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**Media Release**  
For Immediate Release



## **LEARN TO SWIM RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS FURTHER ISSUES FOR SCHOOLS**

Findings from a research study into school based aquatic education commissioned by Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) further highlight issues with the provision of swim and survive tuition delivered through the New Zealand education system.

Matt Claridge, General Manager, WSNZ “the research has provided invaluable information on what is actually occurring in schools, what resources are available to them and the issues schools face with regard delivering quality aquatic based education for their students. This helped WSNZ develop new strategies within Swim For Life that will be implemented from the fourth school term this year.”

“Children must learn swim and survival skills, it is imperative from a drowning prevention perspective and simply as a New Zealander. Schools can play a vital role. Consequently, WSNZ are evolving the most significant swim and survive project in New Zealand for 60 years. Through Swim For Life, WSNZ has aligned itself with the national network of Regional Sports Trusts and Territorial Local Authorities along with the New Zealand Recreation Association and the New Zealand Swim Coaches and Teachers Association. These partnerships are driven to support schools and local communities to enhance the delivery of swim and survival programmes.”

The research project undertaken by the New Zealand Council for Education Research surveyed 2553 schools in the primary and secondary sector. The focus was on finding information about aquatic education programmes and the physical resources (pools) available to schools. In total, 2525 responses were received from schools, a response rate of 99%.



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Access to water is the major issue, 91% of schools with pools only operate through the Summer months, the swimming season window is further condensed due to the major school holiday period in December and January. The majority of schools with no learn to swim programme state this is due to an inability to access pool facilities. Furthermore, the condition of some school pools renders them obsolete.

Claridge comments “The issues schools face are vast but primarily have a common theme of insufficient funding, access to facilities, teacher training, transport and a lack of emphasis and support from the Ministry of Education. 88% of all schools indicate they need help in these areas. While the vast majority of schools are making an effort in this area what is of real concern is that 68% reported they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their current programmes, yet we know from previous studies that the swimming ability of our youth continues to decline.”

Claridge believes this is further evidence of the need to effect change.

“The big issue is still getting children in the water and exposing them to a quality programme. Too many barriers sit in the way of that. Schools and teachers that have been providing for swim and survive tuition may need a hand to enhance the outcomes. That is where the partnership approach championed by WSNZ comes in.

“The research is clear, schools understand the importance of swim and survive education but there is not enough funding as the curriculum doesn’t make it happen.”

...Ends...

## Appendix 1: Executive Summary



**For more information or interview contact:**

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**WATER SAFETY NEW ZEALAND**

Formed in 1949, WSNZ is the national organisation responsible for water safety education in New Zealand.

WSNZ targets drowning prevention and water safety in communities through education. WSNZ oversees proven, proactive and preventative education interventions. In addition, WSNZ prioritizes leadership, collaboration and enabling the water safety sector with resourcing, research, planning and communication.

WSNZ is the lead agency for the Swim and Survive sector in New Zealand. The Swim For Life initiative is the major project for WSNZ. WSNZ seeks to address a dramatic decline in swimming ability of our youth. The Swim For Life initiative is an overarching, national project established to:

- Provide all children with access to the water;
- Facilitate the delivery of quality 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.



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