

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**1 September**

### **More free swimming lessons for Taupō kids as Contact extends partnership**

More Taupō children are to benefit from free swimming and water safety lessons after Contact Energy extended funding of the Contact Swim Well Taupō programme.

Contact will continue to fund the swimming and water safety lessons for regional schools until the end of 2018 – extending the annually reviewed funding it has provided since 2011.

To date, the programme has delivered a total of more than 123,000 free swimming lessons to more than 17,000 children in the Taupō District.

“We’re thrilled to continue to be able to make a real difference to the lives of local children and their families by confirming a longer-term partnership with Swim Well Taupō,” says Rosanne Jollands, Contact Energy Community Relations Manager.

“It’s a programme that the Taupō community wanted us to support and it has been a huge success, enabling thousands of children in the community to become confident around water, and get out and enjoy their beautiful lakes and rivers safely.”

“Drownings are a tragic and largely preventable cause of death, that impacts significantly on families and communities. Contact sees Swim Well as a very important programme in helping prevent drowning which is why we’re committing to a longer-term funding partnership, giving it greater certainty to grow and deliver.”

According to Water Safety New Zealand, more than 100 people have drowned on average every year over the past decade.

In 2015, there were a total of 113 drowning deaths in New Zealand with 18 occurring in the Waikato region. Of the 18, only two occurred in the Taupō District Council area. **[Note to editors – see attached document for regional data breakdown over the past decade].**

Contact Swim Well Taupō Head Instructor Robyn Schwass says the latest figures indicate that the programme is working.

“Thanks to Contact, we’re the only programme in New Zealand able to deliver free swimming lessons to schools and build into that programme a strong water safety skills component. It is very popular with schools and offers hugely rewarding outcomes for the children.”

“We’re just over the moon about a longer-term partnership with Contact and this will take the guesswork out of our planning and make things easier for schools.”



The programme works with 15 schools in Taupō, Tūrangi, and places as far out as Mangakino and Whakamaru, offering lessons to all children from years 1-8.

Mark O'Callaghan, Chairman of the Taupō Sports Advisory Council, which oversees the programme, says Contact Swim Well Taupō is helping to significantly address the drowning toll.

“The programme is unique to a district of this size in New Zealand. Contact is helping ensure our children get the best instruction to become competent and confident swimmers with strong water safety skills, which will stand them and their families in good stead for life.”

The New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy Targets by 2020 are:

- Preventable drowning deaths are reduced from 77 to 50 or less (-35%)
- Drowning hospitalisations are reduced from 172 to 100 or less (-42%)
- Male drowning deaths are halved from 66 to 33 or less
- Preschool drowning deaths are reduced from six to zero.

ENDS

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At Contact we keep the lights burning, the hot water flowing and the BBQ fired up for over 562,000 customers across the country. We're one of New Zealand's largest listed companies but we operate with the same genuine concern for our customers and communities as the smallest. We're integral to our customers' lives – and our customers are integral to us.

Contact Energy is proud to have been part of the Taupo region for the past 58 years. In Wairakei, Contact has a team of 135 geothermal technical specialists supporting the development, operation and maintenance of five geothermal plants across the district. Our pioneering station is Wairakei, commissioned back in 1958 and the newest is Te Mihi, commissioned in 2014.