

## DROWNING FIGURES DEMONSTRATE IMPORTANCE OF LEARN-TO-SWIM PROGRAMS



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The nation's peak industry body for swim schools, the Australian Swim Schools Association (ASSA), is urging all Australians to learn swimming and water safety skills in the wake of the recently released Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2016.

In commending Royal Life Saving Society - Australia on the continued excellence in producing this annual Report, ASSA Chief Executive Ross Gage, noted that it was unacceptable that 280 Australians drowned.

Of particular concern to ASSA is the 21 fatalities in the under five age group, with Gage relating "for every death, many are left from some form of permanent brain damage from immersions".

The Report highlights that once again swimming pools are by far and away the main location for such terrible accidents.

With endless aquatic opportunity, Australians are often looked upon, as born water babies. However, ASSA highlights that no matter our swimming education or ability, Australians are not completely immune to accidents.

While ASSA recommends that parents seek out an ASSA Member Swim School, Gage stressed that swimming and water safety lessons, while a vital layer of protection, are not a substitute for proper supervision and barriers.

Gage added "swimming lesson should be a must, but they are not enough. While people who know how to swim, can and do still drown.

"It's so sad to constantly hear and read of water related incidents, knowing more could have been done by all persons involved, to help avert the tragedy."

ASSA promotes the Layers of Protection message to help keep kids safer when in and around water. It's also a great checklist for adults, to help ensure the safety of their loved ones.

The four Layers, which must be applied together at all times, include:

**1. Constant adult supervision: Don't let the kids out of your sight.**

This is fundamental, and should be performed by a responsible adult. All non-swimmers and children under six, must be supervised within arm's reach.

**2. Proper barriers in place: Keep fences and gates locked up tight.**

Pool fences and gates need to be regularly inspected, maintained and meet government requirements. Objects and potential climbing aids like pot plants and chairs, need to be removed.

**3. Swimming and water safety skills and education: Learn to Swim, and how to get to safety.**

Practicing water safety skills provides another layer of protection, but should never be substituted for proper supervision and barriers.

**4. Emergency Action Plan: Always have a plan in case of emergency.**

Check the pool and other waterways first if a child is missing, then inspect bedrooms, cupboards etc. Ensure your resuscitation skills are up to date, and permanently display at least one resuscitation, or CPR Chart in the pool area.

Gage advised "while people have drowned in less water, than fills a drink bottle, drowning is preventable, especially if the Layers are applied at all times."

ASSA encourages parents to enroll children in swimming lessons in their early months, allowing enough time for the infant's immune system and bond with their primary carers, to strengthen. Gage adds "and once you start swimming lessons, we suggest, it's never a good idea to take a break. Drowning doesn't discriminate, and as accidents can occur in nearly any body of water, in any season, and to almost anyone, maintaining skills, is paramount.

"Drowning is a massive problem in Australia. It takes lives unnecessarily. But we can all do something to help prevent further heartache and loss - listen to the water safety advice, and actively apply the Layers of Protection. Do that, and we can all be safer, lifelong swimmers."

Ian Campbell, Managing Director of JUMP! Swim Schools believes developing water confidence in infants from three months of age is the key to reducing drowning statistics across the country.

Campbell added "teaching babies and children to swim is not only a safety measure but an essential skill for life.

"Children under five years are the age group that is most at risk of drowning. By getting more children water confident and swimming by the time they are primary school age, the more chance we will see drowning statistics decrease."

