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## Australian Story: Out of the Water

**Airs Monday, November 9 at 8pm on ABC and introduced by Johnathan Thurston, co-captain of the North Queensland Cowboys**

It's a tragedy regional Australia needs to know about.

In an *Australian Story* exclusive, a rural family are dealt a devastating blow and spearhead a campaign to alert communities of the deadly danger in their water.

***"It's rare but it's deadly and it's something that rural Australia needs to be aware of," - Dr Robert Norton, clinical microbiologist.***

When Jodi Keough traded her journalism career and modelling business for love and a life on the land she never thought she'd need her investigative skills again.

That was until she discovered something sinister in the water on her north-west Queensland cattle station.

In April this year her precious one year-old son, Cash, died after contracting a deadly parasite that, unknown to the Keoughs', thrived in their house water. The extraordinarily rare disease, caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, is little known, but what doctors do know is the chance of survival is next to none.

***"It causes severe inflammation, it causes brain destruction and we have no immunity to this" - Dr Greg Wiseman, paediatric intensivist.***

Like most rural families Cash's parents, Jodi and Laine, believed the water on their property was clean and safe.

They had no idea two other children had previously died from the disease just 100 kilometres from their homestead.

While Jodi and Laine are deep in grief they felt compelled to share their experience on *Australian Story* to warn other families of the potential danger.

***"I do feel that it is my responsibility, I do feel like it's up to me to prevent our nightmare becoming someone else's reality," - Jodi Keough, mother***

Authorities are supporting the family by rolling out a campaign in regional hospitals across north Queensland.

With no proven medical cure, prevention is the key message and the Queensland Government is recommending rural properties treat their house water.

***"For young toddlers around the home just make sure that the water that they're playing and washing in is disinfected and filtered if possible and we'll reduce the risk, but we won't get rid of it," - Dr Steven Donohue, Director Public Health, Townsville says.***

Unfortunately it's advice too late for the families who've lost three young children.

***"I just want to empower people with the knowledge. I do believe it would just simply be a matter of time that someone else will lose someone they love and statistically it's probably most likely going to be a child and a small child."***

**- Jodi Keough, mother**

## **FACTS:**

- The amoeba, *Naegleria fowleri*, was first identified in South Australia in the 1960s.
- There have been at least 300 known deaths from *Naegleria fowleri* around the world and at least 25 in Australia.
- Figures however are believed to be much higher as the disease is very difficult to diagnose.
- The only way to diagnose the disease is by obtaining fluid from around the brain.
- The amoeba exists in fresh, warm water over 25 degrees.
- The amoeba gets into the brain when water enters the nose. The disease most commonly strikes children because of an under-developed sliver of bone at the top of the nasal passage.

▪ Source: Queensland Government.

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