

Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Water



Sunday, 13 December 2020

PLAY IT SAFE BY THE WATER THIS SUMMER

Beaches across Victoria will be safer this summer with additional lifeguards, more patrolled areas to safely swim and increased surveillance along the coastline.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville announced an additional \$1.7 million funding boost for Life Saving Victoria (LSV) to ensure the safety of swimmers at Victoria's iconic beaches this summer.

The boost to beach safety coincides with the launch of this year's Water Safety campaign – which aims to increase awareness of safety around water and reduce the number of drowning incidents in Victoria.

With many Victorians having fewer experiences around water and swimming during recent restrictions, the additional LSV funding will help keep people safe at Victoria's 67 patrolled locations and nearly 570 public pools.

Volunteer lifesavers on Victoria's beaches will increase patrolled areas by putting flags further apart and establishing extra sets of flags on high-demand beaches when conditions allow. This investment will also fund 300 additional paid lifeguards – increasing lifeguard capacity by 30 per cent.

The additional funding will also assist in implementing COVIDSafe protocols, such as providing personal protective equipment (PPE) lifesaving volunteers at 57 lifesaving clubs across the state.

This latest funding will also provide increased coastal patrols with aerial surveillance including drones and an additional helicopter for situational analysis.

Last year, lifesaving clubs along patrolled beaches conducted 475 rescues, responded to 2,339 first aid cases and undertook 106,935 preventative actions across Victoria's coastline.

The Water Safety campaign asks Victorians to 'know your limits', encouraging them to 'rethink' risky behaviour and be better prepared around water. This year the campaign is particularly targeted at men aged 25-64, as well as those from diverse backgrounds, who may ignore, or not be aware of the risks.

Since the annual Water Safety campaign was established in 1998, the rate of drowning deaths per year has decreased from over 30 per 100,000 Victorians to less than 20 per 100,000.

However recent increases in drowning deaths show a worrying trend leading into summer, with 26 reported drowning deaths in Victoria between 1 July 2020 and 10 December 2020 – the highest number seen for this time period and 11 more than both the five and 10 year averages for this period.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville

"We know Victorians are excited to get back to the water this summer, so we're making sure our life savers have the resources they need to keep people safe."

"We'll have more lifeguards, and increased water patrols and aerial surveillance along the coast to make sure people can still go swimming, in a way that is both water safe and COVIDSafe."

"We want every Victorian to be safe this summer – this year's Play it Safe by the Water Campaign will help raise awareness of the risks associated with swimming and encourage everyone to rethink dangerous behaviour."

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