

Aqua Skills Swift Water Survival

Do you teach self rescue skills to your students before taking them rafting, canoeing, surfing or on other open water activities?

It has been common practise in schools and outdoor education organizations to simply offer a quick safety briefing prior to beginning water-based activities. The activity runs well until a student gets caught in a strong river current or strainer, or gets swept out to sea by a rip.

Tim Sillcock, Director of Aqua Skills claims, "It is vital that students have learned and practised self-rescue techniques before approaching an open water activity".

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Aqua Skills is a water survival programme targeted at secondary and senior primary students. It teaches students to appreciate the strength of moving water and how they can avoid other hazards around rivers and the sea.

The basic programme focuses on self-rescue and safety management around Rivers and Oceans. Students learn to cross moving rivers safely, swim through rapids, avoid obstructions, and understand the dynamics of water movement. It also covers hazards around drains and the banks of rivers.



The ocean component covers rips, surf and surf rescue.

The course demonstrates safety equipment and how to use it properly. "Like wearing a seat belt in a car, students should feel *undressed* when they are not wearing proper safety equipment in water based activities", explains Tim Sillcock.

Safety should remain a habit well into adult life. Too many adults become sloppy with water safety and drown as a result.

Amongst the programme's development team are swimming teachers, outdoor adventure guides and educators. Aqua Skills is a non-profit programme run by an independent board. The foundation licenses selected organisations to run the programmes.



Adventure Tourism and Outdoor Education operator, Adventurama, assisted with the development of Aqua Skills by trailing the programmes over three years.

"We have been running amazing five day rafting expeditions on the Snowy River for years without incident", explains Rob Cooling from Adventurama, "but feel more comfortable being out in the wilderness with students who have completed an Aqua Skills programme. It would be much easier to rescue a student who is not panicking and who has the capacity to assist with their recovery".

Adventurama encourages all schools that run activities in moving water to train their students in Aqua Skills.

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Insurance companies are demanding tighter safety procedures in the outdoors and parents are becoming more aware of dangers on school camps. Whilst every endeavour is made to protect children from dangers when they are on school camps, training in safety *self-management* may avoid an unforeseen tragedy!

Aqua Skills can be contacted by phoning 03 9819 1300 or via ROAM Adventures on 1300 65 22 77, or email info@aquaskills.com.au or through the Aqua Skills website, www.aquaskills.com.au.