

Media Release:

FROM: SwimTastic

DATE: 24 July 2021: For Immediate Release

CALL FOR GOVERNMENT TO WALK-THE-TALK ON WORLD DROWNING PREVENTION DAY

To coincide with World Drowning Prevention Day a leading New Zealand swim school is calling on the Government to walk-the-talk and fully fund school swimming programmes.

Each year more than 350,000 people die from drowning around the world, with more than half of drowning deaths aged under 25 years old. Drowning is the third leading cause of death worldwide for those aged from 5 to 14. In New Zealand, Water Safety NZ reports 82 preventable drowning incidents occurred in 2019. For the 2021 year-to-date, there were 28 preventable drownings with swimming being the cause of 13 of those drownings.

“One drowning death is too many, so it was pleasing to see New Zealand recently co-sponsor the historic UN Global Agreement for Action [UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/75/273 “Global Drowning Prevention,” said Mark Bone, Former Olympic Swim Coach and Founder / CEO of Auckland based SwimTastic.

The UN Resolution states that drowning is a social equity issue that disproportionately affects children and adolescents in rural areas.

“We would hope this would have resulted in the Government walking-the-talk by fully funding the ‘Water Skills for Life’ education programme, but it doesn’t seem to be the case,” said Mr. Bone.

There are 475,797 Primary school kids (Years 1-8 – ages 5-13) across New Zealand yet only 200,000 have gone through the Water Skills for Life education programme at a cost of \$1.4 million for the year ending 30 June 2020. The Ministry of Education contributed only \$150,000 to the Water Safety New Zealand campaign.

There are some 275,797 New Zealand kids in Years 1-8 currently missing out on water survival competencies training.

“There has been no real change from 10 years ago despite the Ministry of Education’s New Zealand curriculum specifying that all children should get the opportunity through school to learn basic aquatic skills by the end of Year 6,” said Mr. Bone.

“While the Government in March launched the ‘Wai Ora Aotearoa: Navigating to a safer future - New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025’, which included recognising ‘Make Water Skills for Life and water safety education an integral part of children’s and young people’s learning through the Health and PE Curriculum’, the issue is the actual delivery which seems to woefully missing in action,” Mr. Bone said.

[ENDS]

Contact

Mark Bone, Founder/CEO SwimTastic Limited

Mobile: 0274 907 239

Email: mark@swimtastic.co.nz

Notes for Editors

- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/75/273 “Global Drowning Prevention” <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/106/27/PDF/N2110627.pdf?OpenElement>
- WHO Report: Preventing drowning: An implementation guide <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/preventing-drowning-an-implementation-guide>
- Ministry of Education: School pools and swimming lessons - <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/our-role-and-our-people/media-centre/school-pools-and-swimming-lessons/>
- Water Safety ‘The Drowning Report’ Live Statistics: <https://watersafety.org.nz/Live-Statistics-2021>
- Ministry of Education Funding to Water Safety: https://cdn.fld.nz/uploads/sites/watersafety/files/Annual_Reports/WSNZ_2020-AnnualReport-FINAL_W.pdf