



**Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
Deputy Leader of The Nationals
Minister for Rural Health
Minister for Sport
Minister for Regional Communications
Senator for Victoria**

MEDIA RELEASE

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LONGER-TERM GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO PREVENT DROWNINGS

The Coalition Government is ensuring continued support for Australia's water safety sector with a three-year, \$36.9 million funding commitment.

The investment will support a range of drowning prevention initiatives such as the River Black Spot Program, the Beach Safety Equipment Fund the Swim and Survive program and Kids Alive Do the Five. The funding will also support snow safety initiatives.

"A total of 291 people drowned in Australia last year – that's 291 lives lost tragically, but needlessly," the Minister for Sport, Senator Bridget McKenzie, said.

"The Coalition Government is committed to doing all it can to reduce drownings – and this longer-term funding will give organisations the ongoing support they need to do their vital work, including buying rescue and safety equipment, educating young children and their parents about the dangers of aquatic environments and teaching children to swim and survive.

"It will also help protect international visitors unfamiliar with Australia's beaches, rivers and waterways from the dangers of activities in and around water."

Minister McKenzie said the Coalition Government continued to support the Australian Water Safety Council's aspiration for a 50 per cent reduction in drownings by 2020.

The funding continues the Coalition Government's longstanding history of providing support to water safety organisations.

An independent review in late 2017 examined the Government's support for water safety and endorsed the direction being taken under the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2016–20 aimed at preventing fatal and non-fatal drowning accidents.

"The new streamlined Water and Snow Safety Program consolidates existing initiatives and gives the water and snow safety sector the certainty it needs to undertake longer term projects to keep Australians and international visitors safe in our aquatic and alpine environments", Minister McKenzie said.

Minister McKenzie reminded Australians that water safety was everyone's responsibility. "People need to remain vigilant around water," the Minister said. "Watch out for yourself and others. Know your swimming capacity, especially watch out for rips, swim between the beach flags, and never swim alone."

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