Plenty. The Strategy will also help national and regional funders focus their investments on the priority water safety issues in the Bay of Plenty.

## Why the Bay of Plenty?

The Bay of Plenty has the 4th highest regional drowning rate in New Zealand and over the past 10 years the average annual number of drowning fatalities in the Bay has not been reducing. (See graph below). Between 2009 and 2018 there were 79 preventable drownings in the Bay of Plenty, 10% of the total drownings in New Zealand over that period.

## Bay of Plenty Preventable Drowning Fatalities

NUMBER OF FATALITIES



## Drowning Statistics

The development of the Bay of Plenty regional water safety strategy began with an analysis of data on the drowning fatalities in the Bay of Plenty during 2009-2018. This data came from the national database on drowning – DrownBase – that is maintained by WSNZ. The analysis of data helped identify initial issues with which to focus on as part of the engagement of stakeholders in the Bay of Plenty.

It was identified early on that developing the strategy from a single regional view of the Bay of Plenty was not a viable option. When consulting on the process to be adopted it was conveyed to WSNZ that the Bay of Plenty consisted of three distinct geographic communities that had different characteristics and challenges from a water safety perspective. It was therefore decided to adopt an approach that recognised the following three sub-regions within the Bay of Plenty:

- Eastern Bay of Plenty;
- Rotorua Lakes District; and
- Western Bay of Plenty.

Each subregion is also at a different point of maturity in its ability to develop, fund and implement drowning prevention initiatives.

Over the past 10 years there were 79 drowning fatalities in the Bay of Plenty, 42 (or 53%) were in the Western Bay of Plenty, 16 (or 20%) in Eastern Bay of Plenty, 21 (or 27%)

in Rotorua Lakes. When looking at the rate per 100,000 of population, the Eastern Bay of Plenty's rate and Rotorua Lakes far exceeds the Western Bay of Plenty, and the national rate.

Further examination of the 2009-18 drowning data for the three sub-regions revealed that:

### For the Eastern Bay:

- Non-powered boating and underwater were the most common activities leading to drowning
- Beaches, Offshore and Rivers were the most common areas where drowning occurred
- Māori were the most likely ethnic group to drown

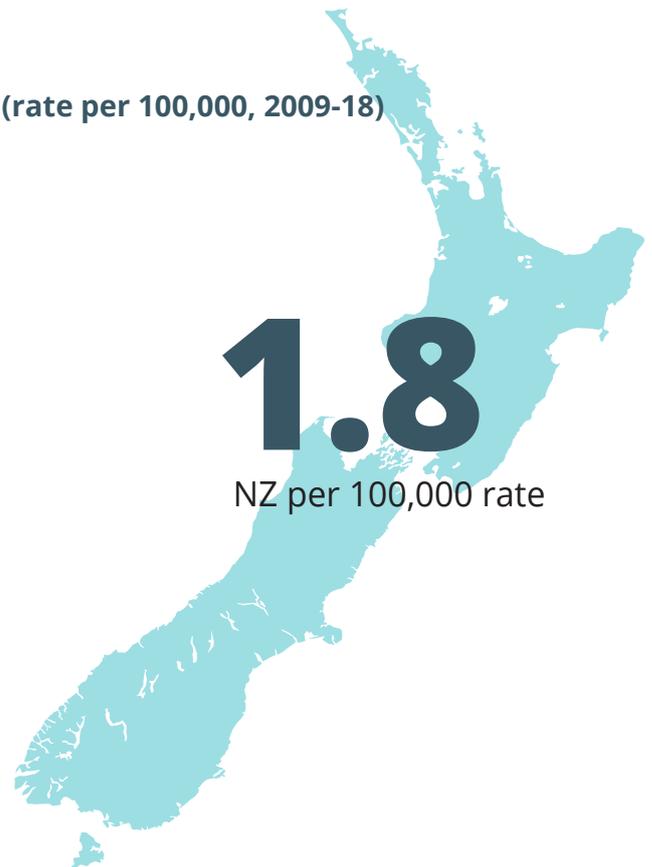
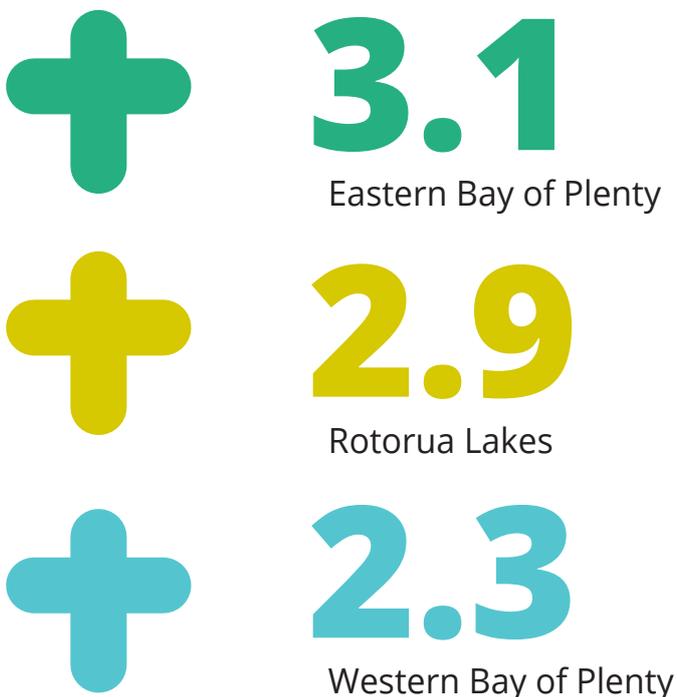
### For the Rotorua Lakes:

- Swimming was the most common activity leading to drowning, closely followed by non-powered boating
- Lakes, rivers and pools were the areas where drowning occurred
- Asians were the most likely ethnic group to drown

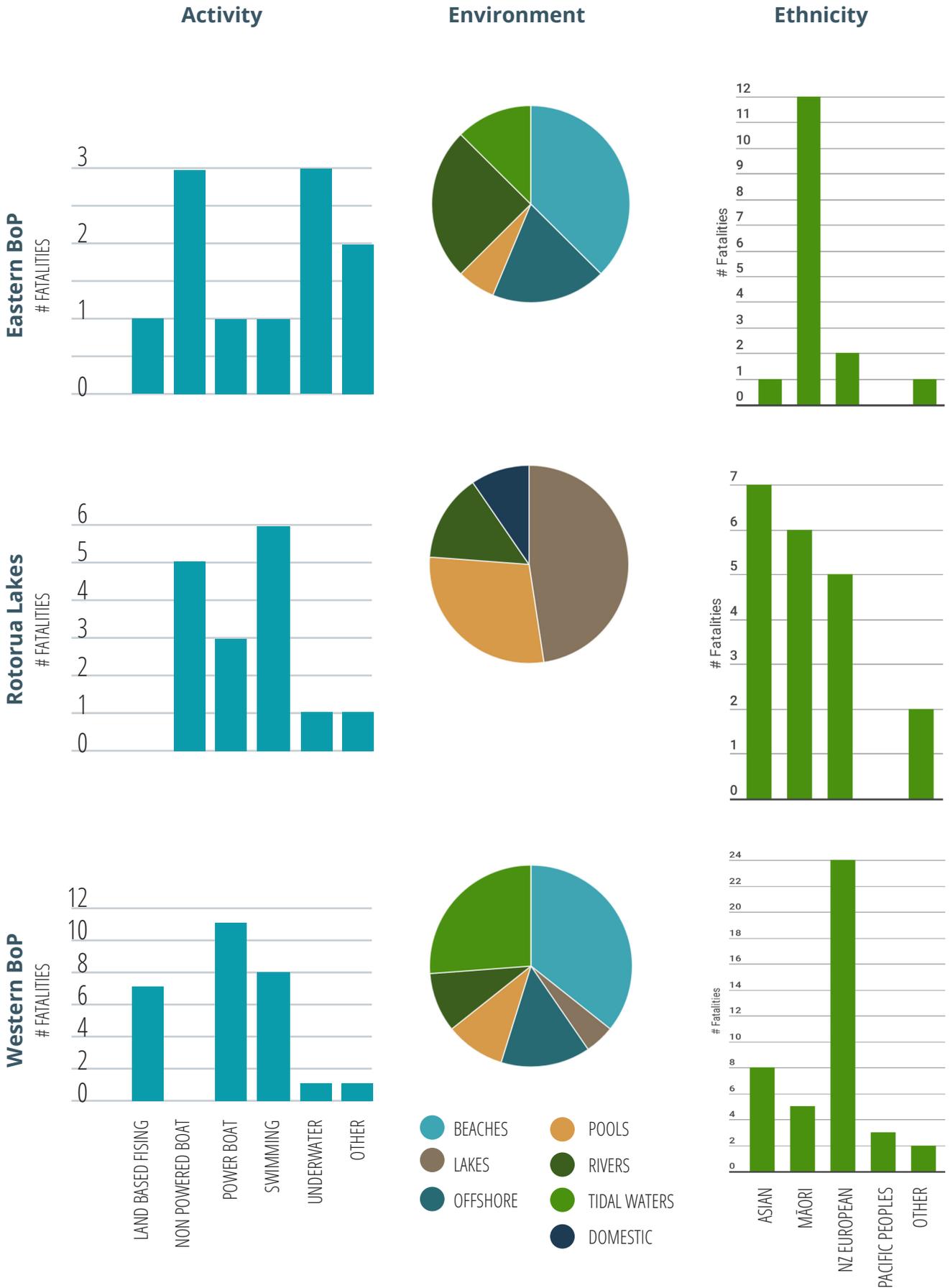
### For the Western Bay:

- Powered boating was the most common activity leading to drowning
- Beaches, Offshore and Tidal waters were the most common areas where drowning occurred
- NZ Europeans were the most likely ethnic group to drown

### Bay of Plenty sub-regional drowning fatalities (rate per 100,000, 2009-18)



# Activity, Environment, Ethnicity Drowning Fatalities 2009-18

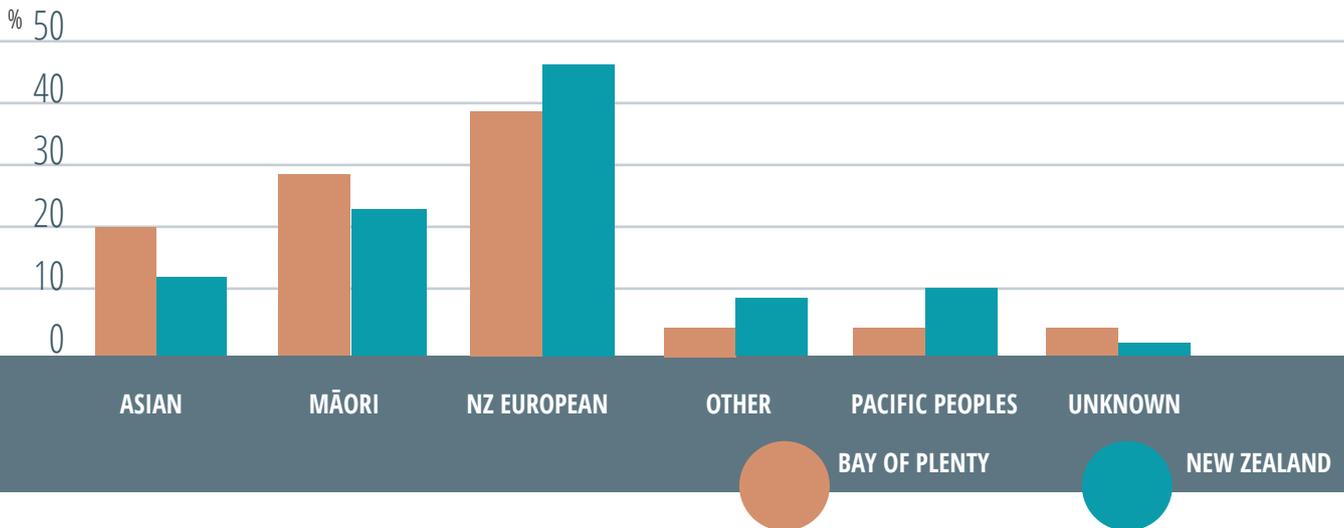


## Priority Groups

Drowning is an overwhelming male death, both nationally and in the Bay of Plenty. During 2009-18 82% of drowning deaths (or 65 people) in the Bay of Plenty were male, slightly less than the national male drowning rate of 83% for the same period.

From the DrownBase data two ethnic groups were identified as being most at risk of poor water safety outcomes. These were Māori and migrants/international visitors, especially Asians.

### Ethnicity Drowning Fatalities 2009-18

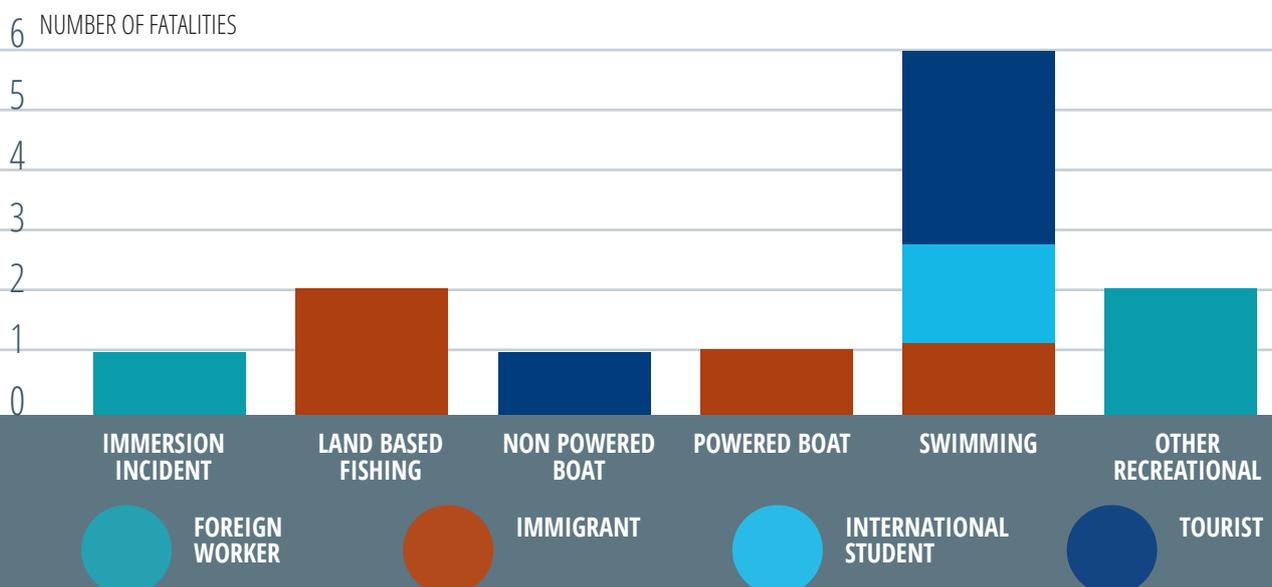


### Migrants and international visitors (2008-17 due to 2018 figures unavailable)

There were 13 preventable drowning fatalities during 2008-17 in the Bay of Plenty attributed to people classified as immigrants, international students, foreign workers or tourists. This is about 17% of total drowning fatalities in the Bay for that period, or one in every six drownings.

This group was most likely to drown in the Western Bay of Plenty (with 8 fatalities or 61% of the total) followed by Rotorua lakes (with 4 fatalities or 31%). Swimming was the most likely activity to precede a drowning (with 6 fatalities) and the most likely group to drown were those classified as immigrants (5 fatalities).

### Migrant and international visitor drowning fatalities in Bay of Plenty 2008-17 by activity



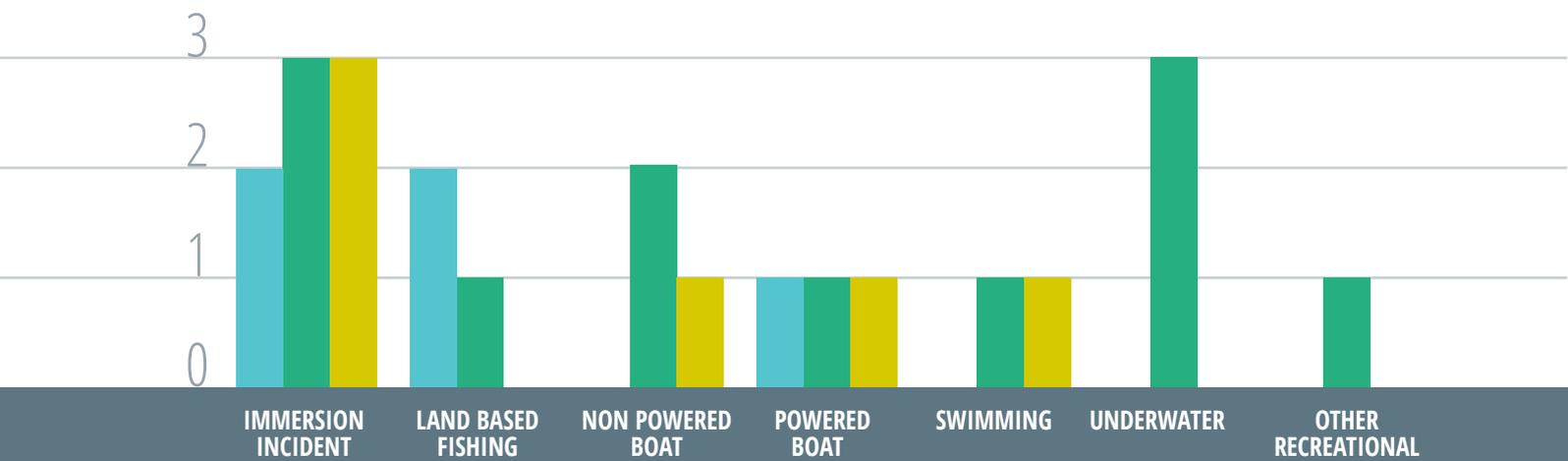
# Māori

There were 23 preventable Māori drowning fatalities across the Bay of Plenty during 2009-18 and while there is an overall downward trend for Māori drownings in the Bay of Plenty, the sub-regional distribution was again skewed towards the Eastern Bay. Around 52% of all Māori drownings fatalities in the Bay of Plenty (12 people) occurred in the Eastern Bay.

When examining the activities that led to Māori drowning fatalities in each of the Bay of Plenty sub-regions some patterns emerge. Boating and Underwater preventable fatalities dominated in Eastern Bay of Plenty while Immersion Incidents accounted for one third of preventable fatalities in Eastern Bay of Plenty and Rotorua Lakes.

## Māori drowning in Bay of Plenty 2009-18 by activity

NUMBER OF FATALITIES



## Māori drowning per 100,000 of population 2009-2018



**5.0**

Eastern Bay of Plenty



**2.4**

Rotorua Lakes

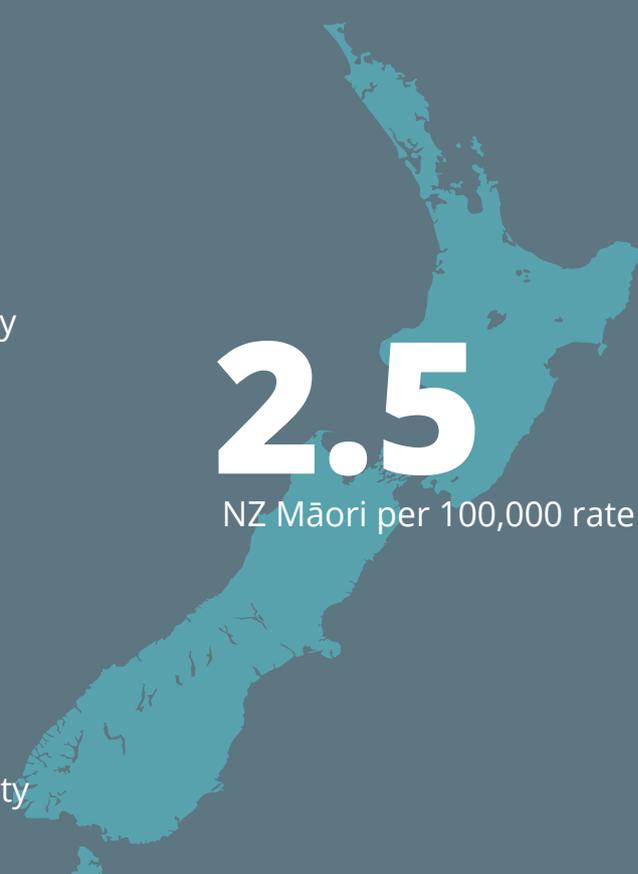


**1.7**

Western Bay of Plenty

**2.5**

NZ Māori per 100,000 rate



# Community engagement

The development of the Bay of Plenty regional water safety strategy has been underpinned by direct engagement with individuals, local and regional stakeholders and organisations across the Bay of Plenty. The aim being to build a consensus view on what the priority actions for water safety in the Bay of Plenty should be.

WSNZ undertook preliminary stakeholder meetings in the Bay of Plenty in late 2017 and early 2018 and found there was general support for the development of a regional water safety strategy. WSNZ also found that that key

fundors in the region would also support an approach like this.

A Project Leadership Group of representatives from regional organisations with interest in water safety has been established to act as the owners of the regional strategy development process. In addition to supporting the development and monitoring the strategy's implementation, the Leadership Group also agreed vision and mission for the strategy to provide high-level, objectives for the region's water safety activity.

The strategy's vision is an aspirational statement about what is to be achieved. It is:

**Preventing drowning in our waters everyday**

The strategy's mission is a statement about how the vision is to be achieved. It is:

**To work collectively to prevent drowning and injury by fostering a greater understanding of, and respect for, water**

These statements have been used to help frame the Project Leadership Group's thinking about priority drowning prevention activities for the Bay of Plenty.



In addition, four main activity areas have been identified to guide the identification of drowning prevention priority work streams and investment priorities in the Bay of Plenty.

These are:

- **Water safety skills development** – Education and training programmes aimed at improving individuals' water safety and swimming skills;
- **Recreational boating safety** – Training and awareness raising initiatives aimed at improving recreational boating safety, (particularly amongst males aged 45+);
- **Fresh water safety** – Education and awareness raising activities aimed at improving water safety in rivers and lakes, particularly amongst those actively participating in fresh water based recreational activities – eg kayaking, white water rafting, bridge jumping; and
- **Beach and ocean safety** – Education and awareness raising activities aimed at improving water safety amongst those actively participating in ocean water based recreational activities – eg rock fishing, diving, surfing.

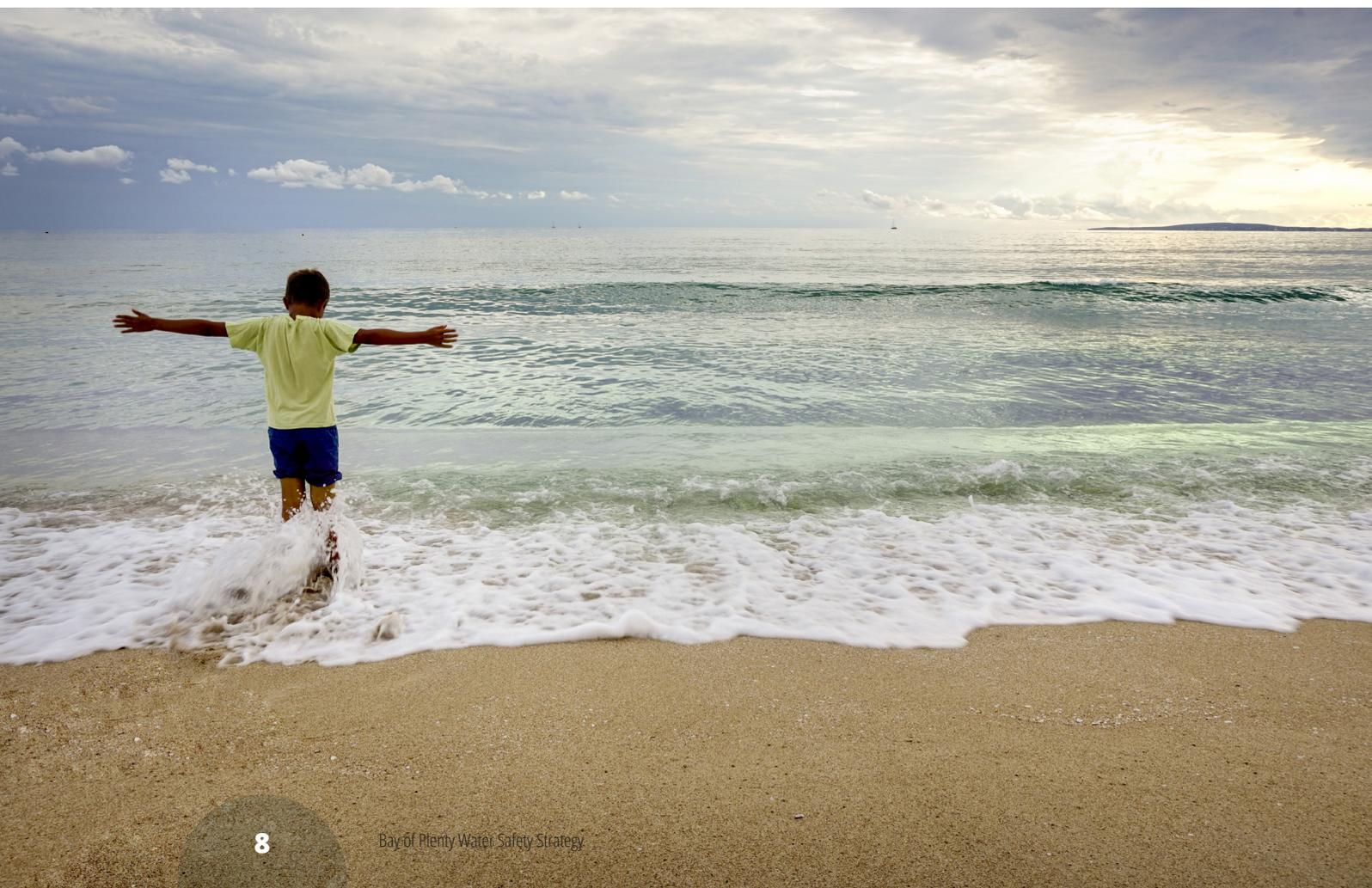
Defining these different activity areas is to ensure the main drowning risks in the Bay of Plenty are covered. Each activity area has different water safety issues/challenges as well as their own unique group of participants/stakeholders (with some overlaps).

## Community engagement

To inform the development of the strategy, community forums were held in each of the sub-regions in May 2018. The locations and dates of these forums were:

<b>Tauranga</b>	Monday May 28th	Classic Flyers Cafe
<b>Rotorua</b>	Tuesday May 29th	Te Puia
<b>Whakatane/ Ohope</b>	Wednesday May 30th	Ohope Beach Resort

The information collected from these forums was collated, analysed and discussed with the Project Leadership Group. To test and validate the results, and to engage with those that may not have been part of the community forum sessions, a series of stakeholder meetings were held in the wider Tauranga area with 34 participants across 16 different sessions.



## Findings

Summarised are the main findings from the community engagement processes that the Project Leadership Group considered when developing priority actions.

- Many submitters noted it was the first time they had been able to engage in a process like this and were pleased to be able to participate, but they also wanted clarity on implementation of the regional strategy, notably on how decisions will be made on priority actions.
- Regulation was seen as being able to achieve beneficial outcomes in recreational boating, particularly regarding:
  - Compulsory wearing of lifejackets or personal flotation devices
  - Alcohol consumption limits for boat skippers
  - Boat registration for powered craft
- Regulatory implementation was an issue, particularly those applying to recreational boating, as many were unaware of what the regulations were that applied (eg Who is a skipper on a jetski?)
- The emergence of new forms of recreational boats (eg SUPs and jetskis) that required no specialist skill or knowledge was seen as creating more risk.
- Safety signage and information on dangers were necessary, and localised site plans should be considered in high-risk areas.
- Involving families/whanau was important for water safety education programmes for the young, and training for parents in water safety as well as having 'children as influencers' of their parents was also suggested.
- Access to water safety skills programmes for all young people was strongly recommended with many supporting its free provision due to cost of lessons being a barrier for many. There were also calls for increased training programmes for learning and behaviourally challenged students.
- There were concerns about the decline of school-based water safety skills training and the closure of school swimming pools.
- The training of children and young people for competence in multiple aquatic environments, including fresh and swift water, was also proposed.
- Promotion of active supervision of the young around water by developing a 'your turn to watch' campaign was proposed.
- Improving the participation of migrants and tauwiwi in aquatics was considered necessary and being able to pass on knowledge in a community/cultural context is important for several groups.
- Ensuring international visitors were made aware of water safety dangers when hiring aquatic equipment, or that they received water safety information from accommodation providers should be promoted.
- More funding is needed to train and employ water safety skills teachers, and to limit lesson class sizes and/or ensure appropriate student-teacher ratios.
- The availability of pools and access to deep water facilities for training was a concern.
- The infrastructure, programmes and services of community maritime rescue and water safety organisations needs to be adequately funded.
- Water safety services need to be expanded in concert with coastal residential development.
- Reaching men with water safety messages is important and needs to be done in a way that is favourable to the male ego.
- Establish a national water safety week prior to Labour weekend to promote water safety.
- Develop a localised, real time website and/or App for water safety information and warnings.
- Encourage retailers of vessels and equipment to provide customer education at point of sale.
- The importance of learning CPR and resuscitation was highlighted, as you may become the medical first responder at a water incident.

# Priority Actions

The Project Leadership Group for the Bay of Plenty Water Safety Strategy reviewed the drowning data and the findings of the community engagement process and identified a range of potential actions for improving water safety.

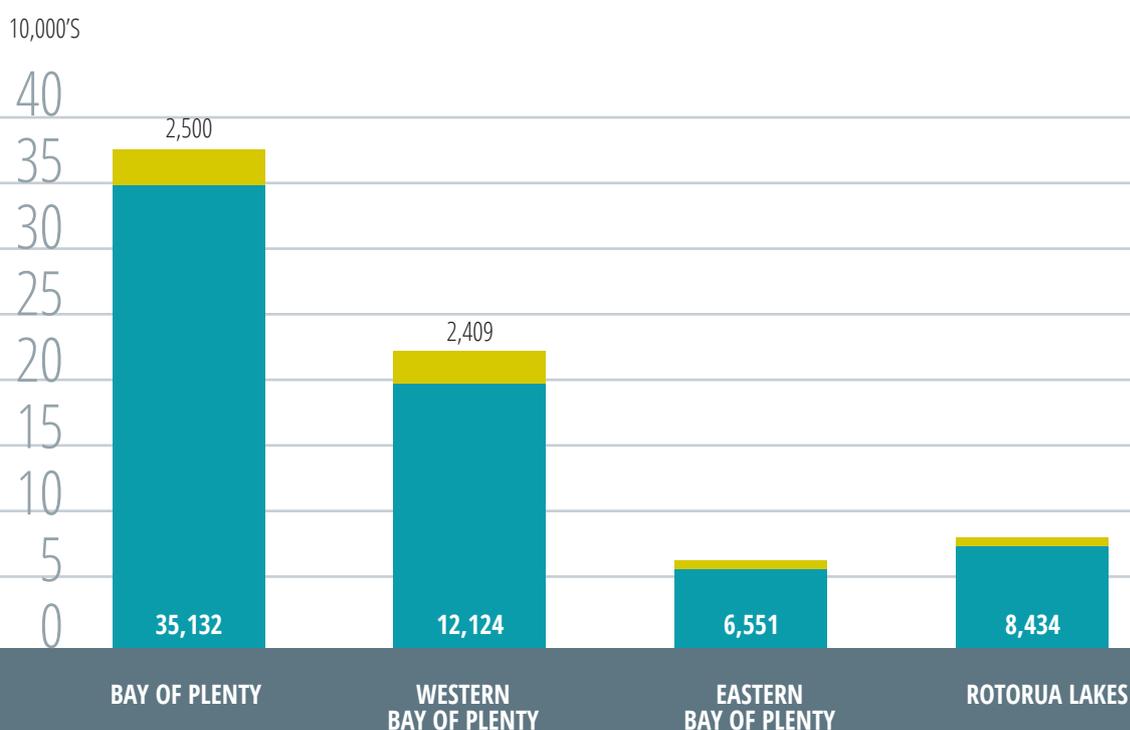
Below is the first tranche of drowning prevention actions for the Bay of Plenty regional water safety strategy in priority order. Under each priority there are key points about their relevance to drowning prevention and the current situation the Bay of Plenty.

## 1 Full rollout of the Water Skills for Life (WSFL) programme to all primary school children.

The WSFL programme is the new national standard for aquatic education in primary schools. It was developed by WSNZ as a way for kids to have fun while they learn water safety. It moves away from a 'learn to swim' approach and seeks to provide children in school years 1-8 with 27 core skills, like getting in and out of water, personal buoyancy and what to do in an emergency. WSFL establishes broad fundamental competencies for life-long water safety.

Participation in the WSFL programme in the Bay of Plenty needs significant improvement. In 2017/18 only 13 of the 141 primary schools in the region were participating in WSFL. This meant that only 2,500 of the 35,100 primary school children in the Bay were getting WSFL lessons (ie 7% of all children).

### Uptake of Water Skills for Life in Bay of Plenty by children in years 1-8 at 30 June 2018 (as recorded in the Water Skills for Life database)



TOTAL STUDENTS



TOTAL ENROLLED FOR WSFL

## **2 All recreational watercraft users qualified and/or compulsory members of Coastguard.**

Coastguard Boating Education (CBE) is the leading provider of boating education in New Zealand and they offer a range of courses for all levels of ability. Their flagship course is the Day Skipper course which provides participants with an introduction to boating and covers boat handling, safety equipment, navigation, tides, weather, rules and regulations, emergencies, and knots. Uptake of CBE courses in Bay of Plenty is low compared to the level of boat ownership, meaning there are many unqualified boat skippers on the water.

Coastguard NZ is a charity that provides a national maritime search and rescue service, including operating a ship-to-shore radio service, providing real-time weather reporting and trip reporting. Becoming a member of Coastguard gives free assistance 24/7 in popular boating areas around the country, like the Bay of Plenty. It is currently estimated that only around 5% of boaties in the Bay of Plenty are members of Coastguard.

## **3 Sustained investment in both current and new activities aimed at preventing attitudes and behaviours that lead to drowning**

It is widely recognised that changing the risk-taking behaviours of men is a key way to reduce preventable drowning rates. Behaviour change is the focus of social marketing (like anti-smoking advertisements) and other activities that increase the knowledge of an issue amongst target groups. Increasing the knowledge of an issue is the first step towards changing attitudes, which, if sustained, in turn leads to behaviour change. Finding the right channel with which to communicate drowning prevention information is a key first step towards effecting behaviour change, as is finding the right message and person to front any campaign.



## 4 All stakeholders involved in water-based activity participating in regular hui/forums

Having a regular forum for those involved in aquatic recreational activity to meet, share, and collaborate is a way of strengthening the collectively ability of the Bay of Plenty community to address water safety issues. The Tauranga Fishing and Boating Show is held in November each year and is an opportunity for the water recreational industry to showcase their products and services, though there is limited focus on water safety. An inaugural Bay of Plenty Water Safety Week was organised and self-funded by some stakeholders in October 2018, but it was a low-key event that needs more support.

## 5 Males targeted with water safety messages that reduce risk-taking behaviour

Males are the primary group at risk to preventable drowning and injury and they would benefit from targeted messages and education programmes to reduce their risk-taking behaviours. In this regard, WSNZ is currently funding the NZ Underwater Association to deliver the Fit, Check & Signal national media campaign for diving and snorkelling that targets males 15-24 and 45+. For the past 2 summers WSNZ has also been running a national social media water safety campaign on Instagram – the Swim Reaper – which is targeted at males aged 15-34. More integrated water safety media campaigns targeting males focused on specific activities or environments in the Bay of Plenty is needed.



## 6 Deployment of internationally recognised signage

Across New Zealand, including the Bay of Plenty, there is a growing migrant population and international visitors who do not fully understand the specific dangers of New Zealand waters and ways of avoiding risk. This is also an issue for other New Zealand residents with limited knowledge of local water conditions. Without adequate warnings about local conditions or specific hazards there is a higher chance of risky behaviour around water.

Improving the quality, quantity and distribution of water safety messages and signage in the Bay of Plenty is seen as a direct way of reducing drowning, particularly in high-risk drowning areas where signage is inadequate or non-existent. Specific promotion of these messages to a range of migrant/ethnic community groups will help ensure a greater awareness and reach.

## 7 A sustained collaborative relationship with Iwi and other relevant Māori stakeholders

Māori are over-represented in preventable drowning fatality statistics in the Bay of Plenty. During 2008-17 Māori were 31% of preventable drownings in the Bay of Plenty, but only 25% of the population. During the same period, one in every eight Māori that drowned in New Zealand drowned in the Bay of Plenty.

In order to reduce Māori drowning rates in the Bay the water safety sector needs to develop stronger relationships with Iwi and Māori organisations. Improving relationships with Māori should lead to better targeting and uptake of drowning prevention initiatives and identifying opportunities to co-produce activities focused on improving Māori water safety outcomes.

WSNZ has just embarked on a refresh of its Māori strategy in conjunction with a group of Māori water safety experts and relationships with Māori is one of the workstreams being pursued. There is potential to have this work inform the development of collaborative relationships with Bay of Plenty Iwi and Māori.



## Priority Number One – Teaching Water Survival Skills to Primary School Children

Nearly one-third of all the preventable drownings in the Bay of Plenty during 2008-17 were of people aged under 25. The priority action for this Strategy is on ensuring children and young people have the knowledge and skills to survive in the water in different environments. Key to this is expanding the Water Skills for Life programme to all primary schools in the Bay of Plenty.

During 2015/16 Sport Bay of Plenty was contracted by WSNZ to undertake a review into Aquatic Survival Skills being delivered to 5-13-year olds in the Bay of Plenty region. and provide recommendations on how programme delivery may be enhanced in the future. The key points of the review were that:

- The majority of aquatic safety skill programmes in the Bay of Plenty are delivered and/or coordinated through schools; and
- The lack of skilled trained teachers is the largest barrier to water survival skills education participation for schools, followed by the costs of the sessions, curriculum conflicts, cost of transport and access to a school pool.

The key recommendations were:

- WSNZ should work with key sector organisations to provide detailed advice to providers on how to deliver the Water Skills for Life water survival competencies framework;
- Investment into water survival competencies professional learning and development (PLD) for teachers should become a key focus for WSNZ and other funders; and

- Funding for reducing barriers for participation – travel and costs of sessions – should continue.

The Project Leadership Group agree with these recommendations and have made the expansion of the Water Skills for Life programme the key priority for the Bay of Plenty Water Safety Strategy. In this regard, this Strategy aims to ensure:

- all children enrolled in Years 1-8 in the Bay of Plenty get a minimum of 8 to 10 WSFL lessons per annum throughout their primary school tenure;
- Bay of Plenty youth have the foundational water skills which will open pathways to other aquatic activities and sports that will help to retain and continue to develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes and behaviours;
- Teachers in the Bay of Plenty are provided with professional development that enables them to deliver water safety education to an acceptable and consistent standard; and
- Parents and caregivers in the Bay of Plenty are made aware of the importance of developing water survival skills and how this differs from traditional swimming skills.

This expansion of WSFL will require effective programme management across the Bay of Plenty and substantial investment in delivery, as well as engagement with schools and potential WSFL providers. More information on the barriers to greater uptake of WSFL is also needed, notably on access to pools and suitable transport to pools, and payment of WSFL teacher fees.



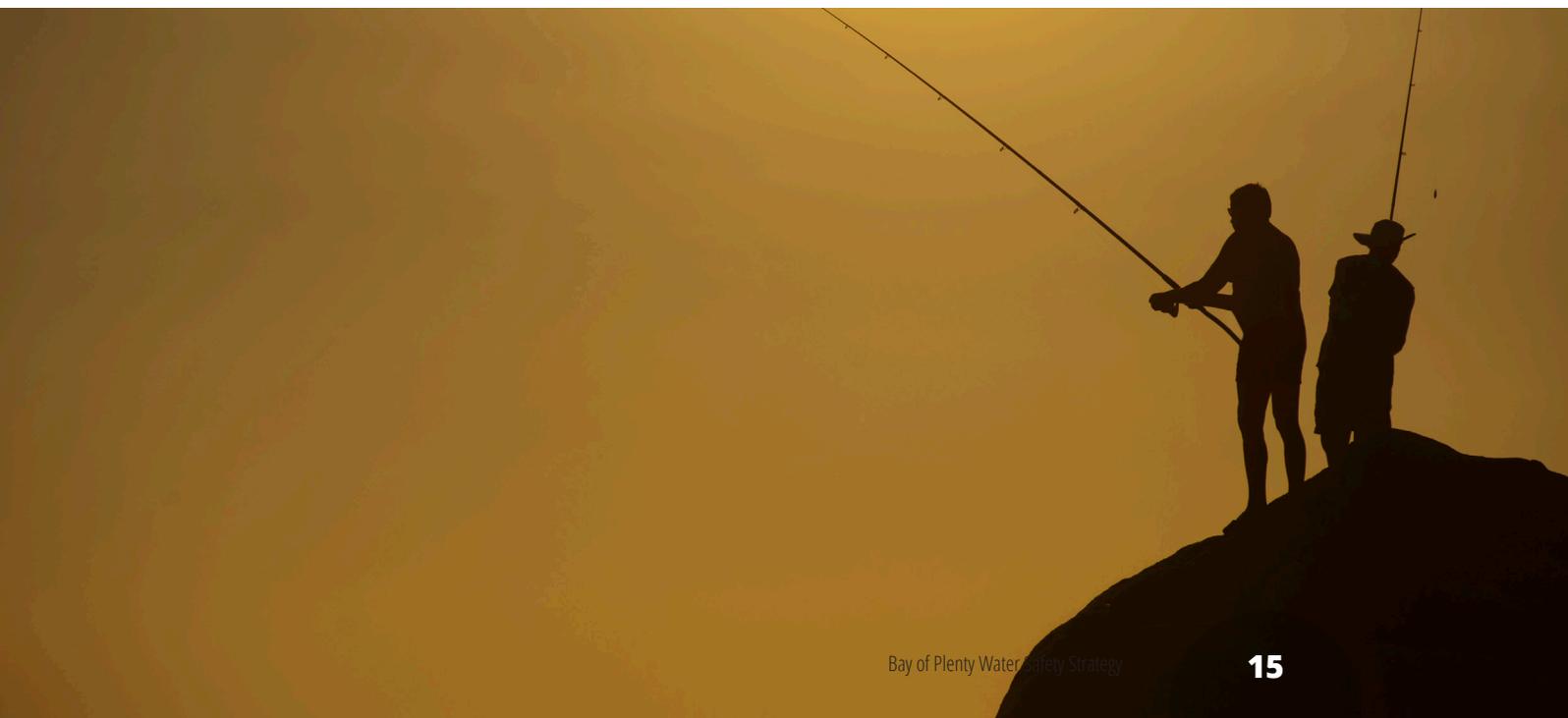
# Implementing the Strategy

It is recognised that more needs to be done to identify suitable interventions for, and providers to deliver, the priority actions across the Bay of Plenty. Work is also needed to secure funding from organisations with an interest in improving drowning prevention outcomes in the Bay of Plenty for these interventions.

To this end, overall implementation of this strategy is to be led by Sport Bay of Plenty. They will recruit an implementation manager to coordinate, facilitate and review the delivery of programmes and initiatives for the Strategy's priority actions. More detailed implementation plans for the strategy will be developed by Sport Bay of Plenty in consultation with the Project Leadership Group.

There will also be a need for the implementation manager to liaise with the Project Leadership Group on the ongoing implementation of the priority actions. The Project leadership Group will provide governance function to the Strategy, including signing off interventions as complete and instigating new actions.

Water Safety New Zealand will retain its national leadership role with regards to the overall management of the WSFL programme but will be looking for a partner to manage the delivery of WSFL across the Bay of Plenty. WSNZ will also continue to fundraise for specific initiatives in this strategy in conjunction with the implementation manager, and it will participate in the Project Leadership Group.



## Appendix 1

# Bay of Plenty Water Safety Strategy Project Leadership Group

Shirley Baker (Chair)	Sport Bay of Plenty
Chris Emmett	Surf-Lifesaving New Zealand – Eastern Region
Mark Hemingway	NZ Sports Fishing Council
Jonty Mills	Water Safety New Zealand (Project sponsor)
Reon Tuanau	Te Runanga o Ngai Te Rangi Iwi Trust
Cr Kevin Winters	Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Coastguard Rotorua

**Definition:** Drowning is the respiratory impairment of lungs due to submersion / immersion in liquid. It can be fatal (mortality) or non-fatal (morbidity). (International Life Saving Federation 2002)

**Preventable fatalities** include recreational and non-recreational drowning deaths. They do not include those fatalities classified as ‘other’ (arising as a result of road or air vehicle accidents, homicide, suicide or of unknown origin) as these are not considered applicable to the prevention and rescue efforts of the water safety sector.

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