

Crowd of 700 head to the pool for fun day with a serious message

# Safety makes a big splash

By CLARE CHAPMAN  
clare.chapman@dailymercury.com.au

SINCE Christmas 41 people have drowned in waterways, pools and beaches across Australia.

In the same period last year 24 people lost their lives in the water.

But on Saturday hundreds of people joined forces in Mackay to create a wave of awareness about drownings and to raise money for education programs around the country.

Boats, goggles, races and swimming were the name of the game at the Royal Life Saving Society's Big Splash Swimathon at the Pioneer Swim Centre on Saturday.

Royal Life Saving Queensland project officer Mark Frazer said there was a fantastic turn-out at the event.

"The community has really come on board and have seen that we are here to try and make a difference

and reduce the number of drownings that happen each year," Mr Frazer said.

"That's what the Swimathon is all about, it's a fundraising event to try and raise as much money as we can.

"The Big Splash gets the community together to

**It is remarkable how many people are not aware of the dangers in an aquatic environment.**

- Mark Frazer

show them that you can have a fun, enjoyable and safe time around an aquatic environment," he said.

"It is remarkable how many people are not aware of the dangers in an aquatic environment.

"Forty-one people have drowned since Christmas

across Australia which is a huge rise on the 24 who drowned in the same period last year."

Councillor Paul Steindl said the day was a success with about 700 people including families, children and community groups pitching in to help the cause.

"It was a great day. There were a lot of families, a lot of kids as well as community races," Cr Steindl said.

"It is a very important cause because there were a record number of drownings in Australia last year and this will certainly help to stop that," he said.

Saturday's swimathon was put on in conjunction with Uncle Tobys and Mackay Regional Council.

It is not yet known how much money was raised.

Mackay Regional Council operates five swimming pools and aquatic facilities in Mackay and at Mirani and Sarina.



Shane Cooks, 13, left, and Chad Blenkinsip, 11, paddle their hardest in the 50m boat race at the Big Splash Swimathon.  
PHOTO: AMANDA BALMER 230110/180



Charlie Willmore, 8, and Nikki Willmore, 6, compete in the 50m noodle race at the Big Splash Swimathon.  
PHOTO: AMANDA BALMER 230110/163