Gary Higgins
Minister for Sport and Recreation

Record number of Territory toddlers enrol in learn to swim programs

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The Northern Territory Government’s Learn to Swim Voucher Scheme is behind a record number of toddlers being enrolled in learn to swim programs through the Royal Life Saving Society (NT).

Minister for Sport and Recreation Gary Higgins, who was joined by former Australian swimming coach Laurie Lawrence at Nightcliff Primary School today, said there have been 1173 toddlers registered to complete the Water Safety Awareness Program since 1 July this year, exceeding the entire 2013-2014 total of 1138.

“Undertaking the Water Safety Awareness Program is a precursor to parents and carers being eligible to access the Northern Territory Government’s $100 Learn to Swim Vouchers,” Mr Higgins said.

“The Learn to Swim Voucher Scheme has resulted in nearly 800 vouchers being issued to parents and carers who are keen to take advantage of the Government’s free water safety initiative since it began in July this year.

“The Territory’s climate and lifestyle makes swimming and living near water almost compulsory so it is certainly heartening to see a record number of parents taking the initiative and ensuring their child attains this important lifelong skill.

“The Learn to Swim Vouchers are part of the Giles Government $5 million expansion of the successful Sports Voucher Scheme, which is aimed at easing the financial squeeze on families.”

Under the scheme, Territory children aged five years and under who are not enrolled in pre-school or school are eligible for $200 in swimming lessons a year, available as twice yearly $100 vouchers.

Mr Lawrence, who is a water safety ambassador and head of the national Kids Alive Do the Five Drowning Prevention Campaign, praised Territory parents who had taken advantage of the scheme.

“Practice and exposure are the keys to learning to swim. Therefore if you want your child to learn fast, you need to take them to a pool regularly. The Northern Territory Government’s Learn to Swim Voucher scheme makes it much easier for families to not only get to a pool but receive instruction from qualified swimming instructors,” he said.
“Drowning is the greatest cause of accidental death in children under five in Australia. On average one child drowns each week. I applaud the Northern Territory Government and the Royal Life Saving Society (NT) for helping to put an end to childhood drowning.”

Applications for the Learn to Swim Voucher scheme open from 1 January and 1 July each year. The Vouchers are valid until 31 May each year and are available from: http://www.sportandrecreation.nt.gov.au/grants-vouchers/learn-swim-voucher

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