



**KIDS
ALIVE**
DO THE FIVE

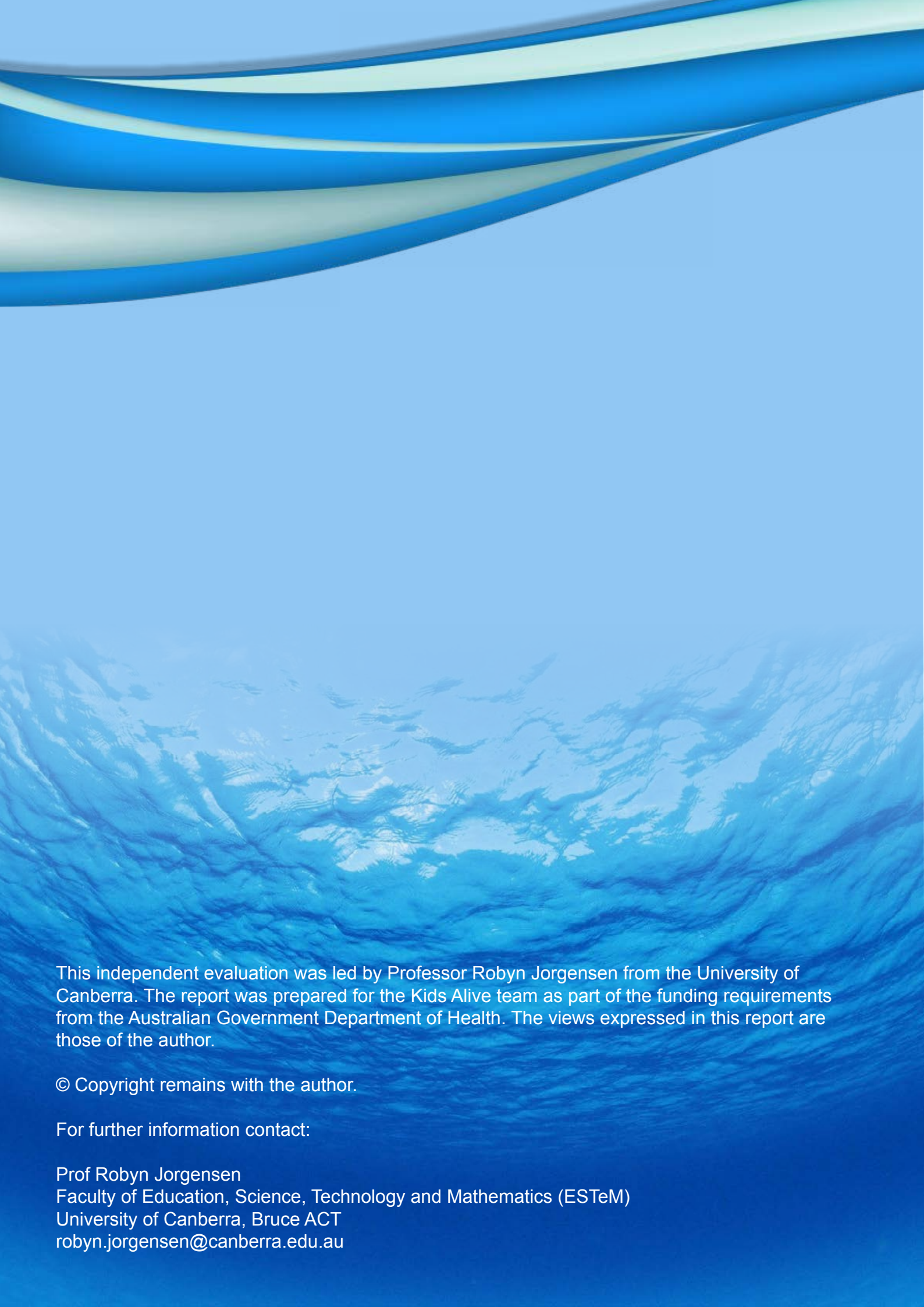


Water Safety Curriculum Resources: Final Evaluation

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This independent evaluation was led by Professor Robyn Jorgensen from the University of Canberra. The report was prepared for the Kids Alive team as part of the funding requirements from the Australian Government Department of Health. The views expressed in this report are those of the author.

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Executive Summary

This is the interim evaluation of the Kids' Alive Water Safety Curriculum Resource. This evaluation has been conducted as part of the funding agreement between Kids Alive and the funding agency, The Australian Commonwealth Department of Health. The interim evaluation has been led by Prof Robyn Jorgensen from the University of Canberra. The questions that have underpinned this interim evaluation are based on ascertaining:

1. Participants' use of the curriculum package;
2. The value of the curriculum package for the teachers/educators;
3. The practicality of the document for the end user; and
4. The value-adding that the curriculum package created.

An advisory committee was established to support the evaluation team in the development and refinement of the survey instrument, the interview schedule, and the selection and distribution to the potential participants. An on-line survey was developed in consultation with the advisory

committee for the interim evaluation and further refined for the final evaluation given the wider catchment of participants. The advisory committee also worked with the questions for the final interview schedule and helped in the development of recording protocols for the interviews.

Ethics approval was granted through the University of Canberra (UC) (HREC 15-16). The on-line survey was constructed and facilitated through the UC survey platform. Potential participants were invited to respond. Data presented in this report are those at the close of business on Nov 13, 2015.

A total of 306 respondents completed the online survey. They represented the voices from a range of early childhood providers including kindergartens, long day care, family day care, early childhood, schools, after school care, and private homes. They covered all states and territories in Australia. A phone interview protocol was adopted to seek more detailed and open input from a selection of participants. While 195 people were approached, it was only possible to interview 100 people, largely due to time constraints of the participants.

Key Findings

There is unequivocal support for the resources. The results from the final evaluation confirm and align with those from the interim evaluation. There are some (small) differences but these can be explained as being due to the wider and more diverse catchment of participants.

At the completion of the survey, respondents were asked if they thought the resources were worthwhile. Similar to the interim evaluation, a resounding 96% responded positively to the question, suggesting that the resources have been received well by the targeted audiences and that the investment into the resources was very sound. This support was endorsed when 97% of the respondents supported the continuation of the water safety resource. These data suggest that the resources have been very well received by the participants – across all sectors of the distribution cohort. These are highly significant in terms of the value of the resources within the early childhood sector.

There are few differences in the overall value of the resources and their rollout in the final evaluation from the interim evaluation. Any differences are likely to be due to the difference in cohorts. For example, there was a difference in the ways in which teachers were planning and incorporating the resources into lessons. The differences were related to the differences in the contexts of swimming lessons and formal lessons in Early Childhood Education settings or school settings.

- It is clear from the evaluation that the books have been the most used resource. This was evident in the take up of the books, as a tool for learning, providing information to families and the request that more be published.
- Many of the sites have written the resources into their formal programs (31%) or intend to write them into their programs in the future (26%). Many of the participants in this evaluation (e.g. swim schools) differ in the use of the resources and so plan differently from those in the formal school settings.
- 86% of the respondents indicated that they had communicated with parents on water safety and a further 11% were planning to do so in the future. This is an excellent outcome as it suggests that the resources are triggering vital conversations between educators and families of young children in relation to water safety.
- 77% of the respondents indicated the resources were useful or very useful in engaging learners.
- Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicated that they used the books often or frequently, suggesting that the books were of great value to the teachers.
- 94% of the interviewees reported that they were easily able to use the resources and with most interviewees indicating that the resources were very valuable in their contexts. Of the interviewees, almost ¾ (73%) of the group indicated that they saw the resources as highly valuable in their work and contexts with 93% of them indicating that they will be using the resource in the future.
- As with the online survey, the interviews also found the water safety message was being heard by the children with 93% indicating the children were learning this message.



Key Message

What is pleasing across the evaluation is the uptake of the resources, the value of the resources, and the strong water safety message that is being achieved through the resources. The much wider distribution of participants in the final evaluation indicates that a diverse range of organisations associated with young children are taking up and using the resources to promote water safety and they are keen to embrace the initiative into the future. The products have been well received by the various sectors of the targeted industries and sites.

Points for Consideration

As with the interim report, there is overwhelming and unequivocal support for the resources across all sectors of this evaluation. As such, the findings strongly endorse the use and value of the resources for all early childhood sectors. The Kids Alive Team and the Department of Health should be pleased with the investment and outcomes to date.

While the data overwhelming support the Kids Alive Curriculum Resource, there are some salient points made in the responses.

- As there is a very strong uptake of the books, and many sites (60%) were keen to be able to access more books, it may be of value to create more of these resources for distribution
- Providing access to the characters also emerged as a further point for extending the project.
- While there were some comments raised about the relevance of the characters, particularly Boo the spaceperson, these were negated by the positive responses to the characters. As with any resource, there will be differences in opinions.





Background

The Kids Alive Team has actively promoted water safety for young children since 2000. Child drowning is the largest cause of accidental deaths of children under 5. But the figures have been declining at a remarkable rate. In the 1999/2000 financial year when the Kids Alive program first went national, 63 children under the age of 5 drowned, making up 20% of all drownings (Royal Life Saving Australia, 2000). In the 2014/15 financial year, this figure has declined to 26 children under the age of 5, accounting for 9.6% of drownings (Royal Life Saving Australia, 2015). Laurie Lawrence, supported by his team, has spearheaded the driving messages of water safety for young children and their families. Laurie Lawrence and the Kids Alive brand have seen tremendous uptake from water safety stakeholders which has resulted in a unified drowning prevention message for young children and their families.

There have been many prongs to the activities employed by the Kids Alive team to educate young children and their families in water safety. These have included the landmark “Kids Alive Do the Five” motto of the team. The water safety initiatives have also included a touring pantomime (as funding permits) in which a team of characters have performed across Australia to bring to children the water safety message. The baby package, in which every newborn is given a DVD, promotes water safety from a very early age. More recently, the Kids Alive team has secured funding from the Australian Government Department of Health to construct a curriculum resource including books and

DVDs and online lesson plans that would be provided free of charge to as many facilities and organisations across Australia as possible. As of November 2015, a total of 82,500 packages have been distributed nationally to family day care units through to long term day care; from play groups through to preschools. Initially funded to produce approximately 25,000 packages, to be distributed to providers in the years prior to school, the project was expanded dramatically with the sponsorship of Australia Post who provided free distribution of the resources. The budget was revised (and approved) to redirect the funds into the production of more resources so that the curriculum packages could be distributed to all schools across Australia (government, Catholic and independent schools) in the early years of schooling (prep to Year 3). Collectively, this provided a very comprehensive distribution of the resources. The intent of the team was to saturate the early years learning environment with the free resources so that all Australian children would be exposed to the powerful water safety messages contained within the resources. The resources have been developed to include the broad social and geographical contexts of Australian children.

The Kids Alive Team has worked with key organisations in the distribution of the curriculum resources. These organisations have included the Australian Childcare Alliance; Royal Life Saving Society; Surf Life Saving Australia; Swim Australia; AUSTSWIM; Farmsafe Australia; Mobile Children’s Services Association of NSW; Playgroup Australia; Remote Indigenous

Centres; Indigenous Education; School of the Air; Showcase Advertising; Kidsafe; Early Childhood Australia; Family Day Care Australia; Australian Education Union and State/Territory Branches; and others. This wide distribution has created a network of distribution that catches the targeted groups for whom the curriculum package is intended. The databases associated with these networks were provided to the evaluation to enable access to potential participants for the evaluation. The distribution of the first round of packages can be seen in Table 1 below.

ORGANISATION	QTY SENT
Early Childhood Education Centres	38,844
Senators	76
Members of Parliament	150
Swim Australia	600
Farm Safe	20
Remote Education	629
Royal Life Saving Society	2,414
Playgroup	8,000
NSW Mobile Service	159
AUSTSWIM	445
Kidsafe	380
Australian Child Care Alliance Head Offices	350
Surf Lifesaving and Royal Life Saving QLD	900
State and Territory Politicians	580
Kids Alive	1,453
TOTAL	55,000

Table 1: Distribution of packages in Round 1.

In the second round of distribution an additional 27,500 packages were distributed including 5300 packages upon request. Those who requested copies included a wide variety of stakeholders including individual parents/families and teachers, school sites, hospitals, council libraries, swimming schools, community groups, and day care centres. Many of these were people and organisations who requested copies on behalf of their organisation or for personal interests. The distribution is across all states and territories in Australia, and in some cases, internationally.

The package was developed by the Kids Alive team, drawing on their collective wisdom and past experiences that they had found to be successful. The resources were vetted and constructive feedback provided through an expert panel. The panel consisted of both academic and practitioner experts so that

the Kids Alive Team were able to develop a set of resources that could be seen to embrace elements of best practice.

The Kids Alive team has also worked intensively with organisations to support the roll out of the initiative. Most notably, the team has provided site visits to promote the resources within various organisations; considerable media input; and numerous conference presentations. The support for the rollout of the resources has been national and international. The Kids Alive team has posted resources out using a targeted strategy so that they will reach maximum saturation but they have also received many (100s) of requests from individuals and organisations, most of which are in Australia but some of which are overseas. Many of the child-centred sites (schools, care facilities etc.) have requested the presence of the characters from the books and DVDs to promote the resources – as was noted in the interim report.

As part of the funding agreement with the Department of Health, the Kids Alive team were required to undertake an external review of the resources – at the 6 month mark (May 2015) and then again in December 2015. These evaluations are to ascertain the value of the resource for the various sectors using the resource, to seek feedback to refine/improve the resource, and if there are further needs for the stakeholders

The aim of the evaluations is to assess the uptake and impact of the curriculum in the targeted industries. Due to the comprehensive distribution of the package, the evaluation will seek input from all target groups to access the potential differences and similarities among various stakeholder groups. The evaluations are guided by three key research questions:

- To what effect have the various stakeholder groups taken up the Kids Alive Curriculum?
- What are the main learnings for the stakeholders and the children when using the Kids Alive Curriculum?
- Are there any particular strengths or issues that stakeholder identify when using the Kids Alive Curriculum package?

These questions underpin both the interim and final evaluations. This report constitutes the final evaluation. By design, this final evaluation is far more expansive than the interim report and sought to include the broad range of participants identified in Table One. Participants from all sectors identified in Table One were sought for both the survey and interviews.



The Resources

The resources focus on characters from the pantomime that has circulated around Australia for a number of years – Lifesaver Lil, Boo the Alien, and Wise Owl. These characters are familiar to many young children who have experienced the pantomimes. The resources contain a consistent message about being safe around water, and provide contexts that are familiar to children. The expert panel provided the Kids Alive team with feedback to ensure that the books reflected current approaches to early years education. This feedback was taken on board by the team and the resources reflect best practice in contemporary early childhood settings.

The curriculum resources consist of a package of four books that focus on water safety in four very different contexts – the beach, the farm, the pool and the home. The books are in a lively two phase genre with a strong rhyming rhythm to them. This was seen to create a fast pace for learners and to engage them in an auditory manner. The characters and scenes in the books are a strong colour with

good contrasts so as to create a very visual learning experience, again with the intent to engage the learners. The illustrations are simple in design so as to enable the learners to see the contexts and readily engage with the intended learning. Included in the illustrations are incidental learnings that teachers and carers can draw attention to so as to draw children into the stories. Much thought has gone into the visual and textual representations within the books.

A series of songs have been created that reinforce the learnings within the books. The two disks (DVD and CD) have the songs about water safety. These songs follow the format employed in the early years with the simple words and the lively musical tempo that engage children. All songs and dances contain water safety messages.

A teachers' resource package has also been designed and can be accessed on line. The on-line tools also provide teachers and carers with a range of resources for the support of the resources, including posters and teacher support materials.



Approach

The final evaluation adopted a two-phased, mixed method approach. Using the modified on-line survey platform hosted at the University of Canberra that was used in the interim evaluation as the key data source, this was supplemented with more detailed input from telephone interviews. The purpose of this final evaluation was to gauge the uptake of the tool and how it was being received by the wide variety of stakeholders to which the resources were distributed.

Ethics

This research/evaluation has been approved by the University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee (HERC 15-16). This evaluation operates within the NH&MRC guidelines for the conduct of research.

Email

The University of Canberra hosted a dedicated email for this project. This was to act as a mode of communication with the participants and to act as a repository for all communications within the evaluation. The email address is Estem-kidsalive@canberra.edu.au.

Participants

The survey and interview participants were accessed via the databases provided by the Kids Alive team. Both tools targeted the broad sectors of participants. As with the interim report, Australian Childcare Alliance Inc. circulated the on-line link to long day care centres in their database inviting centres to participate in the study. Links to the survey were also provided through newsletters and social media forums that target particular groups such as Australian Childcare Alliance members and some swim school sites.

NB: These figures are for the full cohorts so if, for example, 33.4% of all Queensland long-term day care centres were invited, the 5.6% response rate refers to the full cohort, not the sample cohort.

The actual figures provided by Australian Childcare Alliance Queensland Inc. indicate a potential 8372 organisations are listed, of which 1899 centres were approached, of these a total of 241 proceeded to the survey. The long term day care was sought as this is the stakeholder group most likely to create formal programs that would incorporate the curriculum materials.

A smaller cohort of participants (n=50) was included to ascertain any differences among groups. This group was selected on their inquiries to the Kids Alive team. It was a random group with no specific focus or target, thus providing the survey with a broad sweep of other stakeholders. Some inquiries were about accessing the resources, some to provide feedback, etc so there was intent to access a diversity among the stakeholders.

Online Survey		
RESPONDENT	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Swim school or swim teacher	121	40%
Water safety organisation	3	1%
Parent/Family	26	8%
Education provider organisation	53	17%
Teacher: Early childhood, primary, coordinator	103	34%
TOTAL	306	100%

Table 2: Participant distribution - online survey.



In consultation with the advisory team, a list of targeted participant organisations was established with the intent of inclusion in the interviews. There were considerable challenges in accessing people for the interviews, largely due to time constraints in their workplaces.

Interviews

ORGANISATION	NUMBER OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED	PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES
Swim school	37	37%
Water Safety organisation	0	0%
Education Providers organisation	40	40%
Teacher: Early childhood, primary, coordinator	16	16%
Parent/family	2	2%
Other	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Table 3: Participant distribution - interviews.

Table 4 (below) highlights the total number of people approached in the sampling process. This gives a sense of how the distribution of surveys and interviews was undertaken.

Number of People Approached

RESPONDENT	ONLINE SURVEY	INTERVIEW
Swim school or swim teacher	1025 swim schools contacted directly as well as requests to Austswim/Swim Australia to distribute further to members.	70
Water safety organisation	115 Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA) swim schools who were contacted directly and emails sent to RLSSA asking them to distribute the survey to their members.	15
Parent/Family	8	2
Education provider organisation	14654 contacted directly and requests to distribute further to members and teams.	80
Teacher: Early childhood, primary, coordinator	30 contacted directly and requests to distribute further to teams.	28
TOTAL	15,802+	195

Table 4: Distribution of online survey and phone interviews requested.



The Survey

Development and Refinement of the Survey

The initial survey for the interim report was developed through an advisory group, and subsequently refined in light of the findings from that report. The project team initially developed a tool that reflected the intent of the evaluation. This was provided to the advisory group who then provided feedback on the questions, offered further questions, and provided the scope for this evaluation (in terms of long-term day care; the needs of the industry groups; the relevance of questions to the various stakeholders; etc.). A final version of the tool was provided to the advisory team who approved its design and intent. The revised version of the survey tool was again provided to the advisory team for modification given the broader scope of participants. The modifications were approved and uploaded to the on-line survey platform hosted at the University of Canberra.

The on-line survey was developed to protect the identity of participants and there is every intent to preserve the anonymity of participants. Information collected from participants only sought the type of facility from which they worked and a postcode to identify the broad geographical location from which the participants were drawn. This is in accordance with the guidelines of the Human Research Ethics Committee. Only the research team is able to access the survey data. There was scope in the final survey for participants to place requests for the Kids Alive Team for more resources. This non-confidential information was accessed only by the research team and provided to the Kids Alive team for the purposes of distribution of resources.

The On-Line Tool

The on-line survey is hosted at the University of Canberra. The survey was constructed in Qualtrics and all data are stored at the University and accessible by the research team. The survey is simple to use and has been designed with the time constraints of busy people in mind. There are multiple choice options along with Likert-scale questions. The format has been slightly modified from the interim evaluation version to cater for the more diverse group of respondents in the final evaluation. The final question is open-ended and allows for participants to include comments to the Kids Alive team. A full copy of the survey is provided in Appendix One.

Interviews

A structured interview process was adopted for telephone interviews. The interview questions were designed to supplement and extend the responses possible in the on-line survey. The interview schedule was developed in consultation with the advisory team and potential responses identified so that a tool could be developed for the recording of responses. This was an iterative process where the interviewer could also add to the tool as responses were collected. The interview schedule is attached as Appendix 2. Participants were selected from the databases provided by the Kids Alive team so that a relatively random sample of participants could be solicited that would represent the distribution of organisations who received the curriculum package.

Analysis

Analysis of the quantitative data was undertaken using descriptive statistics. The data set is not sufficient, nor intended, to undertake any further, more complex analysis. Analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken by coding data in a software package (NVivo) to look for trends in the data set. Data are reported using these methods.

In reporting the data, the quantitative data will be presented to provide evidence of the uptake, value and learning that the respondents reported. The qualitative data will be incorporated into each relevant section as these provide more insights into the respondent thinking about various aspects of the evaluation. The qualitative data help to support and/or qualify the outcomes reported in the quantitative data.

Analysis and Outcomes

Value and Uptake of the Resources

Across the evaluation, we were keen to assess the uptake and value of the resource to the target organisations and individuals. When participants were asked if they found the resources useful in complementing existing work within their organisation/s or their daily work, it was found that 90% indicated a positive (yes) outcome. This suggests that the resources have been useful to the activities undertaken by the various stakeholders. Participants were also asked as to how frequently they used the resources within their facility. This question provides some insights into the value of the resources within the organisation.

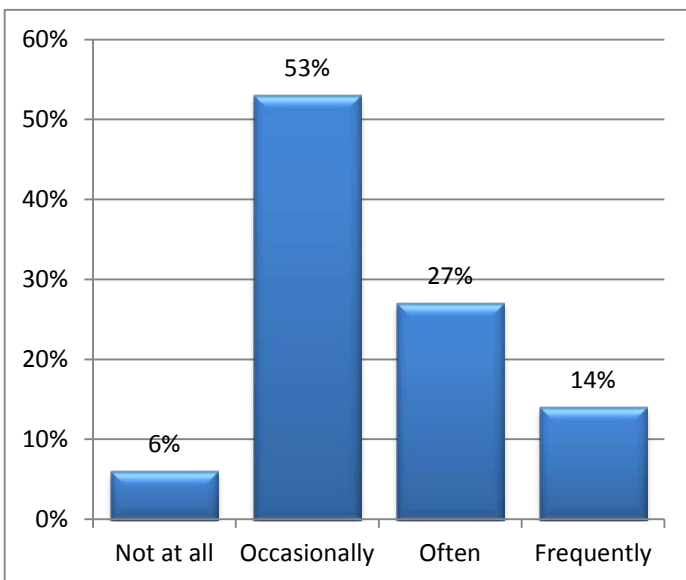


Figure 1: Frequency of use.

Pleasingly, very few (6%) did not use it at all. The majority (53%) used it occasionally while 41% used it often/frequently. These results indicate that the resources have been taken up in the facilities/sites and are being well used. The data from the interviews was very similar to the survey. In the interview process more than half (54%) of the interviewees indicated that they used the resources regularly or often. With 100% of the interviewees indicating that they would be using the resources in the future.

One of the final questions in the survey asked participants if they thought that the initiative was worthwhile. A resounding 96% responded positively to the question, suggesting that the resources have been received well by the targeted audiences and that the investment into the resources was very sound. This support was endorsed when 97% of the respondents supported the continuation of the water safety resource.

There was considerable diversity across the final evaluation in terms of how the resources were used in the various sites.

“As we are a swim school for 4-12 year old children and based in a primary school, we did not use the resources directly with the children as we do not have sufficient time each lesson, nor do we have enough to hand a book to every child, so I have spoken to the Principal of the school and we are giving one book/ DVD to each prep and grade 1 class and using it as an education resource to be read and discussed at story time in the class room. Following each class having read the book they will go into the library. We think they are very worthwhile and a great initiative.”

“Thanks for providing easy to use, engaging materials to complement our annual Health and Physical Education Swimming program. It has reduced planning time in this area for teaching staff in our Junior school. We have only used the materials P-2.”





When asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 as to whether or not the resource should be continued, again the support was overwhelmingly in favour of the continuation of the resource.

Teachers also reported that they were able to integrate the resources in the existing curriculum.

"We are an OSHC program and the resources fit with our curriculum. Great work thank you."

Others reported that the resources could be effectively built into their programs due to their appropriateness for their local contexts:

"Our centre is surrounded by beaches and backyard swimming pools and we think the resources relating to beach and pool care are age appropriate and of great importance."

"We love it at our centre and use it each year especially coming into summer beach and pool party times of the year."

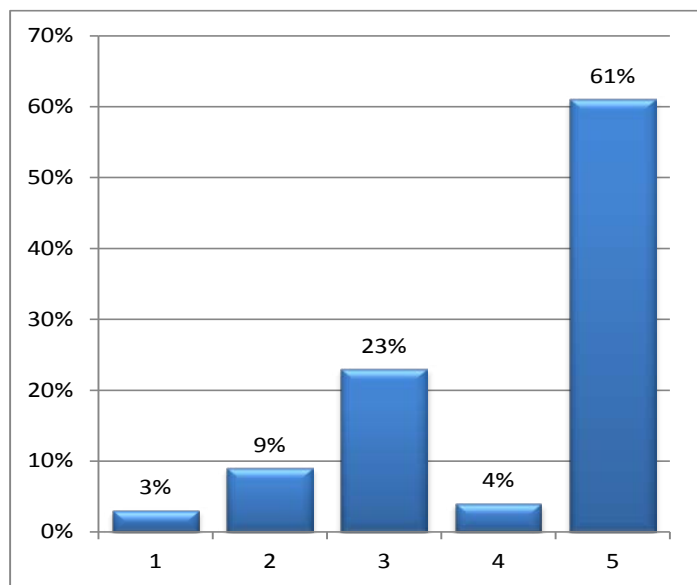


Figure 2: Continuation of the resource.



Learning about Water Safety

As a key function of the resources was to educate about water safety, it was important to assess whether or not the water safety message was being achieved. To this end, participants were asked to rate how useful the resources were in conveying the water safety message. The results indicate that while 20% reported that the resources were not very useful or only marginally useful, the vast majority of participants (80%) reported that they found the resource very useful or excellent.

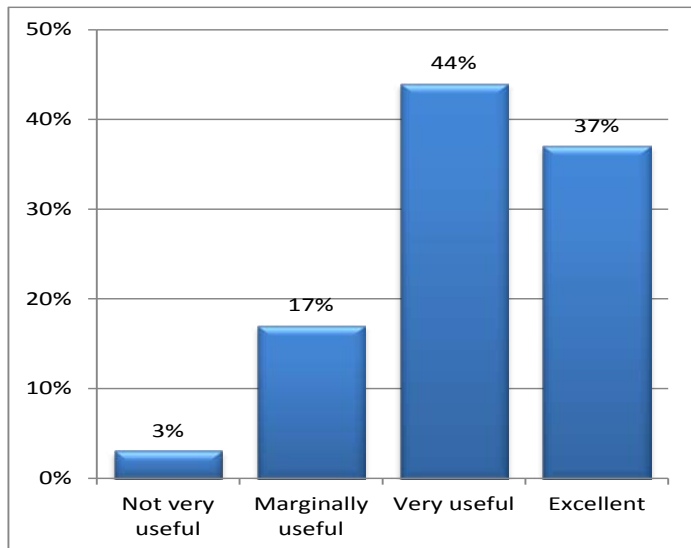


Figure 3: Usefulness of resources for learning about water safety.

Respondents also made specific mention to water safety and the value of the resources in their sites.

“Keep up the good work especially in the coastal areas where all children should be taught water safety.”

What is very pleasing from the survey results is that an overwhelming 86% of the respondents indicated that they had communicated with parents on water safety and a further 11% were planning to so in the future. It would suggest that spreading the water safety message has been a successful outcome. This was supported by a comment from one of the participants who indicated that the messages being conveyed through the resources were being taken up in the families outside the centres.

“As a professional I used my own puppet and the supporting books. One parent said we learnt all about resuscitation last night from their 4 year old. Children really embraced the ideas from the books.”



Engagement of Learners

The Kids Alive Team has been proactive in seeking ways to engage learners – through text, books, music, song, dance and video. These have provided a strong platform for engaging learners. 77% of the respondents indicated the resources were useful or very useful in engaging learners.

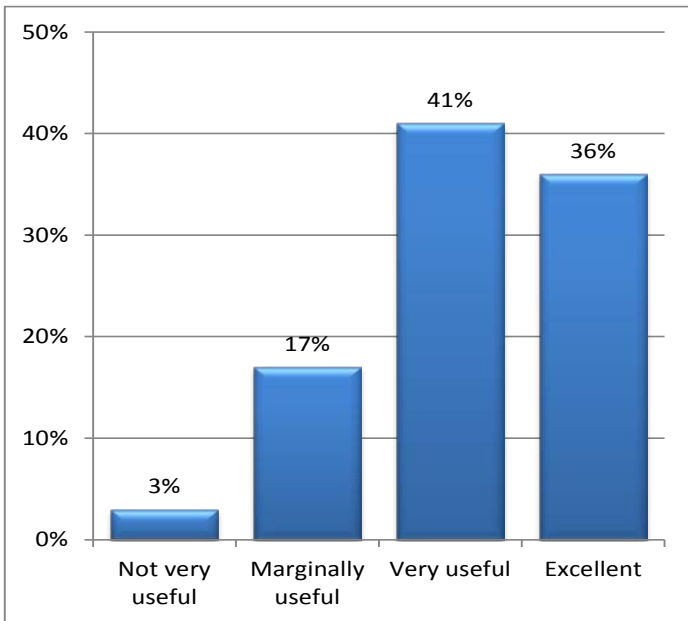


Figure 4: Engagement of learners.

It is clear from these data that the resources appear to have engaged learners. What has been shown from the qualitative comments is that visits from the characters have also been valued by the participants as a means to engage the learners.

Many of the sites have written the resources into their formal programs (31%) or intend to write them into their programs in the future (26%). These figures have changed from the interim evaluation due to the wider selection of participants. In this evaluation, we have included many sites (Refer Table 1) who do not have formal programs or for whom programs are not part of their business so it is unsurprising to see this change. It is pleasing to see that the majority of participants have responded that they will be using the resources in their formal programs as this is likely to be a reflection of those sites who do have formal programs.

As there were four types of resources developed as part of the initiative, it was important to see how each of these resources was being used by the participants.





TYPE OF RESOURCE	NOT AT ALL	OCCASIONALLY	OFTEN	FREQUENTLY	MEAN
Books	8.5%	43.9%	31.2%	16.4%	2.56
DVDs	30.4%	41.4%	21.0%	7.2%	2.05
CDs	44.0%	30.3%	18.5%	7.1%	1.89
Online resources	44.5%	27.4%	20.7%	7.3%	1.91

Table 5: Use of the various resources.

From Table 5, it is possible to see that the books were the most used resource with almost half of the

cohort (48%) reporting that they used these either often or frequently.

TYPE OF RESOURCE	NOT AT ALL	OCCASIONALLY	OFTEN	FREQUENTLY	MEAN
Children engaged with the materials	5%	32%	40%	21%	2.79
Children appear to be learning about water safety	9%	22%	44%	29%	2.97
Children appear to be enjoying the materials	5%	25%	43%	27%	2.91
Children appear to like the different characters	7%	19%	47%	27%	2.94
Children relate to the various characters in the stories	8%	30%	40%	22%	2.76
The scenarios are relevant to the children	3%	2%	47%	27%	2.99
Children recall water safety messages	6%	24%	45%	25%	2.90
The materials are easy for you to use in your program	8%	24%	46%	22%	2.83

Table 6: The value adding of the resources.

The results in Table 6 above, indicate that the materials are hitting their mark in terms of the various elements of the resources. The mean scores

for each item are close to a score of three, indicating that the resources are being used regularly across the sites.



In the follow up interviews, it was possible to explore how the resources were being used in the various sites. A very considerable percentage of the interviewees indicated that the resources were used as reading resource (69%).

USE OF RESOURCES	%
As a reading resource for the children	69
Discussion stimulus	48
Using the DVD	56
Singing the songs	33
As a display at the Centre/site	17
Distributing to families	46
Filling in wait time	2
Integrating into water safety units	27
As a prompt for teachers	6
Haven't used it	4
Haven't used it but intend to do so	2

Table 7: Interviewees responses to how resources were being used.

The interviewees suggested that there were many ways in which the resources were being used by the organisations. As with the online survey, there is very strong support for and usage of the books. There was a strong push for the books to be sent to parents/families for the water safety message to be widely spread. Similarly many of the sites created displays and/or ran the DVD to alert families to the water safety messages while they were at the facility. 94% of the interviewees reported that they were easily able to use the resources with most interviewees indicating that the resources were very valuable in their contexts. Of the interviewees, almost ¾ (73%) of the group indicated that they saw the resources as highly valuable in their work and contexts and 93% of them indicating that they will be using the resource in the future. As with the online survey, the interviews also found the water safety message was being heard by the children with 93%

indicating the children were learning this message. Some of the specific comments mentioned by the interviewees included messages such as:

- *Respect water.*
- *Don't be near water without adult.*
- *Awareness about how even little bits of water are not safe*
- *Sun protection/ swim between flags/stay with adult.*
- *Swim with an adult, if someone falls in they need to get an adult.*
- *Enhanced water safety message to tie in with external swimming program.*
- *Do the five.*
- *Supervision, fence, resuscitate, sun safety.*
- *Don't go near water.*
- *Watch younger siblings.*
- *Pools/dam/rivers safety.*
- *It's serious but if you follow the rules and guidelines you can have fun in the water.*
- *Don't swim on own.*
- *Water is fun but be careful. Strict rules about water at centre.*
- *Don't go in water without supervision.*
- *Always be supervised.*
- *Positive attitude to swimming.*
- *Learning water rules.*
- *How to be safe, especially the farm and beach for holidays.*

In breaking down the responses of the interviewees in terms of the value of the resources at their centres/sites/schools, 88% of the responses indicated a very positive reaction to the resources.

Through the interviews, participants were asked how the Kids Alive resources were used in their contexts and the potential links with their current practice.

Future Directions

As with any resource, there are always ways to improve it. Online participants were asked if they would need further support with the use of the resources in their sites. Both closed and open question responses were available. This question provides information to the Kids Alive Team (and government/funding bodies) on what future developments can occur so as to improve the resources

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS	%
Further materials for support	36
Professional development	28
Additional copies for parent distribution	60
Parent support materials (online or other info)	39
Visits from one or more of the characters	45
No other support needed	8
Materials worked well, and don't need anything else	12
Other	6

Table 8: Future Directions.

Those who replied 'other' were asked to provide information as to what they thought could be done in the future. These included the development of stickers and posters; more materials so that they can be distributed to parents/families and/or used as prizes for the students. The inclusion of visits to the sites by the characters was also seen to be important.

Across both the interim evaluation, there was a theme whereby there was considerable value in the characters coming to visit sites. This was again evident in the final evaluation.

Due to the much wider sampling in the final evaluation than the interim evaluation, there was a more diverse response in what participants sought. For example, in comments from swim schools – where their environment is literally a very wet one, there were suggestions for the books to be made so that they were waterproof:

“These resources were all dry resources which made them hard to use. We had the books sitting on the tables where children/parents congregate. We had many parents read their children the books and children came back the next week asking for them to be read again. Some resources to use in the water would be good.”

In the very early years setting (under 3s) there were also suggestions that the resources could be better tailored to engage young children but with the recognition that the messages were very important for the younger children

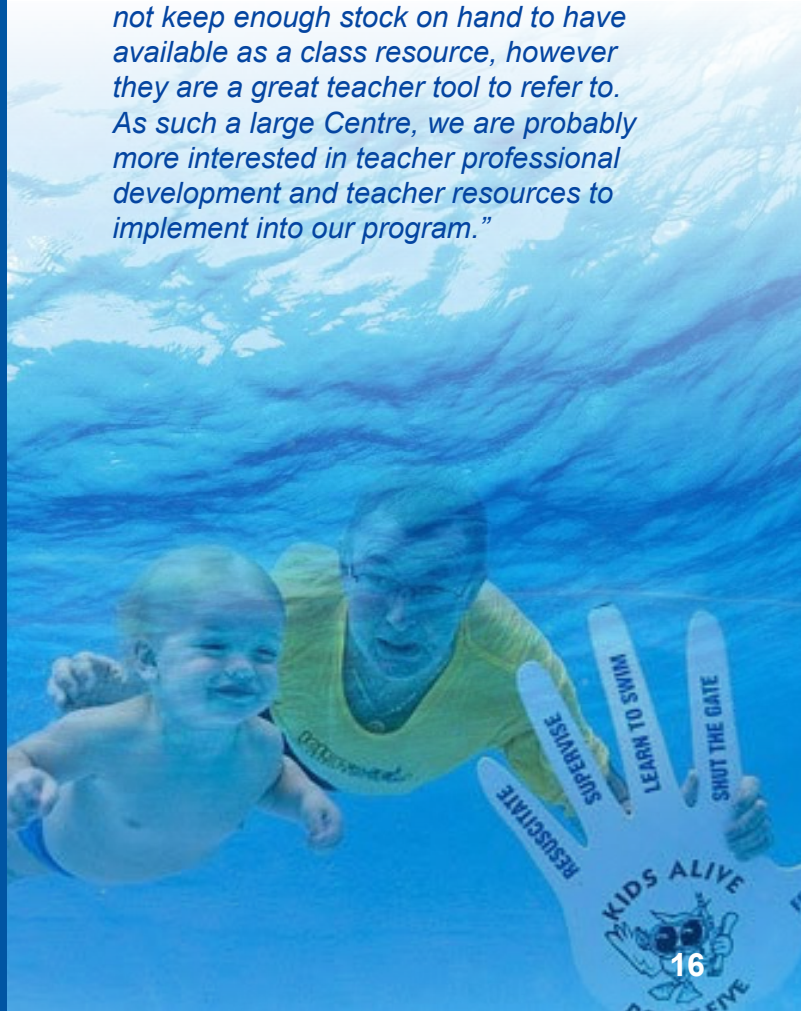
“Try have some resources for the younger age groups for me the age 2-3 years is really important to start teaching them water safety.”

There is a sense that many of the sites would value being able to provide parents/families with copies of the resources. The sites, for example swim schools and early childhood centres, may have had different motivations for wanting to have the capacity for greater distribution of the resources to families, but it was clear that the intent was to ensure that the water safety messages could be given to the parents.

“Continue the great work and I feel that resources that we can distribute to the children and families will also assist in the education we provide while the children are with us.”

There was a noting of the need for the professional development of the teachers to be able to use the resources.

“As a Centre for over 3,000 participants, (over 1,200 under 5 year olds) we could not keep enough stock on hand to have available as a class resource, however they are a great teacher tool to refer to. As such a large Centre, we are probably more interested in teacher professional development and teacher resources to implement into our program.”



In the interviews, people were also asked if they had a message to the funding agency. The comments can be divided into some key themes.

MESSAGE TO MINISTER	RESPONSES
It is a great resource	40
Very useful for teaching children	8
Handy resource for teachers	5
Handy for families	4
Support the characters to be able to go centres	21
More resources on site would be useful	7
Thank you	14

Table 9: Message to the Minister for Health.

The responses indicate a very high level of support for the materials. To give some idea and voice to the types of comments made, some of the brief notes from the interviews are below:

- *Desperate for more help and more resources to spread message. Need lots more.*
- *Continue making and distributing the resources.*
- *Info is useful considering drownings are high in Australia.*
- *Keep up the good work with great resources.*
- *Good job - keep it up.*
- *Keep providing these services so others can receive them.*
- *Getting a good message out there.*
- *Keep it going. Get out to as many as possible.*
- *Money well spent.*
- *Continue it, it's valuable and important.*
- *More resources to give to parents.*
- *Need an initiative to include families in swimming lessons especially younger groups.*
- *Keep it going. Crucial for kids.*
- *Keep it up.*
- *Expand it.*
- *More free DVDs to hand out.*
- *Keep promoting to parents and kids.*
- *All free resources welcome, especially those that help reinforce the message that we are already delivering.*
- *No other programs like this available so we really need it. Keep educating parents, kids and staff.*
- *Don't stop. Swim teachers can only do so much so we really need these.*



- *I hope they realise how valuable it is. Priceless we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Provides a professional brand that's already packaged.*
- *Only have one for library [- we need more copies]*
- *We use it most days. New stories and adventures and a TV series would be great*
- *Please provide funding for subsidised swimming lessons*
- *Can't take lightly. Keep getting message out there. Educate parents*
- *[need to include] multicultural aspect*
- *More funding for swimming lessons at young age. Important life skill*
- *Anything that teaches kids water safety is great.*

While there were many small pieces of advice for the Kids Alive Team for the future development/refinement of the resources, one comment encapsulated many of the smaller snippets of advice:

"Great for 4-5 year olds but need simpler and shorter versions for 2-3 years old. Also would be great to have in different languages as many children have English as 2nd language and need a lot of explanation. Australia characters rather than aliens. [It] would be great to have an adult lifesaver that they can refer back to regularly. More explanation of what terms such as 'sun safety', 'dangerous conditions' and other terms that we use in Australia to help new immigrants understand the messages. Need some really simple back to basics books explaining this. They regularly have to explain to new immigrants (parents) what 'sun safety' actually is. Need more resources to send home to parents so the message can be backed up at home after discussion at centre."



Summary

The outcomes of the full evaluation show overwhelming support for the resources and the water safety message contained within the resources. These findings align with the outcomes of the interim report. What is remarkable about the final evaluation is that, while the outcomes are very similar to the interim evaluation, there is a much wider cohort of participants in this full evaluation. It could be reasonable to expect full day care facilities to use the resources in what could be seen as a traditional model for teaching (as found in the interim evaluation), however, to see such a wide, diverse group of end-users taking the resources on board and using them productively in very different contexts is remarkable. Clearly, the resources and the messages are relevant and valuable to the diverse end-users. This is evident in that 96% of the respondents responded positively to the question as to whether or not the resources were seen to be worthwhile. This is clearly overwhelming support for the resources.

In the final evaluation, the project team used both survey and interview methods. There was strong synergy between both data sources such that there were no new identifiable trends arising from the interviews that had not been found in the survey. This confirms from the two data sources that the approach used was valid and that there is strong triangulation between the data sources. This suggests that the findings reported in this final evaluation represent the views of the target participants. This is testimony to the quality of the resources, the uptake of those resources across a wide sector of industries, and the value of the resources within those sites.

In terms of the resources, it would appear that the books have been a very valuable component of the curriculum package with all sectors of the evaluation using these resources, in various ways commensurate with their context.



The major findings from the evaluation have been highlighted in the executive summary and are reiterated here.

- Many of the sites have written the resources into their formal programs (31%) or intend to write them into their programs in the future (26%). Many of the participants in this evaluation (e.g. swim schools) differ in the use of the resources and so plan differently from those in the formal school settings.
- 86% of the respondents indicated that they had communicated with parents on water safety and a further 11% were planning to do so in the future. This is an excellent outcome as it suggests that the resources are triggering vital conversations between educators and families of young children in relation to water safety.
- 77% of the respondents indicated the resources were useful or very useful in engaging learners.
- Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicated that they used the books often or frequently, suggesting that the books were of great value to the teachers.
- 94% of the interviewees reported that they were easily able to use the resources and with most interviewees indicating that the resources were very valuable in their contexts. Of the interviewees, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ (73%) of the group indicated that they saw the resources as highly valuable in their work and contexts with 93% of them indicating that they will be using the resource in the future.
- As with the online survey, the interviews also found the water safety message was being heard by the children with 93% indicating the children were learning this message.

Final comments for future consideration

As with the interim report, there is overwhelming and unequivocal support for the resources across all sectors of this evaluation. As such, the findings strongly endorse the use and value of the resources for all early childhood sectors. The Kids Alive Team and the Department of Health should be pleased with the investment and outcomes to date. While the data overwhelming support the Kids Alive Curriculum Resource, there are some salient points made in the responses.

- As there is a very strong uptake of the books, and many sites (60%) were keen to be able to access more books, it may be of value to create more of these resources for distribution
- Providing access to the characters also emerged as a further point for extending the project. It is noted that the Kids Alive Team has already acted on this recommendation as it arose in the interim report and there are now more character costumes being made/provided to enable sites to have the physical presence of the characters in situ.
- While there were some comments raised about the relevance of the characters, particularly Boo the spaceperson, these were negated by the positive responses to the characters. As with any resource, there will be differences in opinions. As discussed in the expert panel at the commencement of the project where Early Childhood experts discussed the merits of the characters, there were many aspects of Boo's personality that were integral to her/his role that made for the character to be as presented.

A Personal Note from the Evaluator

From an evaluation standpoint, the outcomes of this evaluation have been outstandingly positive. I would personally commend the Kids Alive Team on an outstanding resource that has clearly met the needs of their targeted market. I would also commend the Kids Alive Team on the processes that they have adopted in the production of this resource – from the conduct of an expert panel to review the products prior to production, and the iterative evaluation process where they have already taken on board outcomes noted in the interim evaluation. This process has, in my mind, created a very valuable resource that has met the market's needs. The data overwhelmingly support this claim. I would commend the Kids Alive Team on the production of this resource, and the Department of Health for providing funding for the resource. As the data show, the resource has been very valuable for the industries in which it has been circulated.



References

Royal Life Saving Australia. 2000. Royal Life Saving Drowning Report. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.royallifesaving.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/3950/2000-Drowning-Report.pdf. [Accessed 25 November 15].

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Appendix One

On-Line Survey Tool



Kids Alive Final Evaluation

This is the final evaluation for the Kids Alive water safety Resource Packs that you received some time this year. The Australian government is seeking feedback as to how the industry is receiving the resource. To this end, we seek your input in the attached survey so that we can provide the funding agencies with some insights as to how the Package is being taken up and any benefits/issues with the resources. This survey is to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the ways in which the resources have been used across the broad distribution of these resources. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes.

What is your industry or background?

- Swim school or swim teacher
- Water safety organisation
- Parent/family
- Education provider organisation
- Teacher: Early childhood, primary, coordinator

Type of Facility:

No of children attending:

Postcode:

Did you receive a copy of the Kids Alive Water Safety Resource Packs?

- Yes No

If no, are you aware of the resource?

- Yes No

Would you like a copy to be sent to you?

- Yes No

If yes, please provide your name and postal address.

.....
.....

If you received the resource does it complement existing activities within your organisation?

- Yes No

Are you involved directly in the use of the resources at your organisation?

- Yes No

If yes, how often is the resource being used in your facility?

- Not at all
- Occasionally
- Often
- Frequently,

In terms of the materials as a tool for learning about water safety, how would you rate the package?

- Not very useful
- Marginally useful
- Very useful
- Excellent
- Not applicable

In terms of the materials as a tool for engaging learners in learning about water safety, how would you rate the package?

- Not very useful
- Marginally useful
- Very useful
- Excellent
- Not applicable

Have the materials been written into your formal program?

- Yes
- No
- Not yet, but we will be doing it in the future
- Not applicable

Which of the resources have you used in your facility?

Books

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

DVDs

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

Music CD

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

On-line resources

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

Have you communicated with parents on water safety?

- Yes
- No
- Not yet, but we will be doing it in the future
- Referred on-line resources
- Not applicable

What do you see as some of the impact of the resources when working with the children (tick)

Children are engaged with the materials

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

Children appear to be learning about water safety

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

Children appear to be enjoying the materials

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

Children appear to like the different characters

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

Children relate to the various characters in the stories

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

The scenarios are relevant to the children

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

Children recall water messages

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

The materials are easy for you to use in your program

- Not at all Occasionally Often Frequently

What other support might you need to help with the roll out of the resources?

- Further materials for support
- Professional development to support the resources
- Additional copies for parent distribution
- Parent support materials e.g. to go on line for the resources or other information
- Visits from one or more of the characters
- No other support needed
- Materials work well and I don't need anything else
- Other - please list
.....
- Not applicable

Do you think that this is worthwhile initiative yes/no

Do you think the water safety resource should continue?

- Yes No

Circle a number between 1 and 5 to rank whether you think the resources should be continued. 1 meaning 'the resource should not be continued and 5 meaning 'The resource is highly valuable and should continue to be created and distributed.

1 2 3 4 5

Any other advice to the Kids Alive team?
(open ended)

Appendix Two

Interview Script

1. What is your first name?
2. What is your postcode?
3. What is your role?
4. How many children attend your organisation?
5. What type of facility are you?
6. Did you receive the Kids Alive resource?
7. If no, please provide your postal address if you would like a copy (end of survey for these respondents)
8. How frequently have you/your organisation/your facility used the resources?
9. How have you personally used the resources at your facility?
10. Has the resource been easy to use or adapt at your facility?
11. How valuable has the resource been to you?
12. What have been the main reactions from children when using the resource?
13. What have been the responses from teachers/educators/families/others when using the resources?
14. Will you continue to use the resource in future?
15. What do you think the children have learnt most from the resource?
16. What message would you like to give the Minister for Health whose department is sponsoring the resource?
17. Do you have any advice for the developers to help improve the resource?
18. Any other comments?



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