

SAFE

Underlying problem

Because our beaches continue to see unnecessary drownings, how might we raise awareness of surf safety in the Illawarra so that we improve safety for ocean users, leading to a safer seaside in the year 2023 and beyond?

Relevance

Clearly our group has successfully attempted to improve water safety within the Illawarra, through the myriad of actions we have taken. When first planning our project, we identified the three key stakeholders (EAL/D, CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) and undereducated individuals) and produced solutions to improve water safety for these groups.

EAL/D groups

After much research our group identified tourists and EAL/D groups to be one of the most at risk demographics concerning ocean dangers, with many unable to read important safety signage. This led our group to focus on promoting water safety to EAL/D groups within our school community. Furthermore, our group also created a website with information regarding water safety that can be translated into many different languages such as Japanese, Arabic, and Chinese.

CALD communities

Within NSW alone males drown at a rate four times that of females, with CALD communities being identified as an at-risk group. This information shocked our team and led us to contact the Swim Brothers organisation who aim “to provide affordable and tailored holistic swimming and ocean safety programs to males to create generational change”.¹ After much communication with Swim Brothers, it became clear that operations like these cannot operate without appropriate funds and that many men come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and cannot afford such programs. This encouraged our group to fundraise money for their operation to give these men the opportunity to learn proper water safety, while still raising awareness of water safety within our school community. The first fundraising event was an Australian beach Christmas themed Candygram with candy canes exchanged, each showing surf safety tips. The second event was a water safety themed bake sale, with every purchase accompanied by our SAFE brochures containing surf safety information. In total these initiatives raised over \$800 for Swim Brothers and raised awareness within our school community.

Undereducated individuals



Australian rip currents are one of the greatest, and most common, hazards on Australian beaches and yet one in three Australians cannot successfully identify a rip thus, highlighting the alarming number of Australian citizens who do not understand their home beaches. In response, our group decided to present at our school assemblies to educate a mass audience. We found this valuable as it allowed us to

¹ <https://www.swimbrothers.com.au/>

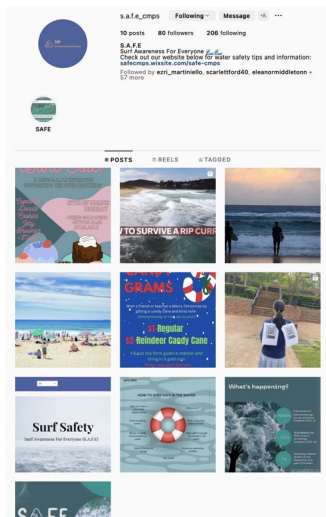
gauge how much our school community already knew regarding water safety (through engaging quizzes) and allowed us to modify our actions going forward to cater directly to those unfamiliar with common water safety practices. Furthermore, our team regularly visited the local Seaside Markets at Kiama, Wollongong and Thirroul where we voiced our concerns about water safety and informed visitors on the implementation of safe water practices. We successfully shared water safety information with many market visitors, through the use of brochures, interactive games and quiz questions.

Organisation

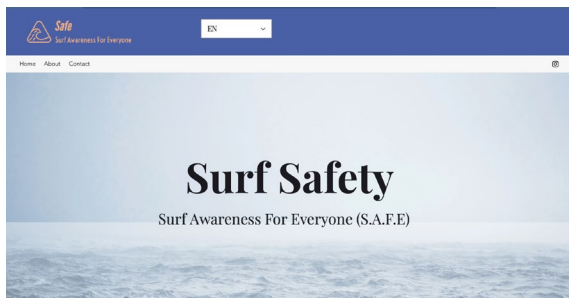
Our team has four members: Claire, Amelie, Ting-Ting and Charlotte.

Group Members	Contribution
<p>Claire</p>	<p>Claire created water safety brochures for distribution at local seaside markets. The brochures contained relevant water safety information such as how to respond when caught in a rip and how to identify strong/unsafe water currents. Claire also created the SAFE logo used as the profile picture for our social media accounts and contributed greatly to the final report. Claire is already heavily involved in the Surf Lifesaving community, and consequently was responsible for contacting Wanda Surf Lifesaving Club about their culturally diverse volunteer lifesavers (drawing our attention to Swim Brothers). She organised and conducted an interview with local council and volunteer lifeguard Griffin Spicknall. Claire also contributed to the Candygrams initiative with their organisation and then distribution around school. She made Ocean Jelly for the bake sale and illustrated the children's book "Rory's Day Out" on her iPad app 'Procreate'. Together Claire, Ting-Ting and Amelie have presented at school assemblies, and to EAL/D students in order to raise awareness of water safety.</p>  <p>Water safety brochure</p>  <p>Team Logo</p>
<p>Amelie</p>	<p>Amelie creates content for our social media posts, and promotes our website, brochures, fundraisers, and QR codes through Instagram. She created our shared email account</p>

(safe.cmps112@gmail.com) so S.A.F.E can directly contact outside organisations to discuss surf awareness and water safety. Amelie designed and created the S.A.F.E. website, which informs the public on safety tips at the beach. This website is available on phone or laptop, and is multilingual, so a wider range of the public can obtain and interpret information. Amelie laminated the QR codes, after taking advice from Nationals, and distributed them amongst the team to display at local beaches. Amelie helped create the presentation for EAL/D students, and presented to them. She distributed brochures at Kiama markets, getting involved directly with the community. Amelie helped organise the “Candygrams” fundraising, by organising the orders so they could be distributed efficiently. Further, she spoke at the school's assembly with Ting-Ting and Claire, to raise awareness about flags coming down and how to stay safe. She contributed to the water themed bake sale fundraising by cooking “Teddy Beach Day Brownies” and arranging the donation to Swim Brothers through the school's Finance office. She co-wrote “Rory's Day at the Beach”, contributed significantly to the reports and video, and designed display items.





Instagram Page



Website



Amelie, Claire, and Ting-Ting presenting at assembly.

	 <p>Amelie's brownies at the bake sale</p>
<p>Ting-Ting</p>	<p>Ting-Ting created content to post on social media accounts and researched relevant statistics on water safety to incorporate into brochures and social media posts. She posted many of the laminated QR codes on beaches around the Illawarra. Ting-Ting spoke at assembly on multiple occasions with Amelie and Claire, promoting both fundraising events supporting Swim Brothers, and informing the school community on relevant water issues and tips. She presented with Claire and Amelie to the EAL/D students at school, informing a key demographic on water dangers unbeknownst to them. She was a key organiser in Candygrams and the water themed Bake Sale, designing posters for both, baking “Coastal Cookies” and distributing materials and Candygrams. Ting-Ting edited the promotional video, and contributed to the final report.</p>  <p>Posters for fundraising events</p>
<p>Charlotte</p>	<p>Charlotte contributed to the final report and contacted Wollongong Mayor Gordon Bradberry expressing concern about the number of deaths of rock fishermen which could have been prevented if they had been wearing lifejackets. She wrote to him about tightening rules, fines and incentivising lifejackets. Charlotte coordinated an interview with Forensic Pathologist Bernard l’Ons to gain insight into the main at-risk demographic.</p>

Resources

Media

Our team used social media to communicate with the wider community on various social media accounts e.g. Instagram and online websites. We found these platforms offered easy communication of information and statistics with the community about staying safe in the water and what to do if caught in a strong/unsafe current. These media accounts proved extremely useful with one of our social media reels receiving over 2,800 views and a link to our website being published as a QR code and displayed

across the Illawarra coastline. We also used an online graphic design platform known as Canva to create visually appealing brochures and posters to post on social media.

Organisations

Our team contacted Wanda Surf Life-saving Club and their associates to discuss management of their surf lifesaving programs and to talk about their club's culturally diverse lifesaver group. Additionally, to understand how organisations are working to assist swimmers, we spoke to the founders of 'Swim Brothers', an organisation that hosts ocean safety programs. This was beneficial as we formed a close relationship with an organisation with similar aims to assist at-risk demographics.

Experts

Our team spoke to a range of experts in the medical and surf life-saving field including Bernard l'Ons, a Forensic Pathologist who has investigated many drowning victims, particularly rock fishermen. We also spoke to Griffin Spicknall, a Warilla lifeguard who reinforced the at-risk demographic and provided insight into the types of rescues Illawarra lifeguards most conduct. SAFE worked closely with Omar Mahmoud and Feroz Sattar, Swim Brothers instructors and organisers. This contact highlighted the importance and effectiveness of culturally appropriate water safety programs within our local area. Furthermore, Claire met famous *Bondi Rescue* lifeguard Anthony "Harries" Carroll to discuss everyday issues at Australia's number one busiest beach and the significance of surf safety information becoming more accessible to all.

Community Leaders

Our team wrote to community leader Lord Mayor Gordon Bradberry to discuss pre-existing lifejacket mandates and how these regulations are enforced on the seaside community. He provided additional information about rock fishermen deaths and moves to prevent these deaths in the future.

Community Impact

Since 1907 when the first Surf Lifesaving club was built at Bondi, surf lifesaving clubs have been deemed essential to maintaining safe beaches resulting in the establishment of a following 128 surf clubs in NSW. However, it has become increasingly evident that these surf clubs can't single-handedly manage water safety across the 2,137km of NSW coastline and consequently we have brainstormed and created possible solutions to help raise surf awareness across our local Illawarra region and beyond. We have raised awareness in the local community by creating a brochure, translated into seven different languages, with relevant water safety facts. We attended several local seaside markets to distribute the brochures reaching an estimated 1000 visitors with whom we interacted successfully sharing our knowledge on surf safety and awareness. Our team has also enforced the importance of water safety by creating various social media accounts with our Instagram page receiving over 2,800 views and over 100 shares. Furthermore, our online website has been published as QR codes and distributed across the Illawarra coastline, providing accessible surf safety information from beaches ranging from Kiama to Thirroul. Additionally, our group has successfully shared our project with the EAL/D community within our school and educated them on the importance of surf safety.

Finally, through fundraising for Swim Brothers our team has raised awareness of water safety within our school community of 700 students, and funded 35 swim safety programs. Our team has spread our message of water safety to over 3,000 people within the Illawarra and will continue to share our message.

Community involvement

We found our project included three key communities:

EAL/D Community

SAFE worked directly with our school's EAL/D students raising awareness and teaching water safety, as we noticed many international students struggle with beach and other water-based activities. Their teacher, Mr Johanssen, endorsed the value in helping them understand water safety procedures, which they shared with their family and friends, thus having broader effects across the Illawarra EAL/D community.

CALD Community

Our team collaborated with many members of the CALD community, building strong connections with organisations like Swim Brothers, particularly Omar Mahmoud and Feroz Sattar. Through this relationship our group learned the importance of culturally appropriate swim instructors and water safety programs. During multiple school fundraisers SAFE raised over \$800 for Swim Brothers providing 35 swim/surf safety programs thus, strengthening our project connection with the CALD community as well as our team's relationship with Swim Brothers.

Undereducated Locals

Despite focusing on raising awareness of members of the EAL/D and CALD communities, we found that many Illawarra locals were unaware of the many dangers of their local beaches. Consequently, we sought to build relationships with members of our community and engage with them so they can understand beach safety. We regularly visit community markets in the sunny seaside suburbs of Kiama, Wollongong and Thirroul distributing flyers to shoppers and engaging in conversation about water safety.

We have had the greatest influence and received the most feedback by engaging with our peers at school. We have spoken multiple times at weekly assemblies and organised ocean themed bake sales to raise funds for Swim Brothers. In December, we organised a 'Candygram' fundraiser, where students could purchase candy canes and send festive messages on water safety themed cards. As Australian beaches are most populated around Christmas, we believed it was appropriate to remind our peers to be vigilant and safe before the school year ended and holidays began. Students were extremely engaged with this initiative, with over 200 cards purchased and over \$250 being raised for Swim Brothers.

While competing in the National Australian Surf Life Saving Championships, Claire met Anthony Carroll, star of the hit reality show *Bondi Rescue*. Carroll, being a seasoned lifeguard, spoke of the importance of

water safety education, especially for tourists visiting Australian beaches for the first time and offered his support for SAFE.

In July last year, we began running a SAFE Instagram account where we regularly post updates and short messages about water conditions. Our most successful post to date is a short skit promoting QR codes to our multilingual website which received over 2,800 views. The video received multiple likes, comments and shares from people worldwide, taking our message of safety to a global audience.

Effectiveness of Action Plan

The effectiveness of each action taken was measured using the following table that evaluates community and Area of Concern impact from our initiatives.

Action taken	Impact on communities	Relation to area of concern
Visiting Seaside Markets	Moderate impact An effective use of time to raise awareness amongst the broader community. However, no guarantee that people are receptive to this information.	Moderate relation Did not specifically target particular at-risk groups EAL/D, CALD or undereducated individuals although such groups were present.
Collaboration with Swim Brothers	High impact Communicating with Swim Brothers was a great way to discuss implementing more culturally appropriate water safety initiatives in our project. Our collaboration had a direct impact on the CALD community, raising over \$800 for water safety education and swimming lessons.	High relation Collaboration with Swim Brothers contained high relevance to our target CALD community.
Fundraising for Swim Brothers	Strong impact Our group hosted multiple fundraising events for the Swim Brothers organisation. This initiative had many positive effects on both the CALD community and our school community, with funds raised going to Swim Brothers, and water safety awareness raised within the school community.	High relation This initiative directly explores our AoC, with both the CALD community and undereducated individuals benefiting.

<p>Translation of water safety signage</p>	<p>Strong impact Specifically effected EAL/D communities with translated lifesaving water signage, therefore making water safety information more accessible to all.</p>	<p>High relation The translation of water safety signage removed language barriers that once contributed to many tourists and other EAL/D fatal drownings within the Illawarra.</p>
<p>Promoting water safety to EAL/D groups</p>	<p>Moderate impact Our water safety promotion to EAL/D students in our senior school educated them and they shared with their family and friends, thus impacting a broader group of the EAL/D community.</p>	<p>Moderate relation By promoting water safety to EAL/D groups within our school community we directly addressed one of the three key stakeholders. However, this initiative only affects a small part of the Illawarra’s EAL/D group.</p>
<p>Social media</p>	<p>Moderate impact While reaching high numbers of views not all views necessarily came from the Illawarra. Nevertheless, our Instagram page was valuable and contains much value with the future sustainability of our project.</p>	<p>Moderate relation Our social media account aimed to convey our water safety messages on a commonly used and accessible media platform allowing water safe practices to be spread on a mass scale, however, did not target any particular at-risk demographic. Because of the nonspecific nature of our followers the initiative only contains moderate relation to the Illawarra.</p>
<p>Website and QR codes</p>	<p>High impact Our website was displayed on the local coastline via QR codes providing the Illawarra with accessible water safety information. This initiative demonstrated a high impact on the community as it was accessible at a variety of beaches (ranging 50kms from Kiama to Thirroul) and provided a variety of languages (including Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese)</p>	<p>High relation The creation of the online website and QR codes related highly to our area of concern, addressing both the EAL/D community and the broader Illawarra coastal region.</p>

	highlighting the website’s strong impact, on both the EAL/D community and broader Illawarra.	
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Adaptation of Action Plan

Seaside Markets: We repeatedly visited local markets to distribute our water safety brochures, and later adapted our approach to obtain better receptiveness and engagement from audiences. In this, we engaged with tourists through games and prizes, whilst also equipping them with knowledge of water dangers. This saw a far greater outcome in our impact on informing seaside-goers.

Contacting Swim Brothers: We contacted Wanda Surf Life-saving Club hoping to collaborate with their CALD community and to gain insight into the accidents they witnessed. However, receiving no response after multiple attempts, we contacted Swim Brothers, a close associate with Wanda. We have since maintained an ongoing relationship with their organisation.

Partnering with local Fishing Stores: We spoke to owners at local fishing stores and proposed the lowering of lifejacket prices but were denied. Instead, our team worked with the fishing stores to actively promote and display our SAFE brochures to a broader audience.

QR Codes: Our team initially intended to create only our multilingual website, but then realised this wouldn’t be accessible to all people, particularly at beaches where the information is most useful. In response, we created QR codes leading to our website, which were posted around various beaches and locations. However, after visiting the beaches on a later date, we realised that the paper QR codes had been subject to damaging weather and no longer worked. To combat this, we re-printed, laminated and posted each QR code across a wider range of beaches.

Sustainability of Project impact

The S.A.F.E project has impacted the Illawarra community significantly; however, the project has many strategies in place to ensure it will continuously raise awareness amongst the community without our direct involvement, especially utilizing Duke of Edinburgh participants. Our social media is designed to be accessible to the whole community. The Instagram account will continue to gain followers, inform the community about water safety, promote our website and the accessibility of our QR codes and brochures. Our multilingual brochures will continually be distributed amongst water-users through the fishing stores, informing them on safety tips and precautions in the oceans. The multilingual aspect will ensure that everyone in the Illawarra community can easily obtain and interpret the information, lowering the risk of water-based dangers. Furthermore, our QR codes placed strategically across Illawarra beaches, with some in Sydney, will ensure that the public has ongoing access to our website, continually raising water safety awareness proving extremely beneficial as the community can freely access information, helping reduce the impact of drownings and water-based injuries in the Illawarra. Additionally, our book “Rory’s Day at the Beach” is in our school library and available at local markets, fishing stores and to Swim Brothers participants. This is extremely important as it can be accessed

without our involvement whilst spreading water safety awareness. Thus, S.A.F.E will continue to raise awareness and inform the Illawarra community and beyond about water safety, due to our freely accessible Instagram page, website, and book. This will impact the entirety of the community, through reduction in undereducated water-users, and further a reduction in drownings and water-based injuries.

Reflection

Growing up in Australia, water safety has been an extremely important aspect of our lives. However, for many people, staying safe at the beach is not a lesson learned at a young age. Each time a drowning or surf injury was reported on the news, we were shocked that preventative steps were not taken to ensure that each person who visits our beaches is aware of the dangers and risks. We began this project because we felt that S.A.F.E. could make a real difference within our local community. Before we embarked on this journey, we questioned whether four fifteen-year-old girls could really make a difference on such a dauntingly relevant issue. Like many other journeys we had highs and lows, with the lows teaching us resilience and problem solving. One low was critiquing our interaction with market visitors to share our message of water safety. We felt like no matter what we said or did there was an overwhelming number of uninterested and undereducated individuals who didn't want to listen to our concerns. However, after multiple market visits, our team was able to begin conversations and engage people's interests. Additionally, we had technological difficulties with our website and QR system, which taught us how to problem solve and communicate, both valuable skills we apply outside CmPS. Alternatively, our group experienced many highs such as teaching the EAL/D students at our school. This was by far one of the most rewarding experiences, with the shocked looks on their faces when we told them about the dangers of the ocean reminding us of the importance of education. In hindsight, our group could have improved on communication and organisation perhaps by implementing a timeline earlier in the project and clearly establishing each member's roles and responsibilities. Despite challenges, we worked well as a team to overcome obstacles and are extremely satisfied with our end result. Overall, our team extremely enjoyed this project and have seen a tremendous impact and improvement in our community's safety, which we plan to continue in future.