



Water Safety Campaign Targets Supervision of Young Children

Bright blue bath mats with a water safety message will appear in homes around New Zealand thanks to a new campaign by Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) and The Royal New Zealand Plunket Society Inc (Plunket).

The new national water safety campaign aims to reduce the drowning rate of young children in New Zealand.

Plunket nurses will give families a bath/shower mat at the five month check for their baby, while discussing water safety tips for toddlers. The mat will have the message “Always supervise children around water....always” “Tiakina ngā tamariki ki te taha wai i ngā wā katoa”.

Drowning of children less than five years old in New Zealand is high. In the 10 years (2000-2009), 90 under 5s have drowned. 58% of these drownings occurred at home, the majority being in a home pool or bath.

A lack of supervision is the common factor in drowning incidents of young children.

Matt Claridge, General Manager, WSNZ: “Water presents a potentially life threatening hazard for young children. The objective of the campaign is to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of water safety for young children with emphasis on active supervision to prevent drowning”.

Sue Campbell, Plunket National Child Safety Advisor says Plunket is delighted to be a part of the campaign, and staff are excited about positively supporting families to stay safe around water. “Plunket is committed to reducing drownings in the under 5s age group.

Parents must understand they cannot leave young children unattended in the bath or under the supervision of young siblings. Research is clear in relation to bath drowning deaths. Children were usually left momentarily for example to finish other household tasks or answer the phone”.

“Delivery of the bath mat by Plunket Nurses will provide opportunity to discuss the message with parents and emphasise the need to watch children around all water environments.”

Claridge concludes: “Young children are totally reliant on parents and caregivers for their safety. Tragedies involving young children and bath tub drownings are avoidable but appropriate supervision is the key.”

The campaign is set to run for a minimum of three years.

...Ends...

Attached information:

1. Bath Mat Project Information

For more information or interview contact:

Matt Claridge

WSNZ General Manager

Phone: (04) 801 9600

Mobile: (027) 478 1836

Email: matt@watersafety.org.nz

Sue Campbell

Plunket National Child Safety Advisor

Phone: 03 471 9286

Mobile: 027 2444430

Email: sue.campbell@plunket.org.nz