

26 March 2008

Media Release

For immediate release



25,000 Students Take on Swim For Life Challenge

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) announced today that in excess of 25,000 Year 5 – Year 10 students are currently participating in the *Swim For Life Schools Challenge*.

Swim For Life is a marketing campaign which seeks to promote action across all New Zealand communities through increasing awareness of the importance of being able to swim and survive.

Matt Claridge, WSNZ General Manager says “the foundation for an improved water safety culture begins with all New Zealand children provided with the opportunity to develop swimming and survival skills. The Schools Challenge will help to raise awareness about the importance of learn to swim programmes in schools. It is an exciting initiative that will measure the swimming capability of students against the long term goal of the initiative; that every New Zealand child is able to swim 200m confidently and competently by the age of 12”.

The *Swim For Life Challenge* is being run through the first term of 2008. Schools can incorporate it into their swimming sports, aquatic programme or as part of a physical education class. As an incentive WSNZ will award three schools, with the best ratio of students who meet the challenge, with \$1,000 worth of RFD life jackets to support further aquatic based education. In addition all students who complete the challenge will receive a personalised certificate of achievement.

Claridge continues “Schools have traditionally been an integral part of learn to swim delivery for Kiwi kids but there are a number of issues which negatively impact on their ability to provide quality tuition. However, we are delighted with the number of schools and students who have accepted the Challenge, this indicates to us that there are schools delivering strong programmes and that they are confident with the opportunity they are providing their students”.

“Our objective with the Challenge is to raise awareness, encourage participation and recognize achievement. We will also be in a position to identify schools that have quality programmes and will work with these schools to better understand how their programmes are structured and

delivered. This information will be shared with other schools in an effort to help them lift the quality of programme provided to their students”.

The *Swim For Life Challenge* concludes on 30 April 2008.

On average 114 New Zealanders drown every year (2003 – 2007). The drowning toll in New Zealand is twice that of Australia’s on a per capita basis.

Swim For Life is a collaborative initiative involving Water Safety New Zealand, the New Zealand Recreation Association, Swim Coaches and Teachers New Zealand and Swimming New Zealand.

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