

MEDIA RELEASE

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Brooke Hanson, Olympic Medallist and AUSTSWIM Ambassador supports learn to swim and water safety lessons for all Australian children

While swimming is an important part of the Australian culture, and children are naturally attracted to water it, has sadly been brought back into national focus with some tragic drowning Nationally.

AUSTSWIM – the Australian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety and Olympic medallist ambassadors; Geoff Huegill and Brooke Hanson are together committed to educating Australians about the importance of learn to swim and water safety and believe that it is critical for all Australian children to participate in learn to swim and water safety lessons and recommend 6 months as the age for starting.

Drowning remains one of the highest causes of accidental death in children, and for every one child who dies as a result of drowning, there are another four children admitted to hospital, and one fifth will be disabled for the rest of their lives. That's why 'now' is a great time to enrol your children into learn to swim and water safety lessons.

As a new mum, Olympic gold and silver medallist; Brooke Hanson understands the important role, learn to swim and water safety lessons, by appropriately accredited teachers play in every child's life. "The arrival of my first child Cooper has reinforced the importance of being taught learn to swim and water safety by an AUSTSWIM licensed teacher" she said.

"Cooper is only four months old and is already enjoying his water familiarisation education in the bath at home. The recent childhood drownings should be a warning to all parents to never take your eyes off your kids around water. Supervision means constant visual contact, not just the occasional glance. Never turn your back on toddlers, children or your swimming companions. Don't look away, don't walk off and don't get distracted – not even for a second," she said.

Olympic gold and silver medallist, Brooke Hanson went on to say; "Probably the greatest irony in me becoming an Olympic swimmer is that I could have drowned before I was two years old. Twice I was plucked from the bottom of the pool and it's unfortunate to know that thirty years on, childhood drowning's are higher than ever."

AUSTSWIM recommends when looking for a learn to swim and water safety program for your children, seek one with a positive and welcoming environment that includes parents as part of the learning process. Parents are an essential part of the learning process, and as the children learn so do the parents.

A well rounded program will also include all the essentials of water safety, water familiarisation, personal water safety, survival knowledge and steps towards stroke development.

Start small by familiarising your child with water in the bath at home. This allows your child to experience the buoyancy effect of water, the movement and force of water, and the feeling of water splashing and showering over the body.

Based on information from medical and child development experts, AUSTSWIM recommend that at 6 months of age children can join formal classes at the local pool. Formal class participation before 6 months of age is not advisable because not all infants under 6 months are physically or developmentally ready to be in a formal education program.

AUSTSWIM recommends formal class ratios that vary according to the age and competency of students and the venue being utilised. From 6 months to 24 months, one (1) to eight (8) Teacher: Baby/Parent and one (1) on one (1) baby and parent learning is best, 24 to 42 months one (1) to eight (8) Teacher: Toddler/Parent and one (1) on one (1) Toddler and parent, and by 42 to 48 months of age, a one to five teacher/preschooler ratio is suitable.

Swimming and water safety classes should be 30 minutes in duration and include a variety of activities, songs, games and equipment to enhance the learning experience of swimming and water safety skills. These programs are generally offered to children over the age of 4 years of age.

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Many parents are keen to know how quickly their child will learn, but learning is a continuous personal process unique to each individual child and a child's skill will evolve over time. Ongoing and consistent participation even during the winter months is the best way to aid the learning process.

Water is everywhere and it's not always clear, clean and heated. Learn water safety knowledge and personal survival skills for the beach, river, lake, dam, creek and even your pool at home.

AUSTSWIM CEO Gordon Mallett urges Australian parents to ensure that children are constantly supervised in and around the water and that they receive regular learn to swim and water safety aquatic education in a fun, engaging and safe environment by appropriately accredited AUSTSWIM Teachers™. Learning to swim provides you and your children with important skills and the confidence to be able to enjoy water safely. Providing your child with the opportunity to learn to swim and water safety skills will give them the best chance of survival if an accident were ever to happen. More than 50 children aged between 1 and 15 drown each year in Australia.

The following water safety tips are important for parents to remember:

AUSTSWIM 'WATER SAFETY' TIP 1

Water safety begins with you. Be within arm's reach when your family is in, on or around water.

AUSTSWIM 'WATER SAFETY' TIP 2

Regardless of swimming ability no person is drown proof. Ensure that there is adequate supervision **AT ALL TIMES** when your family is in or around water.

AUSTSWIM 'WATER SAFETY' TIP 3

Young children are fascinated by and attracted to water. Recognise or eliminate potential water dangers around your home; nappy buckets, fish ponds, bathtubs, toilets, wading or swimming pools.

AUSTSWIM 'WATER SAFETY' TIP 4

Water's everywhere and it's not always clear, clean and heated. Learn water safety knowledge and personal survival skills for the beach, river, lake and even your pool at home.

"AUSTSWIM encourages parents to ensure their children are being taught by accredited AUSTSWIM Teachers™ and in doing so parents are urged to check their child's swimming teachers, AUSTSWIM photo license". Mr. Mallett said.

AUSTSWIM has over 550 AUSTSWIM Recognised Swim Schools nationally who provide a range of learn to swim and water safety classes catering for ages six months through to adults. Classes are taught by accredited AUSTSWIM Teachers of Swimming and Water Safety™. To find a swim school in your area or if you are interested in becoming an accredited AUSTSWIM Teacher™ go to www.austswim.com.au

For further information or an interview please contact:

Gordon Mallett, AUSTSWIM CEO
Phone: 03 9562 7900
Email: gallett@austswim.com.au

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