



## PRESS RELEASE

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### ***Eleven drown in Ireland every month - National Drowning Prevention Strategy launched to target at-risk groups.***

Today, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Mr Michael Ring, T.D. and Irish Water Safety launched Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Strategy at Grand Canal Quay, Dublin. It sets out how Irish Water Safety aims to reduce the number of drownings in Ireland by targeting at-risk groups, particularly children.

Announcing the plan, Minister Ring said: "Our waters are an amazing resource yet 133 people on average lose their lives to drowning on them each year. Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Strategy sets out a clear and achievable vision to halve that number by 2027.

"There needs to be greater awareness of the danger that our waters present and on how to prevent drownings. In 2015 there were 122 drownings compared to 165 deaths on the road. However there is far greater public awareness of road safety than of water safety."

"We have more than 3,000 km of coastline, over 12,000 lakes and our 5 longest rivers measure over 1,000 km. By focusing on education, awareness, training, intervention and action, this 10 year strategy can help us to halve the amount of drownings in our waters. This goal is achievable. Just-look at how road deaths have decreased in recent years largely through increased public awareness and behavioural change. Last year road deaths in Ireland reached a record low of 158 compared to 458 deaths twenty years ago.

Martin O'Sullivan, Chairman of Irish Water Safety said: "This strategy has the potential to significantly reduce drownings in Ireland because it is built upon the hard work, vision and insight of all our members, volunteers and associated partners. It employs learning from all over the world and from every corner of Ireland to set out a clear action plan that will elevate water safety in Irish culture. That's something that will benefit this generation and every generation to come."

Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Strategy sets out a clear vision with real and achievable goals in the areas of education, awareness, training, intervention and action. It maps out how all stakeholders can actively play their part in bringing the number of drownings in Ireland down further. The Strategy prioritises key drowning prevention issues in all aquatic environments and also addresses the World Health Organisation's (WHO) firm recommendation that drowning prevention needs targeted action.

For Irish Water Safety, it marks a pivotal moment that creates an opportunity to elevate the many and complex causes of drowning so that water safety becomes a more central part of the national conversation. Making small changes in how we all act in, on or near water, can have a huge impact for everyone. This document will help the public do just that:

[http://www.iws.ie/\\_fileupload/about/Publications/National%20Drowning%20Prevention%20Strategy/IWS%20National%20Drowning%20Prevention%20Strategy%202018-2027.pdf](http://www.iws.ie/_fileupload/about/Publications/National%20Drowning%20Prevention%20Strategy/IWS%20National%20Drowning%20Prevention%20Strategy%202018-2027.pdf)

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