



# INJURY BULLETIN

QUEENSLAND INJURY  
SURVEILLANCE & PREVENTION  
PROJECT

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## This Month...

Welcome the first edition of the QISPP Injury Bulletin for 1994.

This month we cover the following topics:

- **Occupational Injuries - Injuries to Truck Drivers**
- **Public Pool Drowning and Near Drowning - Brisbane South 1984 to 1994**
- **Rodent Bites**
- **Season Watch - Bites & Stings**
- **Injuries from Drinking Glasses**

## INJURIES TO TRUCK DRIVERS

For the two year period from 1/1/92 to 31/12/93 the QISPP database recorded 449 cases of injury to truck drivers while on the job. Only nine of the truck drivers were female and over a quarter of the drivers were in the 40 - 49 year age group.

The majority of injuries occurred during the week, with less than 10% reported on the weekend. Over 40% of the injuries occurred when loading or unloading the truck while 12% of accidents happened when getting into, out of or off the truck. Less than 4% of cases were motor vehicle traffic accidents involving the truck driver.

The most frequently recorded injuries were cuts and lacerations (almost a quarter of cases), particularly to the hands and fingers. In nearly one-fifth of cases a fracture was diagnosed with over half involving the upper extremity. Strains and sprains accounted for 20% of injuries.

In 8.5% of cases the injury was serious enough to require hospital admission while a further 54% required follow-up treatment.

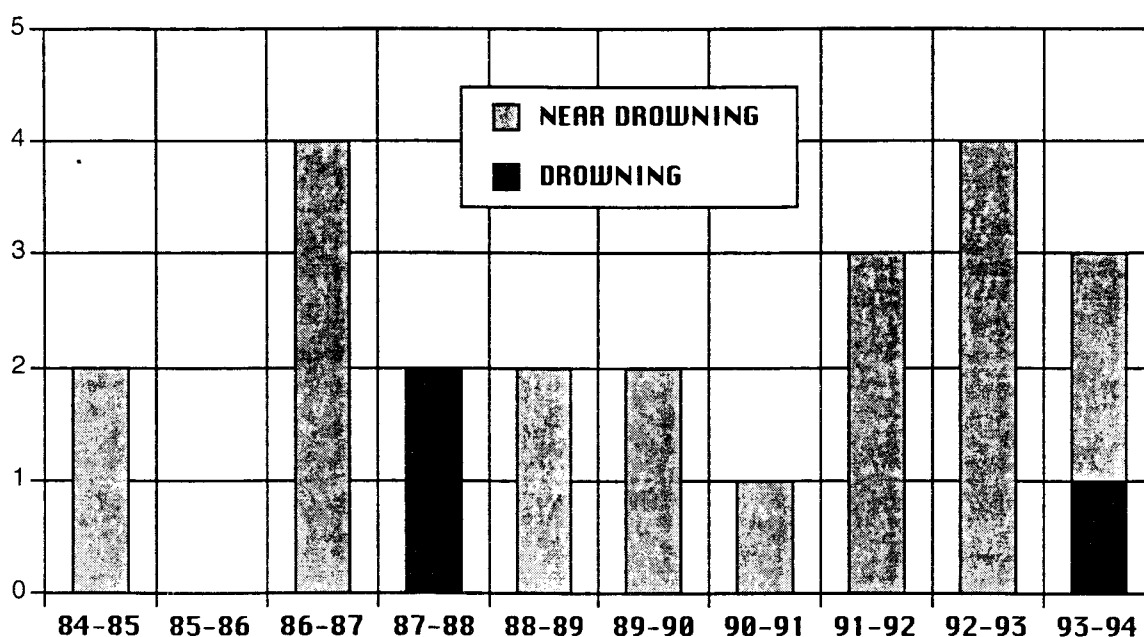
## PUBLIC POOL DROWNING AND NEAR DROWNING - BRISBANE SOUTH 1984 TO 1994

The recent drowning of a six year old boy in the Southbank lagoon has focused attention on the safety of public swimming pools. In the ten years since the Queensland Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project began in Brisbane South on 1.7.84, there have been 20 near drownings and three drownings of children in public pools (Figure 1). This compares with 145 near-drownings and 20 drownings in domestic pools over the same period (no domestic pool drowning has occurred in Brisbane South since universal fencing legislation was introduced almost two years ago). Although the numbers are not as great as domestic pools, public pools are entertainment and recreational venues where the community expects a high level of safety. Apart from the three deaths another six children required intensive care treatment and the remainder spent at least one night in hospital. Considering that the study area is only one half of the greater Brisbane area, the morbidity and mortality associated with the use of public pools is significant.

Any attempt to prevent further drowning and near drowning in public pools should be based on an understanding of the epidemiology which is similar to that of drowning in natural water hazards (rivers, lakes etc.) and different to that of domestic pool drowning. The mean age of children immersed in public pools is almost five years, which is double the mean age of immersions in domestic pools. The three children who drowned were all aged between five and seven years. Domestic pools are a danger to toddlers but public pools are more of a danger to young school children. Because of the older age group, boys are more likely to be victims in public pools. Considering that the figures for the 93/94 season are only half complete, the numbers of immersions in public pools seems to have increased over the last three years at a time when domestic pool immersion has decreased.

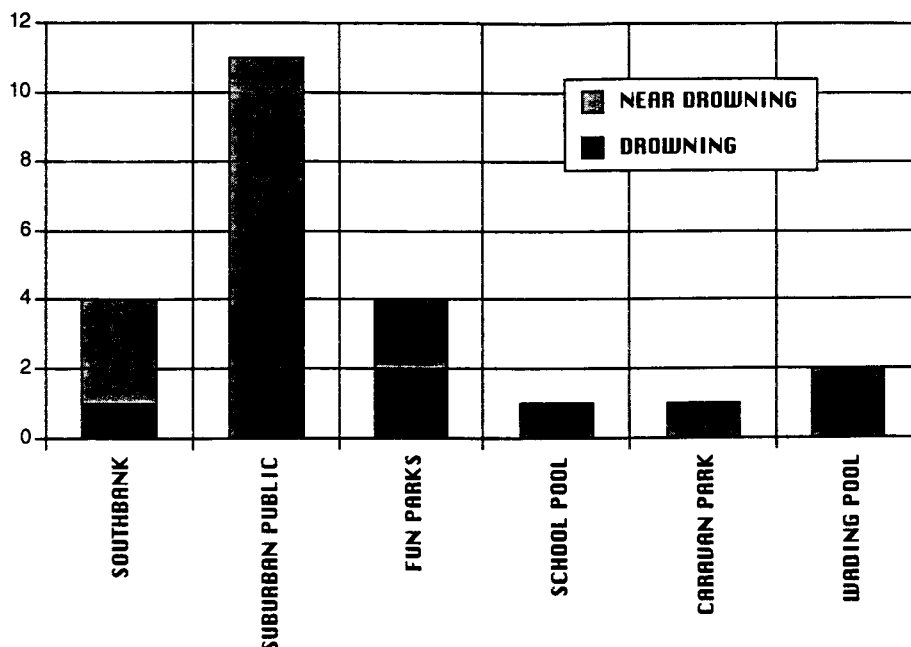
The locality of immersions in public pools is shown in Figure 2. Although there were 11 near drownings in conventional suburban public pools that are normally run in the daylight hours, it can be seen that there were no deaths in this setting. The deaths occurred in the commercial fun parks and at Southbank. There

Figure 1



DROWNINGS & NEAR DROWNINGS OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC POOLS FROM 1984 - 1993 IN THE BRISBANE SOUTH REGION

Figure 2



LOCATION OF CHILDHOOD DROWNINGS AND NEAR DROWNINGS ON THE QISPP DATA BASE FROM 1984 - 1993

have now been two near drowning or drownings at Southbank in each of the last two summer seasons since it opened. It is interesting to note that immersion incidents rarely occur in school pools despite the large number of children exposed to the water in this situation. This presumably relates to the high level of supervision associated with the use of school pools. The two near drownings in wading pools occurred in the shallow public pools in bay side suburbs.

Although near drowning and drowning in public pools is only one seventh as common as domestic pools, the community has an expectation that public pools should be safe in the same way that play grounds and amusement rides should be safe. Clearly, if amusement rides were killing children every second or third year then safety standards would be reviewed until the deaths ceased. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect a review of the standards associated with the use of public pools in Brisbane. The Coronial system is an excellent mechanism for considering safety issues and has been under utilised in Queensland in the past. Southbank and the commercial fun parks are the venues which deserve the closest scrutiny and where the community expects the highest levels of safety. The recent death at Southbank is deserving of full Coronial investigation if future deaths are to be minimised. Town planners and city officials must come to appreciate the

significant risks and responsibilities associated with encouraging unrestricted 'high volume' public use of deep water artificial lagoons.

Dr. Robert Pitt  
Director QISPP.



- Of the snake, spider, wasp and bee injuries found on the QISPP data base, nearly 40% occurred in the summer months.
- The main culprit was the spider and a spokesman for the Queensland Museum stated that numerous spider bites have been reported over the last few months. Due to the warmer weather experienced during winter this year, the red back spider commenced breeding earlier than usual, and its numbers have increased dramatically.
- Many bites and stings were sustained by people whilst gardening or doing home maintenance. Hands and feet were the most common bite site, followed by systemic injuries. Injuries from these creatures are often serious; as evidenced by the 15% of cases requiring admission to hospital.

# INJURIES FROM DRINKING GLASSES

Glass is in common use in the home and the workplace in recyclable containers, ornamental glass, utensils and as architectural glass.

QISPP has data on 6,153 people injured by glass who were treated in hospital emergency departments in the Brisbane South region during the five and a half year period to June 1993. Of this subset 744 people (12%) presented with injuries from drinking glasses. Ninety people were admitted to hospital. This report highlights these injuries from drinking glasses.

Males were more likely to be injured than females (448 males and 296 females). The most common age group to be injured was the 20-24 year age group for both males and females. Among the 57 children less than five years of age who were injured, two thirds were older than 12 months but less than three years of age.

Injuries were most likely to occur on Saturday followed by Friday. The time of day is shown in figure 1. The peak times were in the late evening, at lunch time, breakfast time and in the early hours of the morning. Injuries were also more common during the summer months than during the winter months.

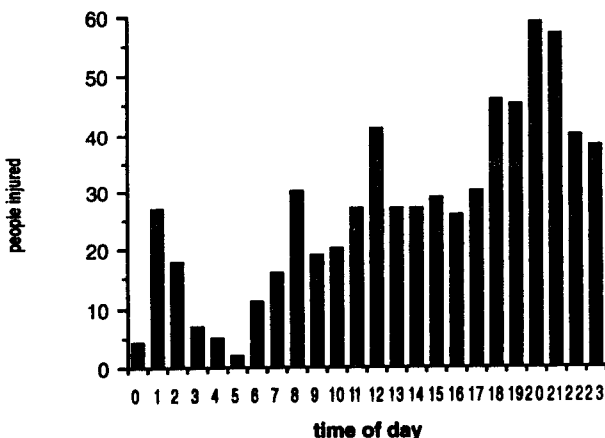
501 people (67.3%) were injured at home almost evenly divided between the kitchen and the living areas. 208 injuries occurred at hotels or other entertainment areas.

While the majority of people were undertaking household activities such as cleaning or eating (348), or were engaged in leisure activities (258), eleven percent of the injuries were a result of intentional violence between individuals. 73 of the people were "on the job" when injured.

Of those people treated for injuries from drinking glasses, one third required a single treatment in the emergency department while two thirds were significant injuries and required return visits for review or further treatment.

FIGURE 1.

Time of drinking glass injuries



Cuts and lacerations were the most common injury from drinking glasses. 473 injuries (63.5%) were to the arms, wrists or hands, 158 (21.2%) to the leg or foot and 136 (18.3%) to the face and neck.

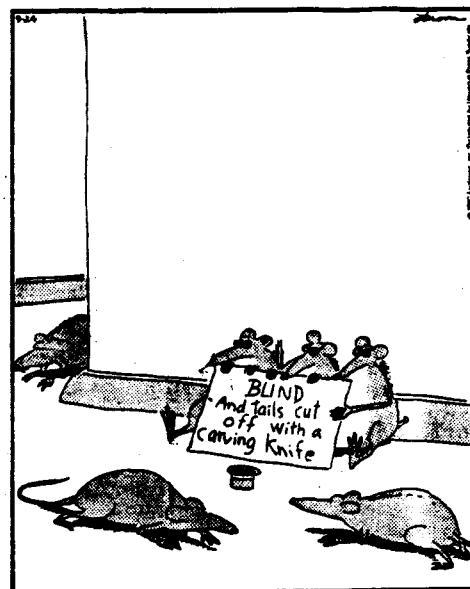
## DID YOU KNOW?

Apart from dog and cat bites people are also bitten by rats and mice. Most injuries occur to the fingers but cases have been recorded with bites to lips and ears. Not all of our rodent bites are from pets though; often a chase around the house ends with a nasty bite on the finger when the animal is finally cornered.

If you are thinking about rodent baits, remember the animal goes away to die and an inquisitive toddler or baby could find the bait, or as has been reported found the mouse and ingested it.

### THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



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