



MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE USE

All media please note, if you want an interview contact Sharon Washbourne at Shallow Water Blackout Australia on 0427 017 060

The huge dangers of children holding their breath under water is being highlighted by Shallow Water Blackout Australia - with support from Royal Life Saving - as the hotter weather kicks in.

Royal Life Saving and the advocacy group Shallow Water Blackout Australia are urging parents and families over the Christmas period to constantly consider water safety issues as the festive season kicks in.

Both organisations say when parents are shopping this Christmas they need to consider water safety matters when purchasing pool toys and games or portable swimming pools.

Royal Life Saving's CEO Justin Scarr says pool toys and games and portable pools can be fun, but may lead to tragedies. He says it is critical all parents have simple pool rules, which is to lock away toys and games when not in supervised use, and to always empty inflatable pools when not being used. He says all inflatable pool use needs to be supervised and children should always be within arm's reach.

Shallow Water Blackout Australia is continuing to raise awareness about the dangers of children holding their breath under water. Tragically in January 2013 Jack MacMillan - aged 12 - drowned in a backyard pool whilst breath holding and playing underwater games with supervision, unfortunately they were not aware of the dangers of Shallow Water Blackout. This then prompted his family to step forward and speak out about the dangers and what to keep watch for.

Sharon Washbourne - who is Jack's Aunty - said, "We want more awareness out there. We are devastated at what happened to Jack. No-one knew that continuous or repetitive underwater breath holding was so dangerous. It certainly seems that regular everyday families aren't aware of the issue of shallow water blackout - where children can lose consciousness as a result of holding their breath under water. It's our duty to bring this to the attention of every family we can reach out to. People can see more at shallowwaterblackout.org where we give key information on the dangers and risk."

Sharon Washbourne says Shallow Water Blackout can be caused by repetitive, competitive or continuous breath holding or by taking several very deep breaths, or hyperventilating, just before diving underwater.

She says swimmers pass out due to the lack of oxygen (O₂) and lower than normal carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels of which the CO₂ levels do not increase high enough to trigger the urgent need to breathe, resulting in unconsciousness/blackout.

Jack's mother - Michelle MacMillan - said, "Jack was a healthy strong swimmer who was unaware of the deadly dangers of shallow water blackout. With summer holidays upon us, I'm urging parents to please educate yourself about the very real risks of long breath holding games and laps. Tragically I couldn't save my son but hopefully by raising more awareness, we can prevent more lives being lost."

On Monday December 23rd, Sharon Washbourne is available for media enquiries, to talk about her concerns. Simply ring Sharon on 0427 017 060 and she can assist. On Monday December 23rd, the primary media contact is Sharon Washbourne on the number detailed.