



## PRESS RELEASE – IRISH WATER SAFETY

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### **New Chairman appeals for schools to help prevent child drownings.**

#### **“30 children drowned in ten years yet curriculum remains largely untaught”**

The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Simon Coveney TD has announced the appointment of Martin O’Sullivan as Chairman of Irish Water Safety, the statutory and voluntary body established to promote water safety.

“I am honoured to be appointed as Chairman of Irish Water Safety (IWS). It is an organisation with a rich history of volunteerism and is deeply committed to these volunteers who teach swimming, lifesaving and promote drowning prevention initiatives nationwide.” said Mr O’Sullivan, “I commend our volunteers for organising winter and summer classes in lifesaving and I strongly appeal to those with children in their care to enrol them in our upcoming annual lifesaving classes nationwide. Over 110,000 certificates were issued last year as volunteers teach the skills necessary to maintain a corps of trained lifeguards for pools and beaches and give the public water confidence and water survival skills.”

“The winter series of classes run by our volunteers for children and adults nationwide complement the water safety curriculum that we developed for primary schools. Thirty children aged fourteen and under drowned in the last ten years so I appeal to schools to teach water safety in the classroom so that children learn good habits.”

“I fear that many children lack an awareness of how to stay safe when playing near aquatic environments because just over 10% of the 3,305 schools nationwide participated in the Primary Aquatics Water Safety (PAWS) curriculum last year. We are deeply grateful to those schools that issued over 50,000 certificates” continued Mr Sullivan, “and I am appealing to the other 90% of schools, teachers and indeed parents to adopt the water safety programme in the school year ahead. Even an hour of classroom based instruction by the schoolteacher will give children essential safety advice and it is all freely available at [www.iws.ie](http://www.iws.ie).”

“Our volunteers are influencing a cultural shift in the safety consciousness of both children and adults in, on and around water. We now need more schools and parents to instil a healthy respect for our wonderful aquatic environments that in turn encourages both adults and children to embrace water based activities safely.”

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Mr Martin O’Sullivan (on left) upon his appointment as the new Chairman of Irish Water Safety, discussing drowning prevention issues with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Simon Coveney TD at Fountainstown beach, Co Cork

## ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR EDITORS:

“I hope to play my part in building on the great foundations that have been laid down by all those who have had the vision to make IWS into the world class organisation it is today. In particular I would like to pay tribute to the leadership shown by my predecessor, Breda Collins, who has served with great distinction on the Board of IWS for the last 15 years and as Chairman for the last five.”

“IWS has grown from strength to strength in recent years and I look forward to working with the Board, the executive team, and the members to ensure that the organisation continues to deliver drowning prevention initiatives to the public.” Martin also paid tribute to the many other agencies and water safety related organisations that do so much to help prevent drownings in Ireland.

A native of Glengarriff in West Cork, Martin’s water safety career started in 1971 when he first volunteered for the Cork Water Safety Area Committee. He has served continuously since then in his native Cork as a member and as the Chairman. He has Chaired the Rescue Commission and the Technical Committee of IWS for over twenty years.

Martin has served with the International Lifesaving Federation since 1994 on various Committees, as Chairman of the Rescue Commission of both the European and World bodies and in more recent years as a Director of their Board during which time he spearheaded the very successful Risk Assessment project of waterways across Europe.

He has been honoured a number of times by both Irish Water Safety and the International Lifesaving Federation which has conferred upon Martin two of their most prestigious awards, that of “Ambassador” and “Grand Knight in the Order of Lifesaving”.

Martin O’Sullivan attended college in UCC where he achieved a BA in English and Philosophy and later an MA and H Dip. He was formerly a second level school teacher and retired from teaching in St Peter’s Community School, in Passage West in 2012.