

## 6. PLANNED NEW WATER SAFETY PROGRAMME TO REPLACE G'n'D SWIMMING (Martin Mackereth)

### **Swimming lessons to water safety**

#### **Purpose**

This report has been put together to outline for the Council, a proposed new programme based around water safety skills and move towards the current national approach of water skills for life, to replace the Council-funded G'n'D swimming programme.

#### **Background**

For the last nine years we have been running the G'n'D Splash 'n' Learn lesson catering for all schools within both the Gore District Council and Maitua Licensing Trust (MLT) boundaries.

The initiative was a partnership between the Council and the MLT, with funding being provided by both organisations. In recent years, Gore Pakeke Lions has also made a valued financial contribution.

MLT recently advised that it was not able to continue funding the programme due to the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on its operations. This led to the decision that the programme could not continue in its current form due to insufficient funding.

This is a programme that is close to my heart. I was the person who designed and put the programme together, working closely with the schools and Water Safety NZ and training all instructors.

Since the programme's inception, the original plan has never been revisited. There is a need to ensure that the programme is still fit for purpose, lines up with current Water Safety NZ goals and outcomes along with keeping pace with what is happening nationally in the industry.

The Council sits on the SwimSafe Southland management group. The Gore District does not run the same programme as others in the group. Our instructors run a learn to swim programme for schools within the Gore District Council area. Schools within the Southland District Council area, work through a Water Skills for Life programme.

The schools in the Gore District Council area have loved the programme and have given some feedback over the years. Some of the feedback received from schools over the years is as follows:

- The course is too long, two weeks is too much and the children are too tired;
- Winter time does not work as we have too much illness;
- We already have students who swim in squads so is there any benefit?

- It is too much time out of school with travel and changing time before and after the lesson;
- Intermediate age group children are too self-conscious, so do not want to participate;

In addition to the above, current Facebook comments in response to the announcement of the discontinuation of the programme, highlight the importance of water safety as distinct from swimming.

### **Opportunity to review**

We now have an opportunity to revisit our approach and construct a programme that will address and overcome some of the issues that have been raised. At the same time this review can also embrace the change in emphasis nationally of moving towards water safety skills.

If we start going through what schools have brought up over the years, we propose that the new programme be based over a week-long period rather than two weeks. This directly addresses concerns of the current programme being too long in time and length away from school.

By making this change we can then run the programme through terms 1 and 4. This coincides with warmer weather over late spring, summer and early autumn. Thus, once again addressing the concerns of schools about winter months and illness problems.

The new programme skills would be challenging for all participants no matter their skill level and has been proven through programmes that I have previously run.

Finally, it would match up with the feedback from Facebook around the need for water survival skills and safety.

### **Discussion**

Moving forward, I propose that we make the switch from a Learn to Swim programme to a Water Safety Skills programme. That would not mean that we do not teach swimming. It means we include the skillset of swimming and put it into how those skills are used by the individual in a water safety manner to help make their life safer in, on and around water.

As the person who wrote the water safety training for SwimSafe Southland which has been operating for three years, and to shed light on the importance of the programme, I will share one of the stories we received.

A parent came to us and hugged the instructor saying, "You saved my child's life". Two weeks before, the parent's child had attended the SwimSafe programme, learning skills around scene safety, body awareness and self-rescue in your environment. When the family went to the beach for a picnic, a rogue wave came in and started to

take the child out and with their trained awareness, the child self-rescued. The child put it all down to the skills learnt in the SwimSafe programme.

So what are the differences between the two programmes? A swim-based programme works on the four competitive strokes for swimming, whereas in a water safety skills programme you will still learn important aspects of swimming – such as flotation, submerging and propulsion through the water – with the addition of reading aquatic environments, a practical session of how to walk through weed air pockets, water movement, boat safety and most importantly, self-rescue skills.

### **Schools outside the Gore District**

What happens with those schools we have provided for that sit outside of the Gore District boundaries? All of these schools that we have provided for in the MLT boundaries currently lie in the Southland District Council boundaries. These schools fall into the SwimSafe Southland programme which is run by REAP in the outlying school swimming pools.

The Chief Executive and I have recently held discussions with Southern REAP and Sport Southland in recognition that there is an opportunity for REAP to fill the void that will be created by the Council concentrating on Gore district schools only.

When the MLT were funding partners, it wanted to provide a service to schools within its wider catchment. Part of this scheme therefore involved Hedgehope, Tukurau and Te Tipua schools being included in the swim instruction programme. Further, the Council (utilising the funds of MLT) advanced monies to Sport Southland to enable REAP to deliver swim safety courses to the following schools: Tapanui, Waikoikoi, Edendale, Wyndham, Glenham and Tokanui.

After further discussion it was agreed that REAP would take over delivery of water safety instruction to the Hedgehope, Te Tipua and Tukurau schools which, being outside the Gore District, cannot expect to receive Gore District ratepayer funding. The third part of the package relates to the contract between Sport Southland and Gore District Council which sees funds advanced to enable water safety instruction to be delivered to those aforementioned schools in Southland and Clutha districts.

I have asked Sport Southland to forward me details of the funding received for these schools in order that a direct solicitation can be made to Chief Executives and Mayors of those two councils. Hopefully if everyone plays their part, no children in Southland will be disadvantaged by the MLT withdrawing from the programme.

I have recently communicated to all the local school principals in the Gore District area about the proposed GAP programme to see how this concept would fit, in addition to receiving any comments and feedback. The feedback to date shows everyone is extremely positive about the change and direction of the new programme and even more around operating in the summer months.

### **Proposed programme**

A new water safety based programme called GAP (Gore Aquatic Programme) will be created and put in place, to align with the national direction about water safety in schools direction. Details proposed are:

- A water safety skills-based programme that will cover school years 1-8.
- The programme will be one week long with years 1-3 having 30 minute sessions and years 4-8 having 40 minute sessions.
- All instruction will be completed by our qualified instructors.
- School involvement around water safety in land-based activities – can be incorporated in self-led learning within the curriculum.
- Teacher awareness to be organised via a 5 minute session in a staff meeting leading up to their sessions.
- All schools will have their sessions over the summer months in terms one and four.
- Ongoing development and improvement by working with the schools.

### **Consideration**

There are differences between REAP's programme and how it is funded. The GDC programme provides a turnkey package for schools where the only responsibility is transportation of children to and from the pool facility. Entrance and lane fees are met by the Council. Conversely, with the REAP programme, schools make a contribution of \$10 per child to cover entrance fees and facility hire.

With this in mind the three schools – Hedgehope, Te Tipua and Tutura – will now incur that \$10 charge so we may have some negative feedback around this. I know that out of these three schools, Te Tipua sit in the Eastern schools learning cluster and often feel they are a part of the Gore District area, so this will need to be managed.

### **Financial**

There is the possibility of providing the programme for primary aged children only, which would save in cost by not having the St Peters and Longford Intermediate classes.

G'n'D programme. The current cost of the Learn to Swim programme is \$70,000. If the Council were to just organise for the schools in the Gore District only, it would be \$68,620 and if the programme included schools in the District without the intermediate age, the cost would be \$56,861.60.

If we shift to a one-week water safety programme, the cost for all schools in the district including the intermediates would be \$56,735. And without the intermediates our cost would be \$45,539. (These cost are based on all schools having full participation.)

This cost would reduce to \$49,385 if we dispensed with a current administration charge presently built into the costs structure. I would recommend this in the interest of accessibility and only charging what is absolutely necessary.

In all of these scenarios the schools missing out that we previously taught are Te Tipua, Tuturau and Hedgehope. However, these schools would be covered by REAP under the arrangement of them being included in the SwimSafe Southland programme.

The Council would also not have to divert funds to cover the Council's share of MLT funding to Sport Southland to enable REAP to deliver swim safety courses to the following schools: Tapanui, Waikoikoi, Edendale, Wyndham, Glenham and Tokanui.

Pakeke Lions in the last three years has contributed \$10,000 to the programme. I have been in touch with Pakeke Lions who are taking the proposal to its next meeting. However, the verbal feedback received in my discussions was positive.

For the schools, it will reduce the cost that they pay for transport to get to the Gore Multi Sports Centre for their session. This is due to the new programme being only one week in duration which will halve the amount of travel currently undertaken.

### **Financial summary**

The total cost of this revised programme is expected to be \$49,385. The Council's contribution is \$28,000. If Pakeke Lions can contribute \$10,000, this will leave a shortfall of \$11,385.

After compiling this report, I was made aware of discussions His Worship has had with the MLT in regard to the possibility of it reviewing the decision not to fund the programme. These discussions have resulted in an email from the MLT President, dated 29 June 2020, confirming that the Trust can now contribute \$12,000 to the programme. This will enable the revised programme to be fully funded.

### **Risk**

Schools current climate. Under a new policy covering donations, all schools have restricted budgets. Therefore if an activity is part of the curriculum, a school cannot pass that charge onto parents any more.

### **Recommendations**

My recommendations moving forward are as follows:

- Redesign the programme to be in line with what is happening nationally with water safety delivery.
- Run with a one week programme which allows all the issues previously raised to be addressed.
- That the programme includes all GDC primary school and Intermediates, costing \$49,500 for the delivery.
- REAP to provide the programme to those that are in the MLT area and do not come into the GDC area.
- Sport Southland to forward details of the funding received for these schools in the MLT area and a direct solicitation can be made to Chief Executives and Mayors of those two Councils. With the reduced funding by the MLT, this measure will still

be necessary. In-house running and ownership of the programme will keep the cost down and allows us to have control of the programme and its delivery.

- Re-launch and have the programme up and running by term four, prioritising the schools that have missed out due to Covid-19 (East Gore and Gore Main Schools).

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the report be received,**

**AND THAT the Council approve the new GAP programme to be adopted and commenced in term four, 2020.**