

Media Release

The Hon Vicki Ward MP

Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery
Minister for Equality



Friday, 24 January 2025

DIVE INTO SAFETY NOT TROUBLE THIS LONG WEEKEND

With large crowds expected to flock to the beach, pools and lakes this long weekend, Victorians are being urged to follow the basic water safety rules when swimming and boating to curb the rate of drownings this summer.

Minister for Emergency Services Vicki Ward today joined Life Saving Victoria (LSV) at Sandridge Life Saving Club in Port Melbourne to recognise the vital work of volunteer lifesavers and remind Victorians of the dangers around water.

The reminder comes following an already fatal summer with 14 drownings on record so far – a figure which is above both the five and ten-year average for the same period.

Last summer there were 27 fatal drownings, which is the highest number on record. LSV lifesavers conducted 849 rescues and attended more than 1,300 major first aids on our beaches.

Water safety is a shared responsibility, and everyone needs to do their part to stay safe when swimming and boating. People should swim at patrolled beaches and between the red and yellow flags, read the signage and check conditions before entering the water, and ensure children are always supervised.

If people are going to be around water do not drink alcohol, avoid swimming alone and always wear a lifejacket when boating and fishing. Jet ski users must comply with their safety obligations and respect others on the water.

There have been 51 boating-related drownings in the last decade, with more than half of these happening because the person wasn't wearing a life jacket, and more than a quarter because a life jacket was worn incorrectly.

Visitors to inland waterways should understand the conditions and consider the risks, as rainfall and storms may have created more underwater hazards.

As part of this year's Budget, the Allan Labor Government is delivering more than \$9 million to support LSV's critical lifesaving services – supporting paid lifeguard services, rescue watercraft, aircraft and drone services and public information.

Swimming classes are now more affordable for families at more than 170 swimming centres, with discounted lessons and Get Active Kids vouchers.

The Labor Government provides a further \$1 million annually to deliver a water safety campaign, which includes targeted information and education for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

To find your nearest patrolled beach location, visit beachsafe.org.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Vicki Ward

"Our dedicated volunteers go above and beyond to ensure the safety of Victorians, but they can't have eyes everywhere. Everyone has a part to play to make sure that we all stay safe in the water."

"We want everyone to enjoy their long weekend with loved ones unharmed. Check the Beachsafe website or other local information to make sure the waterway you're relaxing at is safe."

Quote attributable to Life Saving Victoria CEO Catherine Greaves

"I thank all our volunteer lifesavers, paid lifeguards and staff who are out this weekend, and who have worked tirelessly to keep our community safe over summer."

Media contact: Casey Lodge 0410 964 928 | casey.lodge@minstaff.vic.gov.au