

# Swim For Life – The full scale promotion and coordination of swim and survive in New Zealand

**Matt Claridge<sup>1</sup>**

Water Safety New Zealand<sup>1</sup>

## Background

Swim for Life is the Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) Learn to Swim and Survive project. Recent research conducted by Water Safety New Zealand has shown that the swimming ability of our children is in a downward spiral.

Of further concern is the failure of the New Zealand education system to provide quality learn to swim outcomes and a greater reliance on private enterprise to support the development of fundamental learn to swim skills in school children. The barriers to learning to swim and survival in New Zealand are evident across all geographic and demographic categories. The Swim For Life initiative focuses on creating awareness and mobilising parents, communities, individuals and schools to not only understand the importance of learning to swim in a relevant context but to act upon the need. Failure to do so will inevitably lead to a nation of non-swimmers and a subsequent increase in drownings.

## Aims/Objectives

The objective is to ensure that every child in New Zealand has the opportunity to learn the core life skills of swimming and surviving.

## Target

- Give all children quality opportunities to learn to swim and survive
- Facilitate the delivery of swim and survive programmes in primary schools
- Provide the foundations for the development of a culture that produces generations of New Zealand families that are water safe

## Methods/Implementation

WSNZ's approach is multi-faceted.

At a national level, WSNZ will act as a catalyst for change by:

- taking ownership of a national strategy that establishes sustainable and effective learn to swim initiatives in all regions
- work with Regional Sports Trusts in a collaborative way to achieve mutual goals
- prioritise resources to high need areas, and
- monitoring and evaluating to ensure long-term sustainability

At a regional level, WSNZ will effect change with its regional partners and enable by:

- catering to the needs and capabilities of each region
- galvanising stakeholders
- using a range of skills and tools to identify barriers and find solutions to them
- establishing business plans for each region

National Media Campaign – continued communication highlighting the issue of drowning.

Public Relations – activity aims to continue and further the momentum of the initiative across all communities and key audiences.

Advocacy – The Advocacy programme aims to build awareness among politicians and officials of the low number of New Zealand children who can swim and survive, and in so doing secure commitment to reintroduce swimming into the curriculum (a long term work programme).

## Results/Evaluation

- Swim ability measurements pre and post lessons
- Professional Development outputs and efficiency
- Media evaluation
- Funding generation

### **Discussion**

For all New Zealand children to have the opportunity to develop swim and survival skills, some significant obstacles must be overcome. To effect positive change there is a real need to reassert that the ability to swim and survive is a core-life skill for all New Zealand children and ensure opportunities are available to all to develop these skills.

### **Conclusion**

The Swim For Life objective is for all New Zealand children to be provided with the opportunity to develop learn to swim and survive skills. An increase in the number of New Zealanders learning to swim will impact positively on the number of aquatic based incidents and drownings.

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### **Corresponding Author**

Matt Claridge  
General Manager  
Water Safety New Zealand  
PO Box 10126  
Wellington New Zealand 6146  
Email: [matt@watersafety.org.nz](mailto:matt@watersafety.org.nz)  
Website: [www.watersafety.org.nz](http://www.watersafety.org.nz)  
Telephone: +64 4 8019600