

Importance of School Swimming and Water Safety



INFORMATION SHEET

The information below provides schools and aquatic facilities with key information to include in newsletters, presentations or share with the community, to highlight the importance of school swimming and water safety programs.

There were **56 people who lost their lives to drowning in Victoria in 2018/19**. This is the highest annual drowning toll in more than 20 years. In addition to this, drowning is a leading cause of death of children aged 0-14 years, which indicates that there is still important work to be done to reduce the number of drownings in young people. The school setting is the ideal environment for the provision of vital lifesaving skills, so that no child misses out.

Globally, there are over **140,000 child-drowning deaths annually**. From 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2018, there were almost **1,000 child-drowning incidents in Victoria** (103 fatal drownings, 287 Emergency Department presentations, and 609 hospital admissions). Mandatory swimming and water safety programs will enable every Victorian child to have the opportunity to learn vital swimming and water safety skills regardless of location, physical capability, cultural background and socio-economic circumstances. Acquiring the knowledge of survival swimming and basic water safety skills can significantly reduce the risk of drowning, enhance community safety and build resilience in children.

The aim of school-run swimming, water safety and lifesaving programs will **enable children to learn core survival swimming skills as a minimum**, preparing them for unexpected entry into (open) water; learn personal safety when it comes to assisting someone in trouble; learn a valuable skill for life; increase their self-awareness, good decision making and leadership capabilities; empower children to take personal responsibility for their actions and become the influencers to keep family and friends safe.

Through implementing school swimming and water safety programs, children will have increased awareness of the risks associated with swimming and recreational activities at both coastal and inland waterways to ultimately reduce drowning deaths throughout Victoria. It is anticipated that all students prior to leaving primary school will attain the **Victorian Water Safety Certificate (VWSC)** that is designed to equip children with a basic level of swimming and water safety skills and knowledge. The VWSC describes specific competencies that focus on water safety knowledge, rescue skills, a survival sequence and the ability to swim a continuous distance of 50 meters.



For more information, visit the Swimming and Water Safety Online Toolkit at www.lsv.com.au/toolkit

