

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Medical Research



Thursday, 5 December 2024

HELPING BUSY FAMILIES WITH 900,000 SWIMMING LESSONS IN SCHOOLS

Families across the state will receive more support for school swimming lessons as part of the Allan Labor Government's plan to keep Victorian children safe around water.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll today joined Debney Meadows Primary School students at Carlton Baths to mark Water Safety Week (2-8 December) and to announce further funding for the Swimming in Schools initiative to help Victorian children learn to swim.

The Labor Government is investing an additional \$73.4 million which will flow to schools over the next four years, supporting the equivalent of more than 900,000 swimming lessons for students across the state each year.

Combined with existing funding, more than \$92 million will now support swimming and water safety in schools over the next four years.

The Swimming in Schools program aims to increase opportunities for students to learn how to swim, and ensure they develop lifelong skills in swimming and water safety to reduce their risk of drowning and injury.

Funding is provided to every government and Catholic primary school as well as students of all ages in government specialist schools and English Language Schools, reflecting the higher risks these students can face around water.

As part of this investment, Life Saving Victoria will implement the Water Safety in Schools Initiative, providing expert guidance and resources to support schools and the aquatic sector to deliver targeted swimming and water safety programs to young Victorians, with a focus on supporting at risk cohorts.

These programs build on the Labor Government's other water safety initiatives, including the popular *VICSWIM Summer Kidz Program*, which teaches kids basic swimming skills as well as crucial water safety education at a subsidised cost of \$35 for a week of lessons.

The Labor Government is helping busy families cover the costs of additional swimming lessons with the \$400 School Saving Bonus. The School Saving Bonus is delivering cost-of-living relief for Victorian families, saving more than \$13 million in back-to-school costs just one week since the launch of the School Saving Bonus.

The *Victorian Budget 2024/25* funding builds on the \$131.6 million already invested in swimming and water safety education since 2017.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Ben Carroll

"School swimming is always a highlight of the school year – and we don't want any student to miss out on the fun and the vital education that our water safety programs provide."

"The importance of water safety knowledge and swimming skills cannot be overstated – and this program is making sure all Victorian kids have these crucial skills."

Quote attributable to Minister for Community Sport Ros Spence

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"Teaching kids swimming skills is so important as we enter the summer months. Our popular VicSwim program helps families with affordable swim lessons and this investment builds on that to provide all primary school kids with the chance to learn how to swim."

Quotes attributable to Member for Northern Metropolitan Sheena Watt

"We're proud to deliver swimming and water safety programs for all primary aged students, particularly groups of students who are at higher risk. This initiative saves lives."