

29 October 2007

## Media Release

For immediate release



# Under Five Waterwise Strategy Review

In the last 10 years 101 infant and preschool children have drowned in New Zealand. This figure consistently represents between nine and ten percent of the total drowning toll in New Zealand on an annual basis. Sadly for the most vulnerable in our society the home is the pre-eminent location for infant and preschool fatalities with 73% occurring in a domestic setting.

Hospitalisation data shows that 29 of the 120 submersion related injuries recorded for 2006 were from those under the age of five.

This data (fatal drowning and hospitalisation) reinforces that the home in its broad sense presents the greatest risk environment for children with the home swimming pool as the greatest at-risk area. On par with the home pool is the public swimming pool that accounted for the same amount of hospitalisations in 2006. This statistic reinforces that for the under five age group any water, be it in the home, or the pool, has the ability to turn deadly, quickly.

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) in partnership and collaboration with the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society, New Zealand Recreation Association and New Zealand Swim Coaches and Teachers Association have reviewed WSNZ's current strategic approach to the drowning issues of those that are under the age of five.

Matt Claridge General Manager of Water Safety New Zealand remarks: "the origin of drowning incidents for the Under Five age group generally stems from parent complacency with regard to supervision". Claridge continues: "as parents, supervisors, caregivers and people we need to remember to always actively supervise children near water, ALWAYS!"

Water Safety New Zealand's Under Five Waterwise project focus is to reduce drowning fatalities and submersion incidents for infant and preschool children in New Zealand through education. Subsequently, it promotes the following messages:

- "Always actively supervise children near water, ALWAYS!"
- Maintain hand contact whilst bathing and bath time.
- Ensure any home pool is fenced in accordance with the *Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987* (FOSPA 1987).



- Take children to the pool for valued time together in the water to develop water confidence and familiarisation skills.

...Ends...

All New Zealand drowning data is sourced from DrownBase™, Water Safety New Zealand's national drowning database.

All hospitalisation data is provided by the New Zealand Health Information Service, a unit of the Ministry of Health.

**For more information or interview contact**

Matt Claridge, General Manager

Phone: (04) 801 9600

Cell: (027) 478 1836

Email: [matt@watersafety.org.nz](mailto:matt@watersafety.org.nz)