

Submission 153 TE Inquiry

Dear Secretariat

I realise that I have missed the deadline for submissions by a long way and there may be no way for us to be included further. However, if it is possible to be included as part of a stakeholder or reference group in the future, or even to receive the results of the inquiry, it would be appreciated.

For background, the Royal Life Saving Society Australia is the major educator and trainer of water safety and lifesaving skills - we put over 1,000,000 Australians through one or other of our courses every year. The Swim and Survive program targets children in the 5-14 age group and over 750,000 gain their initial swimming and water safety skills through us. The more advanced "lifesaving" program Bronze Medallion is taught in secondary schools but at this point only 10% of the 13-18 age group attain their Bronze. This means that the majority of our young people are not necessarily able to ensure their "personal aquatic survival" during their school years.

The main issue I would like to see included relates to the training of student teachers in swimming and lifesaving skills. For many years, all student teachers were required to be competent in these skills, so that they could identify dangerous aquatic situations and avoid them, or have the skills to safely rescue themselves and / or students under their care who got into difficulties. From first hand experience, these skills were vital and saved a student at a camp I conducted when she was caught in a rip and nearly drowned.

Regrettably, for quite some years, student teachers have not been trained in these skills, and this places them and the students under their care in danger when on, in and around aquatic environments.

The death of Anthony NGUYEN in Western Australia on 30th. November, 1998 at Conto Beach in Leeuwin National Park, Western Australia graphically illustrates the danger. In the Finding Upon Inquest by the Coroner (4092/98), the first guideline recommended for all schools states:

a) that swimming be actively supervised by persons holding qualifications in swimming and rescue and first aid techniques up to the standard at least of the Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion, or its equivalent;

We have recently read of the tragic drowning of several members of a family in the Grampians, which was triggered by a child falling in to a deep pond, and followed by the ineffective and ultimately fatal efforts of untrained family members attempting to rescue the child.

This could just have easily been a child on an excursion getting into difficulties and untrained teachers also drowning as they attempted to rescue the child.

Therefore I recommend in the strongest possible terms that all student teachers be trained and gain "qualifications in swimming and rescue and first aid techniques up to the standard at least of the Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion, or its equivalent;"

I apologise again for the lateness of this communication and understand if there is no way of being involved in the future. If there is an opportunity I would be pleased to speak with you on (02) 8217 3113.

Thank you and regards

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