



MATT CONLAN MLA | **Member for GREATORIX**
MINISTER FOR SPORT, RECREATION AND RACING

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW LEARN TO SWIM VOUCHERS FOR TODDLERS

14 May 2014

The Northern Territory Government's successful Sports Vouchers scheme will be expanded to include learn to swim classes for toddlers from 1 July 2014.

The announcement comes after yesterday's 2014 Budget saw an extra \$5 million for the scheme, which will also see the Vouchers increased from \$75 to \$200 a year.

"Learning to swim is a vital life lesson and expanding the Sport Vouchers to include toddlers provides parents with more opportunity to ensure their children learn this important skill, no matter what their age," said Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing Matt Conlan.

The new Learn to Swim Voucher will be available for toddlers aged 0-5, who are not enrolled in school or pre-school and who have completed the Government's Water Safety Awareness Program.

The Water Safety Awareness Program provides five free water safety lessons for parents and guardians and their children aged 0 to five years old across the Territory.

"The Northern Territory is leading the way in drowning prevention with our new Learn to Swim Vouchers," said Mr Conlan.

"The new vouchers will ensure that from the time a child is born until they leave school, they will have subsidised access to water safety awareness lessons, learn to swim classes and swimming lessons.

"Helping families with the cost of getting their children involved in sport and recreation activities is a part of the Country Liberals Government's plan to drive down the cost of living.

"Our new Learn to Swim Vouchers are great news for Territory mums and dads. It will ease the financial burden on families and ensure all Territory toddlers can learn to swim, which will ultimately help prevent tragic drownings in the Northern Territory."

Owner of the NT Swim School, Hollie Goodall, welcomed today's announcement.

"The expansion of the Sport Vouchers to include toddlers on learn to swim classes is going to be phenomenal for parents," she said.

"Swimming is a skill everyone should have and it's a huge bonus that not only are the Vouchers being increased to \$200 but they can be used for toddlers too. Our enrolments have already increased this year after learn to swim was included in the school-aged Sport Voucher scheme and we expect the same will occur with the new Vouchers for toddlers," Ms Goodall said.

Executive Director of Royal Life Saving NT, Floss Roberts, said the new Learn to Swim Vouchers would help increase participation in the Water Safety Awareness Program.



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“Since the Water Safety Awareness Program began in 2003 more than 9,000 children under five have completed the scheme and now we are looking forward to seeing that number grow even further with today’s announcement that parents will be eligible for \$200 worth of Learn to Swim Vouchers once they have completed the Program,” she said.

“The Water Safety Awareness Program targets children at the critical age of 0-5 and makes a dramatic difference in drowning prevention.

“I congratulate the NT Government for taking such a momentous step to help reduce the rate of child drowning and I urge all parents to take advantage of the five free lessons and new Learn to Swim Vouchers to ensure their children learn this vital life skill.”

Like the school-based Sport Vouchers, the Learn to Swim Vouchers will be available as a \$100 Voucher twice a year.

Once their child has completed the Water Safety Awareness Program, parents can apply online to receive the new Learn to Swim Voucher for toddlers. Once they apply online, a \$100 Voucher will be posted out to their mailing address. Applications will open from 1 July and 1 January each year.

Parents can apply each year for the Vouchers until their child turns five or they are enrolled in preschool or school. Parents whose child has already completed the Water Safety Awareness Program prior to 1 July 2014 are still eligible to apply for the new Learn to Swim Vouchers.

Swim schools eligible to redeem vouchers will be those registered with AUSTSWIM or Swim Australia.

There have been 14 drowning deaths in the Territory for the 2013-2014 financial year, with six drownings in the first seven weeks of 2014.

For more information on the Sports Voucher scheme and new Learn to Swim Voucher go to www.sportvoucher.nt.gov.au or phone 1800 817 860.

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