

Research Report - September 2008



Craig Mills
Drowning Prevention Coordinator
WaterSafe Auckland Inc.

Dr. Kevin Moran
Principal Lecturer, Faculty of Education
University of Auckland

Do Alcohol and Aquatics Mix?

The Context of Youth Alcohol Consumption and Aquatic Recreation



Preface and Acknowledgements

This is the final report of a collaborative project between WaterSafe Auckland Inc (WAI), Alcohol Healthwatch (AWH), Auckland City Communities Living Injury Free (CLIF), Auckland City Community Action on Youth and Drugs (CAYAD) and Youhtown entitled *Do Alcohol and Aquatic Mix? The context of youth alcohol consumption and aquatic recreation*.

Our thanks to Teresa Stanley and Jan Taylor, WAI; Roanne Govender, AHW; Amanda Sutherland, CLIF; Mike Ikilei and Ana Jacob, CAYAD; and Jewelz, Youhtown for all their enthusiasm, support and assistance in the project. Thanks also to Dr Kevin Moran, University of Auckland for his assistance and guidance throughout the project and his peer review of this report.

Finally, special thanks to the participants who were forthcoming in sharing their experience, beliefs and attitudes around this issue. Without your support this project would not have been possible.



Report authored and produced by:

Craig Mills,

Drowning Prevention Coordinator
WaterSafe Auckland Inc.

Recommended Reference

Moran, K., and Mills, C. (2008). *Do Alcohol and Aquatics Mix? The context of youth alcohol consumption and aquatic recreation*. Auckland: WaterSafe Auckland Inc.

Further enquires about the report should be made to:

WaterSafe Auckland Inc.

PO Box 8163, Symonds Street

Auckland, 1150

Further copies of the report are available in PDF format on the WaterSafe Auckland website at:

www.watersafe.org.nz

Executive Summary

Background

WaterSafe Auckland Inc (WAI), Alcohol Healthwatch (AHW), Auckland City Communities Living Injury Free (CLIF), Auckland City Community Action on Youth and Drugs (CAYAD) and Youthtown jointly conducted a research project examining the context in which youth alcohol consumption and aquatic recreation occurs given the recent rise in alcohol related youth drownings. The purposes of this project were threefold: 1) to ascertain the personal experiences and observations of youth with regards to the use of alcohol, in on and around water; 2) to examine the contexts, both social and situational, in which alcohol consumption and aquatic activity occurred; 3) To identify at risk behaviours and make recommendations to promote safe practice among youth around water and when engaged in aquatic recreation.

Methods

A series of focus group interviews were undertaken using the Converse Model of Youth Engagement (Community Action on Youth and Drugs, 2005). The focus group sessions were run with three groups: a male after school community programme, a female after school community programme and a single sex female educational college. Participants were recruited from the above three locations in an attempt to achieve a diverse group of participants based on age, gender, type of school, geographic location and ethnicity. Twenty-one participants (eight males and thirteen females) took part in the study with participants' ages ranging from 15 to 17.

Key Findings

Participants alcohol consumption and aquatic activity

- Eighteen of the twenty one participants (86%; seven male and eleven females) recalled a personal experience where they had consumed alcohol near an aquatic location
- Five of the eight males (63%), and only four of the thirteen females (31%) had consumed alcohol and then undertaken a form of aquatic recreation

Situational context of consumption:

- The majority of participants (71%; $n = 15$) in this study did not view beaches as a site for normal youth alcohol consumption, instead they were viewed solely for aquatic recreation activities
- The small minority of participants (28%; $n = 6$) who did view beaches as sites for alcohol consumption conversely didn't view these locations as sites for aquatic recreation
- A large proportion of youth alcohol consumption occurs within close proximity to the beach, in the surrounding areas (grassy banks, parks). This close proximity to the water has the potential for youth to engage in spontaneous aquatic activity whilst intoxicated

Spontaneous events

- Because youth alcohol consumption occurred within close proximity to aquatic environments, several spontaneous aquatic recreational activities were identified
- ‘Skinny-dipping’ was the most cited spontaneous event, with both males and females undertaking this practice
- Males reported a high number of occasions where individuals had jumped from height into unknown depths of water, without thought to the potential chances of spinal injury

Special events

- Attendance at special events, such as public music festivals and parties near beaches during New Year’s celebrations were common sites of youth alcohol consumption and aquatic activity
- The close proximity of these events to water resulted in intoxicated youth entering water, thereby highlighting the potential drowning risk these events pose
- With numerous special events occurring in coastal towns, the close proximity of the events to water precipitated spontaneous aquatic events with youth having little regard for their safety

Pool parties

- Pool parties emerged as a common site for both male and female alcohol consumption and aquatic activity
- The potential for serious injuries to occur, in particular spinal injuries when combining alcohol and aquatic activity was highlighted with two serious injuries being detailed
- The importance of promoting correct parent/caregiver supervisory behaviour was highlighted by some respondents ($n = 4$) and raised the issue of parental responsibility for supervising pool parties being comprised by their own intoxication

Gender differences

- Male and female respondents offered different safety strategies when consuming alcohol near water.
- Females were more likely to use active safety strategies such as advising their parents of their intended activities and staying together as a group and relying on each other to minimize any unsafe behaviours
- Males didn’t appear to employ any specific safety strategies and were more reliant on others such as lifeguards making the environment safer for their risk taking behaviours
- Females acknowledged the risks involved with alcohol consumption and aquatic activity and learnt from their experiences acknowledging they wouldn’t repeat such behaviours
- Males, whilst acknowledging the risk, found such events humorous and attempted to justify any unsafe behaviours by playing down the risk associated with the situation
- Males were more likely to have witnessed others consuming alcohol and engaging in aquatic behaviour, and were more likely than females to engage in such activities

Social Supply

- Because participants were under the legal alcohol purchase age, participants had to source their alcohol through other people. Older siblings, friends and parents were the most-often cited sources for youth to obtain their alcohol
- A lack of stringent application of age limitations in purchasing alcohol was reported in Auckland City. This resulted in the reporting of alcohol purchase at alcohol outlets despite the respondents being under the legal alcohol purchase age
- More stringent regulation of alcohol purchase was reported by respondents in coastal towns. In some instances youth reported using older friends and siblings and even strangers to purchase alcohol in these locations

Recommendations

In light of these findings, several recommendations are made

To WaterSafe Auckland, injury prevention and other water safety organizations:

- Highlight the dangers of mixing alcohol consumption and aquatic activity amongst youth and make it a key priority area for action
- Investigate possible educational campaigns, especially those focused on young adult males, that promote self safety rather than a reliance on others
- Educate parents about correct supervisory behaviour where alcohol is involved, and the importance of parents promoting safe youth behaviours around water

To Local Territorial Authorities:

- Investigate procedures in place around alcohol free public events
- Investigate current risk management practices implemented at public events near water
- Investigate potential safer alternatives for underage youth during the New Year period celebrations

Alcohol Healthwatch and other alcohol advisory groups:

- Advocate for stronger monitoring and safety policies at public events, especially alcohol free events and events near water
- Advocate for stronger enforcement of legal purchase age identification

Table of Contents

- Preface and Acknowledgements i
- Executive Summary ii

- Table of Contents.....v

- 1. Background 1**
- 2. Rationale, Aims and Outcomes of the Study 2**
 - 2.1 Rationale 2
 - 2.2 Aims 2
 - 2.3 Outcomes 2
- 3. Methods 3**
- 4. Results 4**
 - 4.1 Participants, Alcohol Consumption and Aquatic Activity..... 4
 - 4.2 Situational Context of Alcohol Consumption 4
 - 4.3 Spontaneous Events 5
 - 4.4 Special Events..... 6
 - 4.5 Pool Parties..... 7
 - 4.6 Gender Differences 8
 - 4.7 Social Supply..... 9
- 5. Recommendations14**
 - To WaterSafe Auckland and other safety organizations: 14
 - To Local Territorial Authorities: 14
 - Alcohol Healthwatch and other alcohol advisory groups: 14
- 6. References15**
- 7. Appendices i**
 - Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet ii
 - Appendix 2: Parent Information Sheet iii
 - Appendix 3: Principal/Executive Director Information Sheet iv

1. Background

Given the accessibility to numerous types of aquatic environments (such as beaches, inland water ways and community swimming pools) it is little wonder that aquatic participation is the number one leisure activity for young people aged five to seventeen years (SPARC Facts, 2001), with over 98.3% of students participating in swimming activity at least once a year (Moran, 2003).

Unfortunately, high youth participation in aquatic recreation often has negative consequences. A New Zealand report detailing the circumstances surrounding drowning in peoples under 25 years from 1980 to 2002 reported a total of 769 unintentional youth (15 – 24 years) drownings (Child Youth and Mortality Review Committee, 2005). Adolescents have been widely recognized to be at greater risk of drowning as a consequence of their indulgence in at-risk behaviours (Smith & Brenner, 1995; Moran 2008a), and as a result of a defiant attitude towards safety practices (Morrongiello et al, 2008).

A significant risk factor contributing to youth drowning is alcohol consumption. Of the 769 unintentional drowning deaths in youth aged 15 – 24 years from 1980 - 2002, 21.6% of drownings involved alcohol consumption (Child Youth and Mortality Review Committee, 2005). The latest youth drowning statistics show that the number of unintentional youth drowning fatalities associated with alcohol consumption is increasing, with 26% of drownings in 2002 - 2006 involving alcohol (Water Safety New Zealand, 2008). The high prevalence of drownings associated with alcohol consumption is not surprising given that a recent study of 9,699 New Zealand school students revealed that by the age of 15 years, almost 90% (males 88%; females 87.7%) of students have consumed alcohol and more than a third (males 41.4%, females 38.5%) have undertaken an episode of binge drinking (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003).

Further highlighting the prevalence of alcohol consumption and aquatic activity, a national youth water safety survey of 2,200 Year 11 students reported that one quarter (24%) had consumed alcohol before swimming in the previous year, one fifth (21%) had mixed alcohol with other forms of aquatic recreation, and over a quarter (28.6%) had witnessed friends consume alcohol in aquatic environments (Moran, 2003). Gulliver and Begg (2005) reported similar results in their study of 21 year old students in Dunedin, of which one fifth of the males had consumed alcohol prior to aquatic activity. Alcohol consumption and unintentional drowning death is not limited to New Zealand, with overseas studies mirroring New Zealand results in identifying alcohol consumption as a risk factor in drowning, especially amongst youth (see Orłowski, 1987; Smith & Brenner, 1995) and during boating (see Howland, Hingson, Mangione, Bell, & Bak 1996).

Moran (2006) has expressed concern at the clustering of unsafe attitudes and behaviours surrounding alcohol use and aquatic activity, especially amongst males and has argued that these behaviours and attitudes perhaps explain the over-representation of males in drowning statistics both in New Zealand and world-wide. Howland et al. (1996) found that the association between drinking and other risk-taking behaviours was strongly gender-orientated, with males who had consumed alcohol during their last aquatic activity more likely to swim without lifeguard supervision (males 37%, females 26%), or to swim alone (males 15%, females 14%). Furthermore, Levy et al. (2004) reported that those who consumed alcohol during the day were 3.5 times more likely to suffer a submersion injury, and that the risk was especially high for underage drinkers aged 15 – 20 years.

2. Rationale, Aims and Outcomes of the Study

2.1 Rationale

While New Zealand and overseas studies give a clear indication that alcohol consumption is an identified risk-factor in unintentional drowning, little is known about the context in which youth alcohol consumption occurs in, on or around aquatic environments. Whilst other identified drowning issues such as land-based/rock fishing and pre-school infant drownings are in decline, youth drowning where alcohol is involved is rising, warranting immediate attention. Moran (2006) has also suggested that further qualitative and in-depth study of youth views on alcohol use and aquatic recreation may provide strong explanatory evidence as to why youth in the 15 – 24 year age group are over-represented in drowning statistics and why some youth may appear to be at greater risk of drowning than others.

2.2 Aims

The specific aims of the project were:

1. To ascertain the personal experiences and observations of youth with regards to the use of alcohol in, on and around water;
2. To examine the contexts, both social and situational, in which alcohol consumption and aquatic activity occurred, and
3. To identify at risk behaviours and make recommendations to promote safe practice among youth around water and when engaged in aquatic recreation.

2.3 Outcomes

The specific outcomes of this study are:

1. To gain a greater understanding and insight into the contexts in which youth alcohol consumption and aquatic activity occur;
2. To identify particular at risk activities and environments;
3. To make recommendations and suggest further strategies to enhance the safety of youth around aquatic environments;
4. To form a working group of participants to develop a youth based intervention to target the specific issues raised in the report, and
5. To pilot a research method and process that may be implied in future large scale studies.

3. Methods

Participants in the study were recruited from three different institutions; an all girls group from a community after-school programme, an all male group from the same community after-school programme and female students from a private single-sex school. Participants were familiar with each other and in some instances had pre-existing friendships. Using such participants is an appropriate method where the goal is to elicit conversations around sensitive issues (Leask, Hawe & Chapman, 2001). The participants ranged in age from 15 to 18 (Year 11 to Year 13). Participants from the three different institutions reflected a diversity of type based on gender, type of school, geographic location and ethnicity.

Focus group discussions were used to generate qualitative data that enabled a deeper understanding of the context surrounding youth alcohol consumption and aquatic recreation. The focus group discussions followed the Converse Model of Youth Engagement (Community Action on Youth and Drugs, 2005). The Converse Model uses two focus group sessions to develop discussion around a particular topic. The first session introduces participants to the topic and ends with participants instructed to bring a particular story concerning the topic back to the next session. The second session allows participants to share their stories and for subsequent discussion to occur.

Three focus group interviews, each with between six and eight participants, took place between March 2008 and May 2008. The use of focus groups reflects a natural way for youth to communicate, and have been shown to be appropriate for learning about youth experiences and behaviours (Tolich & Davidson, 1999; Krueger & Casey, 2000). The focus group discussions lasted between 45 and 80 minutes, and were conducted by trained facilitators, gender specific to the group. The facilitators used open ended questions and phrased questions in language the participants would understand. The focus group discussions were audio-taped by way of a dictaphone for later transcription

The audio-tapes from each of the three focus group discussions were transcribed and the information was broken down thematically to identify common themes and critical issues between the three groups. These common themes included; 1) the situational context of consumption, 2) special events, 3) pool parties, 4) spontaneous events, 5) gender differences and 6) social supply of alcohol.

Each common theme identified in the analysis is reported with verbatim comments from participants to illustrate each of the six main themes. Fictitious participant names are included in the report followed by their verbatim comments provided in italics.

Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to participation. The study received ethical approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (Reference Number 2007/313, approved 20th September, 2007).

4. Results

The results are presented in seven related subsections that include:

- 4.1 Participants, alcohol consumption and aquatic activity
- 4.2 Situational context of consumption
- 4.3 Special events
- 4.4 Pool parties
- 4.5 Spontaneous events
- 4.6 Gender differences
- 4.7 Social supply of alcohol

4.1 Participants, Alcohol Consumption and Aquatic Activity

Twenty-one participants took part in the study ($n = 8$ males, $n = 13$ females). Participants ranged in age from 15 to 18, and were students in Years 11 to 13. There was a mixture of participants from single-sex girls educational colleges and co-educational colleges. Participant's self-identified with three major ethnic groups, NZ European, Māori and Pacific Islander.

Eighteen of the twenty-one participants (86%; seven males and eleven females) recalled a personal experience where they had consumed alcohol near an aquatic location. Only one male participant (14%) and two female participants (18%) did not have a personal experience to recall during the focus groups.

Of the seven males who identified a personal experience, five (71%) had consumed alcohol and then undertaken aquatic activity. In comparison, only four females (36%) who identified a personal experience of consuming alcohol near an aquatic location ventured into the water.

4.2 Situational Context of Alcohol Consumption

A common theme from each of the focus groups was that aquatic environments, in particular beaches, are not a common site of youth alcohol consumption. Many (71%; $n = 15$) identified beaches solely as a site for aquatic recreation and didn't associate these locations as a site for alcohol consumption: *"if you go to all the trouble, like going all the way out of Piha on a nice summers day and you get drunk ... I just don't see the point in doing that"* (Sarah).

A small minority of participants (29%; $n = 6$) did consume alcohol on beaches in direct proximity to the water. Interestingly, the participants who identified they had consumed alcohol at beaches, didn't view beaches as a site for aquatic recreation: *"Id just rather drink and not be fused swimming ... I was preoccupied drinking. I was like nah, I'd just rather sit here and drink"* (Tegan). Further reinforcing the view that beaches were a site for either drinking or swimming but not both, one participant commented: *"drinking at the beach makes it more fun. As long as it's safe. You know like, as long as you're not running into the water drowning"* (Richie).

It appears that the youth in this study associated beaches with either aquatic recreation or alcohol consumption. While the majority of participants (71%; $n = 15$) didn't identify beaches as a common site for youth alcohol consumption, it does appear that for some youth alcohol consumption does occur in the vicinity of open water. Consistently throughout the discussions, participants reported that it was the proximity to water which was an important consideration in their safety. When asked if they thought drinking near water was a safe practice, typical participant responses were *"I think it depends on how near the water you are. If you're drinking at Mission Bay, then there's a barrier between the grass and the beach. I was drinking on the grass at Mission Bay ... and I guess I thought that was alright"* (Tim) and *"drinking at the beach, it's sorta alright because you're on the sand, you've just gotta watch out for the water"* (Paul).

It would appear participants in the study did not associate alcohol consumption with general aquatic activity.

4.3 Spontaneous Events

Participants in this study identified that while drinking may not commonly occur in direct proximity to aquatic environments, a common theme which emerged from discussions was spontaneous unintentional aquatic recreation whilst intoxicated. One particular activity was reported in several instances, this event being 'skinny-dipping'.

'Skinny-dipping' was a common spontaneous event that both males and females had partaken in while intoxicated. Most often these events happened as a result of a *"spur of the moment decision"* and occurred when participants found themselves near the water: *"When we got back onto shore they [friends] decided that they would like to go skinny dipping, and so they started running off into the ocean and I had to run off after them and try and save them otherwise they would have sunk and drown"* (Keith). It appears that the majority of the occasions when participants had gone skinny-dipping were completely spontaneous, unintended and with little regard to their possible consequences of their behaviour: *"now I think about it, it was the stupidest thing I've ever done. But at the time it was just a whole lot of fun"* (Sophie).

Another spontaneous event that was discussed was jumping from heights into unknown depths of water. Such events were only discussed by males and were attributed to friends *"bringing out the dare devil in themselves"* (Ben); *"they [friends] were saying "why don't I jump in?" so they jumped and so I had to jump in and take them to safety ... if we had to swim any further they probably would have drowned"* (Ben). Again due to the spontaneous nature of these events, it doesn't appear that participants or witnesses have much regard for the potential consequences of jumping into unknown depths of water. One participant who was witness to such an event commented: *"I was sitting thinking should I stop them ... it would have been funny"* (Jamie).

Only one incident involving alcohol consumption and recreational boating activity was recalled in this study: *"they [my friends] parked up for the night and got really drunk and decided to move the boat ... he [my friend] was standing on the backboard and got pushed off and his foot got stuck in the motor"* (Jen). While this incident was described as *"a stupid move"* the actions of the friends were condoned by the participant because *"they got the most soberish person to move it [the yacht]... he was an actual racing sailor ... so they were quite good at handling the yacht"* (Jen).

4.4 Special Events

Attendance at special events such as public musical festivals and parties near the beach during New Year's celebrations, were common sites of youth alcohol consumption near aquatic environments.

Auckland City Council's Jazz and Blues Streetfest, a strictly drug and alcohol free event held in Mission Bay was identified as a popular special event where youth alcohol consumption and aquatic activity occurred. Mission Bay is a popular Auckland destination with a long beachfront promenade surrounded by a park and a popular beach overlooking the Hauraki Gulf.

Despite being advertised as a "strictly drug and alcohol free event" thirteen (62%; seven females and six males) of the twenty-one participants had attended the festival and had consumed alcohol. Participants described the festival as being "*a place where underage kids go and get drunk*" (John), "*it's the young place to drink*" (Hayley) and an event were "*people turn up drunk and completely smashed*" (Dan).

Given the close proximity of the event to the Mission Bay beach and the apparent intoxicated state of many of the youth patrons, it is unsurprising that participants were able to recall many instances of intoxicated youth entering the water: "*[a girl] ran into the water and got completely soaked and you know, she looked like she was drowning but she was having the time of her life in there. People even ran up and tried to help her...*" (Dan). The effects of alcohol on individual's judgment and decision making also makes special events near aquatic locations extremely dangerous with the possibility of serious harm occurring: "*there was this one chick and she was so drunk. She was on top of the fountain and her clothes were saturated and see through ... I thought she was going to die because I honestly thought she was going to try and jump off and land in the water*" (Chloe).

The influence of adult drinking in public areas was highlighted as a possible reason why youth engage in such risky behaviour at the festival even though its an alcohol free event: "*What is really stupid about Jazz Fest is, across the road from where it's held there was adults, having dinner and drinking wine ... so like the betrayal of older people drinking effects youths obviously... they [youths] thought it was cool to drink at the beach, but nah, its not cool.*" (Jamie). On the evidence of these responses it would appear that youth expect adults to behave safely and without intoxication around water.

Another popular site of youth alcohol consumption near aquatic environments is during New Year's celebrations at coastal towns throughout New Zealand. The youth in this study were able to discuss at length numerous events they had witnessed at beaches throughout the Coromandel Peninsula, a popular holiday location for Aucklanders.

As discussed previously, a large majority of instances occurred in close vicinity to open water, most commonly in the grassy surrounding areas. Discussions within the three groups revealed that youth congregate near the beach, in particular near the surf lifesaving club "*because that's where everyone goes ... and everywhere else is boring*" (Elizabeth). The opportunity to congregate with large bands of youth, mitigated by the lack of parental control and supervision, makes these events near water extremely popular with young adult youth. Being within such close vicinity to the

water and consuming alcohol may exacerbate the chances of youth engaging in spontaneous aquatic activities such as those which have been discussed previously.

The close proximity to the water at 'beach parties', coupled with alcohol consumption, led to several participants describing instances where individuals had ventured into the water and gotten into trouble. One female participant described an incident where *"there was a group of guys and they were absolutely trashed and they decided that they were going to swim across [to the sand dunes], and we couldn't stop them. They got over there but they couldn't get back because two of them had comma'd out over there... they were only 16,17. It's crazy"* (Natalie).

The effect that alcohol has on judgment and decision making was brought up in discussions between the three groups and provides some insight into the high occurrence of spontaneous and unintentional aquatic behaviour in youth when intoxicated. Participants described how *"when you drink you lose your inhibitions and you want to go swimming, because you think you can"* (Anna); *"When you're drinking you think you're invincible ... you think everything's cool no matter what it is"* (Jen). It appears that while many youth are aware of the consequences of consuming alcohol and aquatic activity, alcohol influences their decision making to such an extent that these consequences become redundant.

4.5 Pool Parties

Pool parties emerged as a common aquatic environment where alcohol consumption and aquatic activity occurred. Each of the three groups recalled specific instances where alcohol consumption led to individuals entering the pool.

Both the male and female groups recalled incidents of serious injuries that had occurred as a result of people consuming alcohol and then venturing into the pool. Most commonly these injuries resulted due to individuals trying to perform back-flips and bombs into the pool: *"people were doing the best drunk people flips you would ever see, but this one dude he back flipped and smacked his head, broke his nose and passed out in the water"* (John).

Not all injuries were the result of intentional aquatic recreation however. Drinking within the vicinity of the pool was also identified as a significant risk factor leading to injury due to the wet and slippery surfaces leading to unintentional immersion in the pool: *"he was dancing and trying to walk along the edge of the pool and he fell face forward into the water. Now he's paralyzed and in a wheelchair for the rest of his life"* (Richie).

While both males and females recalled experiences of alcohol consumption and aquatic recreation in the pool, females appeared to be less likely to participate in such behaviour: *"two guys went swimming [in the pool], both were intoxicated and stupidly we were all standing around watching ... [we told them] that's stupid it's freezing cold ... but boys are kind of persuasive so we just let them go"* (Hayley).

Alarming, each of the pool parties recalled by the participants, even those where serious injuries occurred, had had adult supervisors. However, the effectiveness of the supervision provided by adults, in most instances parents, was diminished due to the parental supervisors themselves consuming alcohol and in some instances becoming intoxicated. When asked the question "was

there any adult supervision at the party” one participant responded *“My older sister [was supervising]. Unfortunately she went to the bar for most of the night...she was highly intoxicated, highly”* (Chloe), with another participant recalling *“they [the parents] were kinda on the drink themselves”* (Ben). The tendency of adult supervisors to drink alcohol, and in some instances become intoxicated, is of particular concern given the recall of serious injuries that had occurred, and the negative behaviour modeling witnessed by youth: *“Parents should lead by example ... if kids see what parents are doing then they follow by example”* (Tim).

4.6 Gender Differences

Strong gender differences emerged in regard to how many participants had a personal experience of consuming alcohol and participating in aquatic recreation. Five of the eight male participants (63%) recalled a personal experience where they had consumed alcohol and undertaken aquatic recreation. In comparison, only four of the thirteen female participants (31%) had a personal experience.

Another obvious gender difference was the safety strategies that males and females put in place to ensure their safety when consuming alcohol near aquatic environments. Females appeared to favour more active strategies (such as advising their parents of their intended activities) to ensure their safety, whereas males seemed reliant on passive strategies (such as having increased lifeguard patrols) to ensure their safety.

Females often discussed how they informed their parents of the events that would be occurring that night; where they would be going and that alcohol would be involved. Many females saw that passing this information onto their parents would ensure they would be safe: *“because if they [your parents] don’t know that you’re drinking, they’re totally oblivious to what you’re doing. That’s why I think its best to have an open relationship with your parents about it. Because then you know you’re safe”* (Elizabeth). While not all females passed on information to their parents that they would be drinking, all females told their parents where they were going and believed this would keep them safe as well *“you just tell them your going down to the beach to kick it with your mates, they don’t really know alcohol is involved”* (Erin). Females also appeared to stay together in large groups, and to rely on friends to stop themselves getting into potentially dangerous situations: *“she was trying to [get in the water] but her friend was making sure she didn’t swim ... he was quite smart really”* (Sophie). Reinforcing female’s use of active strategies to reduce the risk of harm, one participant discussed how she limited her alcohol intake when drinking in the bath to ensure her safety: *“I only drink one beer. [That way] I won’t overdose myself. I might slip in the bath and drown myself.”* (Amanda).

In comparison, males didn’t appear to employ any specific strategies to keep themselves safe and appeared more reliant on, and advocated strongly for more passive strategies to keep the environment they consume alcohol in safer. The most common strategy males thought would keep them safer was to have lifeguards at parties to ensure people’s safety. One participant discussed how you could *“plan to have like security guards or something there showing where the boundaries are ... and you could have lifeguards there just in case someone drowns when they’re drunk”* (Paul). Males also believed that having a designated sober person to save people in case of an emergency

would be an adequate safety measure: *“drinking at the beach is okay at 2 or 3 in the morning so long as you have someone sober that has the ability to pull people out of the water”* (Ben). In comparison females didn't view this as an effective way of ensuring their safety saying *“you might need a few more people than one to help ... and everyone's too drunk to help them”* (Emma). Males also discussed at length making the boating environment safer for the consumption of alcohol by having higher railing systems to prevent people falling over board: *“[have your boat] heavily guarded with rails so there's absolutely no possibility of falling”* (Keith). Males also discussed the benefits of water safety training indicating that such skills would help during an immersion incident with one participant commenting that *“people need to know survival skills, not just learn to swim, but survival skills”* (Dan).

When recalling their experiences females more readily acknowledged their indiscretions and the risk they put themselves in. Typical female responses were *“now I think about it [skinny dipping at night], it was the stupidest thing I've ever done”* (Anna), and *“I just didn't really realize the consequences”* (Nicky). Females also discussed how they would learn from the experience and not repeat the behaviour again: *“at the time it was just a whole lot of fun, but I'd never do it again”* (Anna), and *“if you think about what's gonna happen when your drinking [near beaches], then it is better if you don't actually go outside in the first place”* (Erin)

In comparison, males were not as willing to acknowledge that their behaviour had put themselves in danger and often found such experiences humorous: *“I thought it would have been funny but stink at the same time... I would have laughed at first”* (Jamie). Males also went at lengths to justify their behaviour was safe with two participants arguing *“drinking at the beach, it's sorta alright because you're on the sand”* (John) and *“I believe that drinking at the beach is ok at 2 or 3 in the morning so long as you have someone sober...”* (Ben).

4.7 Social Supply

As the participants in this study were under eighteen years of age, legally they were not able to purchase alcohol. However, discussions between the groups highlights the ease of obtaining alcohol through parents, older siblings, friends, other adults or through alcohol stores which do not have stringent age identification processes in place.

Discussions revealed an apparent ease for 'under-age' youth to purchase alcohol within Auckland City. Despite concentrated efforts by alcohol advisory organisations and the New Zealand Police to enforce mandatory age identification checks, it appears many alcohol stores are not abiding by this law with one participant commenting: *“it's easy to get alcohol without I.D ... its too easy now”* (Hayley). Comments like these were common and reflect the apparent ease at which youth appear to be able to purchase alcohol illegally within Auckland City.

In comparison to larger centres, it appears that small coastal towns, especially those within the Coromandel Peninsula, are far more stringent in enforcing identification checks. Several participants commented on the more stringent enforcement of legal purchase age in small coastal towns: *“Around Auckland is easy, but around places where there's a lot of young people, and around New Years they're a lot more strict”* (Natalie), *“Like Whangamata [a small coastal town] around New*

Year's, because there's so many young people, they're too strict, like you can't get in with a fake I.D. or anything" (Jen).

Where youth were not able to purchase alcohol themselves, older siblings, friends or parents were the most common source of their alcohol supply. Older siblings or friends of a legal alcohol purchase age emerged as a common source of alcohol supply for the underage participants in this study, with one participant commenting *"My friend's brother was 21... so he gave us the alcohol"* (Paul). Sourcing alcohol through strangers was another means of obtaining alcohol, with the practice seemingly common amongst youth within this study: *"you can just stand outside the alcohol store and wait for the right dodgy or nice person to come along and they'll go get it for you. It's really simple like that"* (Sophie).

Interestingly, several of the participants commented on how they perceived adults contributed to a normalized drinking culture in New Zealand society. Several participants responded that witnessing adults consume alcohol could lead to a normalizing of this behaviour: *"Its like the phrase monkey see monkey do"* (Tim) and *"Parents should lead by example, because if kids see what the parents are doing then they follow ... So if the parents are drinking alcohol then the child thinks its okay to drink alcohol"* (Ben).

5. Discussion

This study is a first to provide a qualitative insight into the situational contexts of youth alcohol consumption and aquatic activity. Discussions from the groups show that whilst youth acknowledge the risk of consuming alcohol and participating in aquatic recreation, a large proportion of youth, both male and female are participating in this potentially dangerous behaviour.

The observation in this study that males were more likely than females to have consumed alcohol and undertaken aquatic recreation is not surprising given Moran (2006) has identified males as more prone to exhibiting risky behaviours in aquatic environments, especially in regard to alcohol consumption where more males (36.3%) than females (19.9%) had used alcohol or drugs during aquatic recreation. In this study, five out of the eight males (63%) and four of the thirteen females (31%) had consumed alcohol and gone into an aquatic environment. This figure may be explained by the higher rate of aquatic participation, older sample population and greater ease of access to aquatic environments in Auckland compared to Moran's (2006) national survey, but indicates the severity of this problem for both males and females and highlights a heightened risk of drowning to a large proportion of youth.

That the majority of youth in this study did not view beaches as a site for alcohol consumption was surprising as it was expected that the ease of accessibility to Auckland's beaches would have made them a key site for underage youth drinking. However, the majority of youth did indicate that they consumed alcohol in close vicinity of the beach, in most instances the surrounding areas and grounds, which perhaps explains the high instances of spontaneous aquatic activity while intoxicated in this study.

The high instances of "spur of the moment" decisions to go 'skinny-dipping' during night is also concerning and poses a significant drowning risk. The effect of alcohol on the body's thermoregulatory system is well noted with alcohol creating a false sense of warmth, reducing an individual's awareness of the onset of hypothermia (Driscoll, Harrison & Steenkamp, 2004). With youth consuming alcohol and venturing into the water at night with little or no layers of clothing on, the chances of hypothermia occurring are exacerbated.

Males also reported a number of occasions where alcohol consumption has led to individuals jumping from bridges into unknown depths of water. This risk-taking behaviour is not uncommon amongst males with Moran (2008b) reporting that 40% of males have divided head-first into an unknown depth of water, and over 70% of the 58 cases of spinal cord injury between 1989 and 2004 occurring in males (Moran, 2008b). The influence of alcohol appears to be a contributing factor in these injuries, with 15 – 45% of diving related spinal injuries involving alcohol consumption. While it is unclear whether the participants dived head-first in this study, jumping from heights into unknown depths of water poses a significant risk of spinal cord injury. Serious spinal cord injury as a result of aquatic participation is a significant problem with 11% of all of Australia's annual spinal cord injuries occurring as a result of aquatic recreation, in particular, diving into unknown depths of water (Blitvich, McElroy & Blanksby, 2000)

The high number of instances highlighted in this study surrounding aquatic activity while intoxicated during special events, presents significant safety concerns for youth. Given the popularity of beaches, or their surrounding locations as sites for public events, and their close

proximity to water, it is concerning that many youth view these events as sites to consume alcohol. In particular, Auckland City's Jazz and Blues Streetfest is associated as a place for youth to drink despite the event being drug and alcohol free. The close proximity of these events to water often leads to spontaneous aquatic activity while intoxicated presenting a significant drowning risk. Coupled with this spontaneous aquatic activity is an apparent lack of safety precautions implemented by the organizers to prevent intoxicated individuals entering the water. Future public events need to ensure that risk management practices and safety precautions are taken into account highlighting the potential drowning risk posed by nearby aquatic environments.

Not surprisingly, participants identified that large numbers of youth congregate within close proximity to the beach during New Year's celebrations. Given the close proximity of the water, coupled with alcohol consumption and the risk-taking behaviour of males in particular, the large number of spontaneous activities indicated in this study was not surprising. These spontaneous events pose a potential drowning risk given youth are in most instances highly intoxicated, swimming in unfamiliar bodies of water and swimming outside of patrolled areas. Given that large numbers of youth congregate at such events and that alcohol consumption appears to be the social norm, the influence of peers on mediating safe behaviour or encouraging reckless behaviour at such events can not be underestimated. Moran (2008c) highlighted that for males, friends are the most important source of water safety understanding, and the second most important influence for females. Friends therefore have the potential ability to prevent risk-taking behaviour, but conversely, also have the potential to promote and condone risk-taking behaviour. Comments from participants in this study would tend to support the importance of friends in safe social behaviour.

The emergence of pool parties as a significant site of youth alcohol consumption and aquatic activity is particularly concerning given the potential for serious injury, in particular, spinal injuries. As indicated earlier, males are at a significantly greater risk of spinal cord injury and alcohol consumption appears to be a contributing factor to these injuries. While the influence of alcohol and risky diving behaviour is well acknowledged, this study also showed the effects alcohol has on making the immediate pool environment extremely dangerous. The slippery surfaces within close vicinity of the pool create a dangerous environment for intoxicated youth given the effects alcohol has on co-ordination, balance and proprioception, heightening the possibility of accidental immersion leading to injury as was indicated in this study. Further efforts to restrict alcohol consumption within the pool environment need to be intensified, especially among male youth.

The unsatisfactory supervisory behaviour of parents in relation to pool parties is also of particular concern and warrants attention. Each pool party discussed in this study had parental or caregiver supervision, however, the supervisors themselves were intoxicated and therefore their supervisory capabilities and capabilities in case of an emergency are severely diminished. The future impacts of such negative behaviour role modeling cannot be underestimated as Moran (2006) has identified families/parents as being of significant influence on youth understanding of water safety. Moran (2008c) noted that family was the most important water safety influence for females (44.3%) and the second most important for males (29.5%). Parents therefore play a significant role in the understanding and future water safety practices of youth, and negative water safety practices exhibited by parents is likely to have a detrimental influence on youth practices both in the present and in the future. Current efforts promoting correct supervisory behaviour need to be persisted with as well as highlighting the potential negative consequences of unsafe parental behaviours.

The gender differences reported in this study are not surprising and reinforce the gender differences in water safety practices identified by Moran (2006). That females are more likely to engage in active safety strategies such as advising their parents of their behaviours, staying together as a group and limiting alcohol consumption to ensure their safety, may help explain the lower female youth drowning toll. In comparison, males do not appear to utilize any safety strategies and seem reliant on others to make the environment safer for their risk behaviour. This reliance on others to ensure their safety therefore distancing their own personal responsibilities, coupled with a risk-taking attitude, may explain the high male youth drowning toll. With male youth identifying their peers as their most important source of water safety information, promoting active safety strategies through peer-related learning strategies may present an opportunity for safer aquatic practices within this group.

Whereas females acknowledged alcohol consumption and aquatic activity as a dangerous practice, and often vowed never to repeat the practice again after a personal experience, males, while acknowledging the risk, didn't appear likely to change their behaviour and in some instances went at lengths to justify it. This 'attitude of defiance' shows that while males in particular have an awareness of the risks involved, their attitudes over-ride their cognitive awareness of the risk, leading to risk-taking behaviours (Morrongiello et al., 2008). Knowledge alone may not be sufficient to illicit behaviour change, therefore water safety programmes need to target attitudinal change and promote positive attitudes towards active safety strategies.

The results from this study reflect the findings from previous research indicating that the social supply of alcohol to minors is an important issue that needs to be addressed. Kalafatellis, McMillen and Palmer (2003) identified that for youth aged 14 – 17, parents (49%) and friends over 18 (29%) were the most common sources of alcohol supply for minors. Similarly parents and friends over 18 were common sources of alcohol supply for the youth in this study. Despite the participants in this study being under the legal alcohol purchase age of eighteen, they highlighted the ease of obtaining alcohol through various means, in particular through parents, older siblings, friends and even strangers.

6. Recommendations

In light of the findings and discussion above, the following recommendations are made:

To WaterSafe Auckland and other safety organizations:

- Prioritize youth alcohol consumption and aquatic activity as a key priority area for action
- Investigate possible educational campaigns, especially aimed at young males promoting active strategies promoting self-safety not a reliance on others
- Educate parents about correct aquatic supervisory behaviour where alcohol is involved, and the importance of parents in youth understanding of water safety behaviours

To Local Territorial Authorities:

- Investigate procedures in place around alcohol free public events
- Investigate current risk management practices implemented at public events near water
- Investigate potential safer alternatives for underage youth during the New Years period celebrations

Alcohol Healthwatch and other alcohol advisory groups:

- Advocate for stronger monitoring and safety policies at public events, especially alcohol free events and events near water
- Advocate for stronger enforcement of legal purchase age identification

References

- Adolescent Health Research Group (2003). *New Zealand Youth: A profile of their health and wellbeing*. Auckland: University of Auckland.
- Blitvich, J.D., McElroy, G.K., & Blanksby, B.A. (2000). Risk reduction in diving and spinal cord injury: Teaching safe diving skills. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 3 (2), 120 – 131.
- Child Youth and Mortality Review Committee, (2005). *Circumstances surrounding drowning in those under 25 in New Zealand (1980 – 2002)*. Wellington: CYMR & Water Safety New Zealand.
- Community Action on Youth and Drugs (2005). *Converse Model of Youth Engagement*. Auckland: Auckland City Council.
- Driscoll, T.R., Harrison, J.A., & Steenkamp, M. (2004). Review of the role of alcohol in drowning associated with recreational aquatic activity. *Injury Prevention*, 10, 107 – 113.
- Gulliver, P., & Begg, D. (2005). Usual water-related behaviour and ‘near-drowning’ incidents in young adults. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 29 (3), 238 – 243.
- Howland J., Hingson, R., Mangione, T.W., Bell, N., & Bak, S. (1996). Why are most drowning victims men? Sex differences in aquatic skills and behaviours. *American Journal of Public Health*, 86, 93 – 96.
- Kalafatelis, E., McMillen, P., & Palmer, S. (2003). *Youth and alcohol: 2003 ALAC youth drinking monitor*. Wellington: Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand.
- Krueger, R.A., & Casey, M.A. (2000). *Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.
- Leask, J., Haw, P., & Chapman, S. (2001). Focus group composition between natural and constructed groups. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 25 (2), 152 – 154.
- Levy, D.T., Mallone, S., Miller, T.R., Smith, G.S., Spicer, R.S., Romano, E.O., & Fisher, D.A. (2004). Alcohol involvement in burn, submersion, spinal cord and brain injuries. *Medical Science Monitor*, 10 (1), 17 – 24.
- Moran, K. (2003). *New Zealand Youth Water Safety Survey*. Wellington: Water Safety New Zealand.
- Moran, K. (2006). *Re-thinking the drowning risk: The role of water safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in the aquatic recreation of New Zealand youth*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Palmerston North: Massey University.
- Moran, K. (2008a). Youth aquatic recreation: The pleasures and pitfalls of an aquatic lifestyle. In Noemie Beaulieu (Ed.), *Physical activity and children: New research* (pp.35-64). New York: Nova Science Publications.
- Moran, K. (2008b). Taking the plunge: diving risk practices and perceptions of New Zealand youth. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 19 (1), 68 – 71.

- Moran, K. (2008c). Parents, pals or pedagogues? How youth learn about water safety. *Physical Educator – Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 44 (1), 15 – 18.
- Morrongiello, B.A., Cusimano, M., Orr, E., Barton, B., Chipman, M., Tyberg, J., Kulkarini, A., Khanlou, N., Masi, R., & Bekele, T. (2008). School-age children safety attitudes, cognitions, knowledge, and injury experiences: how do these relate to their safety practices? *Injury Prevention*, 14, 176 – 179.
- Orlowski, J.P. (1987). Adolescent drownings: Swimming, boating, diving and scuba incidents. *Pediatric Annals*, 17 (2), 125 – 132.
- Smith, G.S., & Brenner, R. (1995). The changing risks of drowning for adolescents in the United States and effective control strategies. *Adolescent Medicine: The State of the Art Reviews*, 6 (2), 153 – 169.
- Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (2001). *SPARC Facts 1997 – 2001*. Wellington: SPARC.
- Tolich, M., & Davidson, C. (1999). *Starting Fieldwork: An introduction to qualitative research in New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Water Safety New Zealand (2008). *New Zealand Drowning Statistics. In DrownBase (Data from 2002 -2006)*. Wellington: WSNZ.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet



THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

To Kura Akorangi o Tamaki Makaurau
INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8895
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street
Auckland 1035, New Zealand

Do alcohol and aquatics mix? Youth perceptions of alcohol use in aquatic recreation

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to take part in this project

What Is It About?

You are invited to take part in two small group discussions about alcohol use and aquatic recreation. While research shows that some youth use alcohol in the aquatic environment, little is known about what youth think about mixing alcohol with aquatic activity.

Why Are You Doing It?

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of youth perceptions of the use of alcohol during aquatic activity or when in an aquatic environment.

Who Is Being Sought?

The type of participants being sought are youth aged 16 years and over, who take part in aquatic recreation. To be eligible to take part you must meet the above stated selection criteria. The discussion groups are limited to a maximum of 12 participants.

So What Will I Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to be involved in two small group discussions on the use of alcohol in the aquatic environment. The group discussions will be no longer than 45 minutes. The data collected will be electronically recorded and transcribed into a written record. Participants will be assigned a coded number and will be referred to that code number throughout the duration of the session. Participants will be offered a small gift by way of thanks for their participation and have the option of being involved in a third group discussion to develop a community resource. Participants may experience forms of social discomfort during the focus group sessions. Accordingly a qualified Youth Line Counsellor or your School Counsellor will be available in a separate room for participants to utilize should any psychological discomfort arise.

Where and When Will It Be On?

The focus groups will be run at your school or at a community centre depending on where you saw the advertisement. The sessions will be run during February and March.

So What Will It Do?

As a result of the focus groups, it is hoped that water safety organisations will have a greater understanding of youth perceptions of alcohol consumption in the aquatic environment. Subsequently, a community resource will be developed using the findings from the study.

Who Is Funding The Project?

Contributions from Alcohol Healthwatch, WaterSafe Auckland and the Ministry of Health will fund this project.

Can I Find Out About The Results?

At the conclusion of the session you are offered the option of requesting a copy of the final results of the project.

Ethics

Your anonymity cannot be assured by the researchers, nor can the confidentiality of your identity be guaranteed. Any information you provide will be published in such a way that it does not identify you as its source. Data obtained will be stored at secure premises at the Principal Researcher's place of work and destroyed after a period of six years. You have the right to withdraw at any time without disadvantage and withdraw your information up to July 1st 2008.

If you wish to partake in this research project please read and sign the enclosed participant consent form. If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Dr Kevyn Moran
University of Auckland
k.moran@auckland.ac.nz
(09) 623 8899 extn 48670

Craig Mills
WaterSafe Auckland Inc
craig.mills@watersafe.org.nz
(09) 306 0809

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92190, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn 87830

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 17/10/2007 for three years
Reference Number 2007/313

Appendix 2: Parent Information Sheet



THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Te Kura Akonga o Tairāwhiti Māori
INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz



The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street
Auckland 1035, New Zealand

Do alcohol and aquatics mix? Youth perceptions of alcohol use in aquatic recreation

PARENTAL INFORMATION SHEET

Your son/daughter has shown an interest in being involved in the following research project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not you wish your son/daughter to participate in this project

What is it about?

The research study is interested in examining alcohol consumption and youth behaviour in aquatic environments. While research shows that youth alcohol consumption in the aquatic environment occurs, little is known about what youth think about mixing alcohol with aquatic activity.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of youth perceptions of the use of alcohol during aquatic activity or when in an aquatic environment.

Who is being sought?

The type of participants being sought in this project are youth aged 16 years and over who take part in aquatic recreation. To be eligible for this study participants must meet the above stated selection criteria. The group discussions are limited to a maximum of twelve participants.

What will participants do?

Participants are asked to be involved in two 45 minute group discussions on the influence of alcohol on youth behaviour in the aquatic environment. The data collected in the focus groups will be electronically recorded by way of a Dictaphone and transcribed into an official transcription with the participants consent. Participants will be assigned a coded number and will be referred to that code number throughout the duration of the session. All participants will be offered a small gift by way of thanks for their participation and have the option of being involved in a resource development team to design a community resource at the conclusion of this project. Participants may experience forms of social discomfort during the focus group sessions. Accordingly the School Counsellor, or a Youth Line Counsellor will be available in a separate room for participants to utilize should any psychological discomfort arise.

Where and when will it be on?

The focus groups sessions would be conducted during February and March at your son/daughters school or at a community centre.

What are the outcomes of the study?

As a result of the focus groups it is hoped that water safety organisations will have a greater understanding of youth perceptions of alcohol consumption in the aquatic environment. A community resource will be designed to educate youth and the public at large about the risks associated with such behaviour.

Who is funding the project?

Contributions from Alcohol Healthwatch, WaterSafe Auckland Inc and the Ministry of Health will fund the project.

Availability of results:

At the conclusion of the session all participants will be offered the option of requesting a copy of the final results of the project.

Ethics

The researchers cannot assure student's anonymity, nor can the confidentiality of the participant's identity be guaranteed. All information provided will be published in such a way that it does not identify the identity as its source. Data obtained will be stored at secure premises at the Principal Researcher's place of employment and destroyed after a period of six years. Participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time without any disadvantage and may withdraw their information/data up to July 1st 2008.

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Dr Kevin Moran
University of Auckland
k.moran@auckland.ac.nz
(09) 623 8899 extn. 40620

Craig Mills
WaterSafe Auckland Inc
craig.mills@watersafe.org.nz
(09) 306 0809

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92190, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7595 extn. 87830

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 17/10/2008 for a period of three years. Reference Number 2007/313

Appendix 3: Principal/Executive Director Information Sheet



THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

To Kōwhiri Kōwhiri o Tāmaki Māhuta
INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz



The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street
Auckland 1035, New Zealand

Do alcohol and aquatics mix? Youth perceptions of alcohol use in aquatic recreation

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL / COMMUNITY GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you for showing an interest in allowing this research project to be undertaken within your school. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not you give permission for this project to be advertised to youth at your school.

What is it about?

The research study is interested in examining alcohol consumption and youth behaviour in aquatic environments. While research shows that youth alcohol consumption in the aquatic environment occurs, little is known about what youth think about mixing alcohol with aquatic activity.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of youth perceptions of the use of alcohol during aquatic activity or when in an aquatic environment.

Who is being sought?

The type of participants being sought in this project are youth aged 16 years and over who take part in aquatic recreation. To be eligible for this study participants must meet the above stated selection criteria. The group discussions are limited to a maximum of twelve participants. The research team involved in this project seek your permission to advertise this project to the students of your school.

What will participants do?

Participants are asked to be involved in two 45 minute group discussions on the influence of alcohol on youth behaviour in the aquatic environment. The data collected in the focus groups will be electronically recorded by way of a dictaphone and transcribed into an official transcription with the participants consent. Participants will be assigned a coded number and will be referred to that code number throughout the duration of the session. All participants will be offered a small gift by way of thanks for their participation and have the option of being involved in a community resource development team at the conclusion of the project. Participants may experience forms of social discomfort during the focus group sessions. Accordingly a School or Youthline Counsellor will be available in a separate room for participants to utilize should any psychological discomfort arise.

Where and when will it be on?

The research team seek your permission to use your facilities to undertake the small group discussions. The group discussions would be conducted during the third week of February.

What are the outcomes of the study?

As a result of the group discussions it is hoped that water safety organisations will have a greater understanding of youth perceptions of alcohol consumption in the aquatic environment. A community resource will also be developed at the conclusion of the project.

Who is funding the project?

Contributions from Alcohol Healthwatch, WaterSafe Auckland Inc and the Ministry of Health will fund the project.

Availability of results:

At the conclusion of the session all participants will be offered the option of requesting a copy of the final results of the project.

Ethics

The researchers cannot assure student's anonymity, nor can the confidentiality of the participant's identity be guaranteed. All information provided will be published in such a way that it does not identify the identity as its source. Data obtained will be stored at secure premises at the Principal Researcher's place of employment and destroyed after a period of six years. Participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time without any disadvantage and may withdraw their information/data up to 1st July 2008.

Please confirm in writing (see form attached) that you are prepared to allow the researchers to advertise this project to students in your school. If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Dr Kevin Moran
University of Auckland
k.moran@auckland.ac.nz
(09) 623 8899 extn. 48620

Craig Mills
WaterSafe Auckland Inc
craig_mills@watersafe.org.nz
(09) 306 0809

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92190, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 87830
This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 17/10/2008 for a period of three years. Reference Number 2007/313