

# **MEDIA ADVISORY**

(for immediate release)

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Tuesday, 14 February 2006

## **Pongakawa School Adopts Swim For Life**

### ***Background***

Pongakawa Primary is the first school in the Bay of Plenty Region to sign up with the Swim For Life initiative.

Swim For Life is a marketing initiative focussed on getting New Zealand children back in the water and learning to swim. Ideally children receive this tuition at school, but fundamental to the programme is the acknowledgement that less than 25% of New Zealand children can swim 200 metres by the age of twelve.

Roger Scott from Water Safety New Zealand is visiting the school this Wednesday to formalise the agreement with Principal Craig Haggo.

Mr Scott says Pongakawa is very fortunate to have a school that puts so much emphasis on learning to swim and survive.

The 300 students at the school benefit from the six-lane heated outdoor pool, funded by the local community and Lottery Grants in 1996. Every student receives 30 minutes of swim and survive instruction daily throughout Summer and Term 1.

The pool is used during lunchtimes for water polo training and flippa ball practice. In addition the Pukehina Surf Life Saving Club use the school pool to train.

Teacher Francis Patete strongly supports the daily swim and survive instruction and is a keen advocate for promoting water safety skills.

“We love to share our enthusiasm and success with the rest of the nation. Pongakawa is a small community, but proud of what we have achieved for our children.”

Roger Scott is also enthusiastic about what is happening in the Pongakawa Community.

“As a core life skill, the ability to swim and survive is the key intervention for reducing drownings. Although Pongakawa parents can never rest easy with children around water, they can take great satisfaction in the knowledge that their children will be able to make safer decisions around water in the future, and that they have an appreciation of safety around water.

The fact that a large number of schools in New Zealand do not have a Learn to Swim programme is disheartening. Thankfully schools like Pongakawa Primary School are ensuring their pupils have a positive aquatic experience.”

## *Facts*

- Learning to swim & survive has **not been compulsory** in New Zealand schools for many years.
- Drowning is a **major cause of accidental death** in New Zealand.
- There were 103 drownings in 2005; five in Bay of Plenty region

## *Quotes*

Water Safety New Zealand Executive Director, Alan Muir, says New Zealand has double the number of drownings per capita than Australia.

“Drowning has always been known as The New Zealand Death,” says Muir, “Even though drowning deaths have reduced by 46% in the past 20 years it is still far too high. On average 124 people lose their lives to the water in this country, at a huge social cost to families, friends, and whanau.”

## *Supporting Information*

Last year a total of 160 teachers in the Bay of Plenty region received swimming instruction training funded by Water Safety New Zealand. Whilst Pongakawa School is the first in Bay of Plenty, it is hoped that every school in the region will eventually sign on with Swim For Life.

Swim For Life is but one example of a marketing intervention that aims to further reduce drowning deaths.

Swim For Life is a marketing initiative focussed on getting New Zealand children back in the water and learning to swim. Ideally children receive this tuition at school, but fundamental to the programme is the acknowledgement that less than 25% of New Zealand children can swim 200 metres by the age of twelve.

Water Safety New Zealand is actively promoting Swim For Life in the Bay of Plenty Region. Swim For Life works to ensure the barriers to learning to swim and survive are overcome and builds awareness by promoting positive activity in the community.

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Ends

Photo opportunity with Francis Patete and students:

Pongakawa School Pool  
Old Coach Road  
Pongakawa  
11:30 AM, Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2006

For further information contact:

**Roger Scott**  
Water Safety Coordinator  
Water Safety New Zealand  
(027) 248 0644  
(04) 801 9600  
[roger@watersafety.org.nz](mailto:roger@watersafety.org.nz)  
[www.watersafety.org.nz](http://www.watersafety.org.nz)