

LAUNCH OF SURVIVAL SWIMMING GUIDE – PRESS RELEASE

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY LAUNCHES SURVIVAL SWIMMING GUIDELINES FOR COMMONWEALTH LIFESAVERS

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) Commonwealth has launched an ambitious campaign marking its 125th Anniversary in 2016: the development and extension of Survival Swimming initiatives in every Commonwealth country in which it operates.

Survival Swimming, which covers the necessary actions to help ensure people can survive an unexpected fall into deep water, is a vital skill both for leisure swimmers and those who live, work and travel on water.

To aid instructors, the RLSS has developed a Survival Swimming Guide, which is available on its website* for all Member Branches and other organisations to use.

Drowning is one of the biggest preventable causes of death in the world today, responsible for the deaths of around 373,000 people worldwide. Survival Swimming skills include being able to roll into deep water and surface with the head above water; keeping the head above water for 30 to 90 seconds; and swimming in a controlled manner for 10 to 50 metres.

Royal Life Saving Society, New Zealand has for a number of years had a full comprehensive AquaSafe Strand in their Award Scheme**. The Strands are:- 'Swim & Survive' with five levels and the 'Survivor Strand' with three levels. These encompass well established sequential survival swimming skills for all participants.

Also several RLSS member branches already have well established Survival Swimming programmes in their country, including Canada, St Lucia, Bangladesh, India and Australia. In St Lucia, for example, 21 out of the country's 24 swimming and lifesaving instructors have committed to teaching 'Swim to Survive'.

The challenge for the RLSS in 2016 and beyond is to bring Survival Swimming skills to everyone in the Commonwealth via RLSS instructors and other drowning prevention organisations.

"Drowning impacts disproportionately on children and people in poorer countries with over 90% of deaths by drowning occurring in low and middle income countries," said RLSS deputy Commonwealth president, Clive Holland.

"The World Health Organisation's 2014 *Global Report on Drowning* outlined *Ten Actions to Prevent Drowning****, and many of these actions are supported by the development of Survival Swimming initiatives.

"Our Member Branches in 27 Commonwealth countries are encouraged to work with other countries and organisations to establish new initiatives and build upon existing Survival Swimming.

“There could no greater legacy we can leave from our 125th Anniversary year than a significant reduction in the number of deaths by drowning throughout the Commonwealth, and we sincerely hope that our Survival Swimming campaign will help bring this about.”

* <http://www.rlsscommonwealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RLSS-Survival-Swimming-Guide.pdf>

** http://www.lifesaver.org.nz/pdf/RLSS_NZ_Award_Scheme.pdf

*** <http://www.rlsscommonwealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/10-Actions-to-prevent-drowning.pdf>

NOTES FOR EDITORS

New Zealand is a Member Branch of the Royal Life Saving Society.

About the Royal Life Saving Society

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS), which is celebrating its 125th Anniversary in 2016, was established in England in 1891. It is a volunteer organisation and charity dedicated to the prevention of drowning, and has independent, self-governing branches active in 27 Commonwealth countries.

The RLSS works with affiliates, partners and volunteers to reduce drowning through public education and awareness, lifesaving and lifeguard training, survival swimming and swimming instruction, risk management, lifesaving sport, research into the causes and prevention of drowning, and advocacy for sound drowning prevention standards.

HM Queen Elizabeth II is the Society's Patron, and HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO is the Commonwealth President. It is governed by the Commonwealth Management Committee, which comprises elected Branch Presidents representing Asia Pacific, Americas/Caribbean and Africa/Europe.

The Society is affiliated to the International Lifesaving Federation (ILS), which is recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the world authority on the global effort to prevent drowning.

About Drowning Prevention

The World Health Organisation's 2014 [Global Report on Drowning](#) notes that drowning is among the ten leading causes of death on children and young people, with the under 5's at disproportionately higher risk. Around 373,000 people drown worldwide every year, with 90% of deaths occurring in low and middle-income countries, many of them in the Commonwealth.

Visit www.lifesaver.org.nz or www.rlsscommonwealth.org.uk for more information.