



Australian High Commission

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian High Commissioner observes Swim for Safety training at Otter's Club

The Australian High Commissioner, Her Excellency Robyn Mudie, visited the Otter's Club yesterday to observe Swim for Safety training of 27 swim coaches from around the country. The training is sponsored by the Australian Government through the Australia Awards Program.

A team of water safety experts from Life Saving Victoria and YMCA Victoria developed the Swim for Safety Program. The program will be implemented across Sri Lanka to over 1000 people, predominantly children, over the coming months.

“The aim is to develop children from non-swimmers to basic swimmers with a focus on water safety,” said Mr Mevan Jayawardena, General Manager of Life-saving Victoria.

Mr Jayawardena added that “the program can be conducted in open water such as rivers and lakes or at swimming pools”.

Over the last two weeks, 54 local swim teachers have been trained by Australian experts to deliver the Swim for Safety Program, which involves 10 lessons that give children and adults practical water safety skills.

The local swim teachers who have completed the training, which has taken place in Colombo, Galle and Mirissa, are from swim schools and the Sri Lankan Police, Navy and Coast Guard.

The Swim for Safety Program was delivered to swim coaches in both English and Sinhalese and is being adapted for delivery in Tamil.

The Australian High Commissioner said “our aim is to make Swim for Safety widely available in Sri Lanka to prevent drowning”. Ms Mudie added that “this program is a welcome step forward in implementing recommendations contained in the Drowning Prevention Report which was released by the Lifesaving Association of Sri Lanka in partnership with Lifesaving Victoria in December 2014. I encourage the Association to continue its efforts to work with the government and other stakeholders to pursue the goal of water safety for all in Sri Lanka”.

Lack of swimming skills within the population of Sri Lanka has been identified as a major contributor to drowning in Sri Lanka. Increasing the swimming ability of individuals is a fundamental need for preventing drowning death and injury.