

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Wednesday, 30 January 2019

CHECK BEFORE YOU DIVE THIS SUMMER

The Andrews Labor Government is appealing to Victorians, particularly young people, to stay safe and be aware of the risks associated with diving into water this summer.

Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos and the Director of the Victorian Spinal Cord Service at Austin Health Associate Professor Andrew Nunn, today joined 26-year-old paraplegic Josh Davis to urge young people to check water depth before diving to avoid severe spinal cord injuries.

Mr Davis was swimming with friends in the Murray River last January when he jumped from a mate's shoulder into the water and severely injured his spine.

So far this summer, the service at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre has treated three patients with spinal cord injuries that will last a lifetime.

Every year, around six people come to the Victorian Spinal Cord Service with their lives irreversibly changed by a split-second decision to jump into shallow water.

The force as the head hits the bottom usually impacts on the vulnerable mid neck. This can result in fractures and dislocation of the vertebrae and severe damage to the soft spinal cord, and lead to quadriplegia.

Factors such as unfamiliar water, shifting sands and a lack of visibility can all create a risky environment for diving into water.

The Labor Government is calling on Victorians to challenge their mates and call out anyone engaging in risky or dangerous activities.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"It doesn't matter if it's a backyard swimming pool, river, creek or the ocean – you need to know the depth of the water before diving in."

"Unfortunately we have people suffering severe injuries every summer, but these are avoidable if you take a few precautions."

"We want everyone to enjoy themselves this summer but look after yourselves and your mates – one split second decision can have a lifelong impact."

Quotes attributable to Austin Health's Associate Professor Andrew Nunn

"Know what can happen if you dive head first into shallow water. A broken neck is a life sentence and something that just doesn't need to happen."

"Unfortunately this is a holiday phenomenon, so the risks are greater at this time of year with the warmer weather and people being away on holiday."

"Injuries from diving into shallow water can have devastating consequences, but they are preventable."

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