

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



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EXTENDED LIFESAVING PATROL SEASON FOR VICTORIAN BEACHES

Victorians are being reminded to stay safe around the water as the weather warms up, with this weekend officially marking the start of what will be an extended lifesaving patrol season around the state.

Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes joined volunteers today at Life Saving Victoria's (LSV) headquarters in Port Melbourne to remind Victorians hitting the beach this summer to swim at patrolled locations and between the red and yellow flags.

This weekend marks the official start of the annual patrol season for thousands of lifesavers and lifeguards, who will run full patrol services at bay and coastal lifesaving clubs around the state until after Easter 2022.

Last summer, Victoria volunteer lifesavers and lifeguards performed 612 rescues and undertook 233,700 preventative actions to keep an estimated 3.8 million visitors to our beaches safe.

This is the second time LSV has provided an extended lifesaving season, after last year's season was extended for a similar period following the busiest patrol season on record and an increase in drownings.

Tragically, last year saw Victoria record its highest deadly drowning toll in more than 20 years, with 61 people losing their life.

The Andrews Labor Government has provided \$8.5 million in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* to LSV for critical water safety initiatives to reduce the number of drownings and to support LSV in meeting increasing operational costs.

It's one of the largest ever investments in water safety and includes \$4.34 million to support the extension of the lifesaving season in 2021-22 as well as funding for rescue equipment maintenance at LSV and the rest of our 57 lifesaving and surf lifesaving clubs.

The funding includes an investment of \$1.32 million to support an increase in LSV's aerial water safety surveillance activities, which will see more services from LSV's remotely piloted aircraft drone systems as well as more flight hours for the rescue helicopter service.

The funding has also supported the installation of a new high-definition winch camera on the rescue helicopter, which allows the crew to clearly see a patient's condition when being winched to safety.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes

"People will undoubtedly be keen to visit our beautiful beaches this summer – however it's important that they be careful around the water."

"Our lifesavers and lifeguards will be on our beaches for longer to make sure Victorians are safe – but everyone can do their part to reduce the risk by only swimming between the flags at patrolled areas."