

Water Skills for Life

Water Skills for Life Extension Program

Our Water Skills for Life (WSFL) programme remains our most significant water safety intervention. The programme seeks to ensure that primary aged children have the opportunity to learn basic skills, and knowledge to survive in, on, and around water. More learning opportunities, and better survival skills may over time result in people changing their behaviours around water based on risk awareness.

We refreshed WSFL based on Otago University's Assessing the Water Survival Skills Competency of Children research, that identified 7 competencies (with 27 core skill areas) with the greatest chance to improve survival rates of children. The refreshed WSFL programme now comprises three levels:

- Foundational skills for years 1-8 taught in pools
- Extension programme, for years 5-8, that builds on skills learnt in pool but taught in other environments – beaches, rivers and lakes
- Refresher content to sustain competencies and best practise over the remaining life stages.

Over the past year, significant improvements were made to enhance WSFL effectiveness and to ensure consistent understanding of the skills required. These improvements were implemented to address the need for clear communication, standardized assessment criteria, and increased accessibility to resources.

One of the key updates was the launch of a refreshed website, providing an improved user experience and making it easier for participants to access relevant information. Additionally, a new e-learning tool was introduced to facilitate a consistent understanding of the skills that need to be learned, leaving no room for misinterpretation of assessment criteria for all competencies.

To better support school teachers in delivering the program, easy-to-use resources such as unit plans, water safety and awareness resources, Kahoot quizzes, student e-learning modules, and "Kurious Kumara" water safety books were developed specifically for them. These resources aim to equip teachers with the necessary materials and guidance to effectively teach water skills to their students.

A quality assurance platform was implemented, offering instructors the opportunity to participate in self-reviews to ensure they are well-supported and equipped to deliver WSFL. In addition, periodic external assessments by WSNZ were introduced to evaluate the delivery of the program and confirm adherence to the seven water survival competencies. This assessment process identifies areas for improvement and helps maintain the program's high standards.

Agreement was also reached with the Ministry of Education to promote Water Skills for Life to schools. This partnership aims to increase awareness of the Water Skills for Life program among schools and ensure that they choose qualified providers for effective implementation. Collaboration with the Ministry of Education has initiated WSNZ involvement in the review of the health and physical education curriculum to ensure that water safety is embedded in the curriculum and taught consistently across schools.



WSFL Evaluation Framework

Progress was made implementing an evaluation framework for WSFL focusing on four key areas: accuracy, creativity, adaptability, and effectiveness. The evaluation framework incorporates two methodologies:

- Internal quality monitoring, which ensures that WSNZ maintains a high standard of quality in the program's implementation. Ongoing assessments of WSFL deliverers' effectiveness and efficiency are conducted, identifying areas for improvement, and providing feedback for their delivery.
- Utilizing existing quality standards from self and external reviews of funded organizations. This approach allows us to learn from best practices and experiences gained through the refreshed WSFL implementation. Data from reports, evaluations, and input from stakeholders and experts in the field will be collected and analysed.

Implementation of these methodologies demonstrates our commitment to quality and continuous improvement. By bringing quality assurance in-house from Oct 2023, WSNZ will have more control over monitoring and evaluation, allowing for real-time adjustments and improvements to enhance the effectiveness of the WSFL framework.

How we performed against our performance measures can be seen in our Statement of Service Performance.