

If in doubt, don't go out - swim between the flags and if ever out of your depth Float to Survive

The Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association (APOLA) says everyone needs to play it safe at beaches during the busiest period at our coastlines so loved ones and friends can take home great memories rather than being involved in a beach drowning tragedy.

Thirty year plus professional beach lifeguard veteran and **APOLA National President Greg Hackfath**, who oversees beach safety on the NSW Coffs Coast said that both regular and occasional beach goers, be they swimmers, rock fishers, small boaters or surfers need to maintain **respect for the ocean** and always think safety first when out and about at beaches and at other open water locations.

“If people think safety first and respect conditions on the day at our beaches, lakes or lagoons it can be great fun,” said Coffs Harbour City Council Lifeguard Coordinator, Greg Hackfath.

Mr Hackfath said that above average crowds at beaches during these peak ‘most swim-able days’, creates challenges, and this season particularly new challenges as people are practicing social distancing that translates to more people swimming away from the popular patrolled locations. The **water safety survival advice** for people choosing in-water locations away from patrolled areas is simple – if in trouble don't panic, stay calm and **float to survive**.

People turning away from crowded popular locations need to exercise particular care and if ever entering the water away from the patrolled areas they must spend time to check actual beach and water conditions that are ever-changing - never go in alone, go in near board riders and if ever needing to help someone always use a floatation device – a surfboard or bodyboard will help anyone float.

Mr Hackfath said “always be guided by the on-duty lifeguards, read the beach signs and take time to check it out where best to go in whenever out for a swim, surf, fish or paddle.”

BONDI RESCUE star and Surf Educators International Bruce ‘Hoppo’ Hopkins says the best locations are at **supervised locations – the area between the red and yellow flags. If in doubt, don't go out – swim between the flags and follow directions from lifeguards and lifesavers**

Mr Hopkins and lifesaving legend Craig ‘Riddo’ Riddington say that everyone should learn how to read the beach conditions, including **learning about rips in well supervised practical in-water programs**. Both Hoppo and Riddo are strong advocates for people learning about the ocean and rips and emphasise in all their teachings that **float to survive** is the key message for anyone experiencing difficulty in the water.

During a recent **World Leader Summit**, when Mr Hopkins was recognised for delivering one of the most influential presentations, Hoppo explains that **learning to float** is a simple skill and achievable no matter your age – toddlers, kids and adults can save themselves if they think **float to survive** rather than exhaust themselves trying to swim against the current. **For more information** about water survival visit the **Surf Educators International website** or see what Hoppo said at the World Leader Summit –<https://www.facebook.com/worldleadersummit/videos/1084289282033483/> (start 41.40).

APOLA's TOP 6 BEACH SWIM TIPS

1. Bathe and swim between the red and yellow flags which indicate the supervised swimming area:

No flags = No Swim

2. Look for, read and obey water safety signs

3. Check water conditions and the water depth before bathing or swimming - never dive head first

4. Bathe and swim under supervision or swim with a mate - never go in alone

5. Never bathe and swim directly after eating or under the influence of drugs including alcohol

6. Learn how to recognise rips and keep clear of these areas - if caught in difficulty stay calm, float with the current and call out HELP and wave an arm if help is nearby

AND REMEMBER when out in the sun always SLIP, SLOP, SLAP, SLURP and WRAP

(slip on a shirt or rashie, slop on sunscreen, slap on a hat, drink water, and wear sunglasses)

Further information contact the APOLA Office on 0408 855 267, or email info@apola.asn.au

Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Incorporated. (APOLA Inc.)

APOLA Inc is a non-profit professional association that is recognised as the peak professional association for Australian professional beach inspector ocean lifeguards. It promotes best practice in ocean water safety and beach management and coordinates professional ocean lifeguard activity in lifeguard training, community education, tourism support, public relations, regulation and risk management in consultation with Councils and their professional lifeguards and other water safety agencies.