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AMA URGES WATER SAFETY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

With summer temperatures set to soar, the AMA is urging Australians to take appropriate care of themselves and their loved ones in and around water this summer.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that water sports and recreation activities are an integral part of the Australian way of life.

“Beaches, pools, waterslides, rivers, lakes, creeks and other waterways are the destination for most Australians in the summer holidays, especially when the temperatures are high,” Dr Gannon said.

“Water activities can provide a much needed reprieve from the scorching heat, but it is important that they are conducted safely.

“According to Royal Lifesaving, there were 280 drowning deaths in Australia between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016, with over a third of these deaths occurring in summer.

“Everyone can play an important role in helping to reduce these tragic incidents.”

Preventive measures can include:

- ensuring that pools are appropriately fenced;
- avoiding swimming alone;
- supervising children;
- using personal flotation devices;
- staying between the flags whilst swimming at the beach;
- abstaining from consuming alcohol or other drugs while participating in aquatic activities; and
- learning CPR to allow you to render assistance if required.

Dr Gannon said that accidents that occur through aquatic leisure activities are responsible for just under 10 per cent of all new spinal cord injuries in Australia.

“The safest way to enter the water is feet-first,” Dr Gannon said.

“Always check the depth of the water before jumping in, and be mindful of floating debris or unexpected hazards.

“It is important to remember that water depth can change on a daily basis due to tides and sand movement. Never assume the depth of the water without checking first.

“Be aware of safety when you are swimming at an unfamiliar location. Before entering the water, familiarise yourself with the conditions by taking note of any safety signs and, where possible, try to swim only at a patrolled beach. And check for rips.

“Take precautions against sun exposure and other heat-related risks.

“Remember the *SLIP, SLOP, SLAP, SEEK, SLIDE* rules for staying safe in the sun. Slip on a shirt, Slop on sunscreen, Slap on a hat, Seek shade, and Slide on some sunglasses.

“Sunscreen must be reapplied regularly and given adequate time to dry before entering the water.

“Higher UV protection ratings do not mean you can apply less sunscreen.

“Despite being surrounded by water, it is still possible to become dehydrated while enjoying yourself at the beach or in a pool.

“Make sure that you continue to drink plenty of water and watch out for the signs of dehydration, such as increased thirst, headache, dry mouth, dizziness, and lethargy.

“Above all, make the most of the health benefits of sport, exercise, and play in the beautiful water locations Australia has to offer,” Dr Gannon said.

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