

## Position Statement

**TITLE:** Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (RLS) Aquatic Spinal Management

**NUMBER:** PS 03-16

**ORIGINAL VERSION:** APRIL 2016

**REVIEW DATE:** APRIL 2018

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### Supporting Resources

This position statement should be read in conjunction with the following resources:

1. ANZCOR Guideline 9.1.6 – Management of Suspected Spinal Injury January 2016  
Purpose

### Background

The possibility of spinal injury must be considered in the overall management of all trauma victims and caution must be taken when moving a victim with a suspected spinal injury. Following the release of the ANZCOR Guideline 9.1.16 (January 2016), the use of semi rigid (SR) cervical collars by first aid providers is not recommended.

ANZCOR recommended that all rescuers in the pre-hospital environment review their approach to the management of suspected spinal injury with regards to SR cervical collars. Consistent with the first aid principle of preventing further harm, the potential benefits of applying a cervical collar do not outweigh harms such as increased intracranial pressure, pressure injuries or pain and unnecessary movement that can occur with the fitting and application of a collar. In suspected cervical spine injury, ANZCOR recommends that the initial management should be manual support of the head in a natural, neutral position, limiting angular movement. In healthy adults, padding under the head (approximately 2cm) may optimise the neutral position. An awareness of potential spinal injury and careful victim handling, with attention to spinal alignment, is the key to harm minimisation.

The priorities of management of a suspected spinal injury are:

1. calling for an ambulance
2. management of airway, breathing and circulation
3. spinal care.

### Purpose

Following the release of the above ANZCOR Guideline (Jan 2016) the purpose of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (RLS) Aquatic Spinal Management Position Statement is to ensure trained candidates are provided with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively and safely remove a suspected spinal patient from an aquatic environment.

## **Workplace Induction**

All candidates should undergo an induction into a facility or environment prior to commencement to ensure knowledge of facility specific equipment and emergency procedures.

## **Currency of knowledge and Skills**

Lifeguards are required to re-accredit at least every 12 months to maintain their qualification and demonstrate an up to date knowledge and skill set. It is recommended that lifeguards practice their skills throughout the year, either formally or informally due to the professional nature of the qualification. Aquatic Spinal Management should be a part of this ongoing training and reaccreditation.

The following flow chart of principles should be followed throughout all Aquatic Spinal Management training and emergencies.

