

Facebook 'planking' craze claims life in Australia

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Ambulances in Cairns. A new craze sweeping the Internet known as "planking" has claimed a life in Australia with a man attempting the fad plunging to his death from a balcony Sunday.

A new craze sweeping the Internet known as "planking" claimed a life in Australia Sunday and police fear the tragedy may not be the last.

Planking involves someone lying flat on their stomach with their arms against their bodies in unusual and sometimes dangerous situations, with photographs of their exploits shared through social media sites.

It has gone viral [in recent weeks with Facebook page Planking Australia](#) boasting over 55,000 fans and hundreds of photos of people lying on train tracks, escalators, fire hydrants, motorbikes and other objects.

Police last week warned "plankers" of the dangers and their fears have been realised with the death of a man in Brisbane who plummeted from a seventh-storey balcony and died at the scene.

"This morning we have seen a young man take this activity a step further and attempt to plank on a balcony. Unfortunately he has tragically fallen to his death," Queensland Police Deputy Commissioner Ross Barnett said.

The man, who has not been named, and another person had been out during the night and were planking in various locations on their way home.

"It is what we've been fearing," added Barnett, but could not say whether it was Australia's first death from the craze.

Barnett said he was worried that more injuries would occur as people try to out-do each other by planking in increasingly precarious positions to get the ultimate photo.

"Police fear that as planking gains popularity there may be more injuries and potentially further deaths," he said, adding that it may appear to be light-hearted fun but can quickly turn to tragedy.

"Accepting a risk of injury for yourself is one thing, but the potential is there for others to be injured as a result of your behaviour."

Last week, a 20-year-old, also in Queensland state, was arrested after being allegedly found "planking" on a police car. He was charged with being on police equipment without lawful excuse.

Police issued warnings of the dangers at the time but the publicity only seemed to fuel the fad.

"If other people break the law during this activity they will be charged as well," warned Barnett.

"But no penalty will ever return this young man to his family and friends. This is a tragedy and our condolences go to the family."

Facebook tributes immediately started pouring in for the dead man.

"R.I.P Fellow planker," said one posting on the Australian Planking page.

"I didn't know him, but he was a planker like the rest of us."

Another wrote: "Stay safe dudes, plank carefully."

But not everyone was sympathetic.

"Seriously, people are so dumb. Get over this stupid planking thing," another post said.

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