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For Immediate Release

Swimming Lessons for CALD Residents in Response to Recent Drowning Tragedies

The Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia expresses deep sorrow and concern following the recent drowning tragedies in Mandurah, where a 13-year-old girl was left orphaned after both of her parents drowned in an estuary. This devastating incident highlights the critical need for effective water safety education and swimming skills, particularly within our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

The tragedy involving Jun and Leslee Ballo, who were pulled from the water at Herron Point Boat Ramp, underscores the urgent need to improve water safety awareness and provide accessible swimming lessons to all residents. The couple, who regularly went fishing as a bonding exercise, unfortunately did not return home, leaving their community and family heartbroken.

In light of these events, we are committed to enhancing water safety education for all residents, with a special focus on our CALD communities. The City of Busselton's initiative to offer swimming lessons for CALD residents, supported by South Regional TAFE and the Geographe Leisure Centre, is a commendable example of proactive measures that can save lives. These lessons not only teach essential swimming skills but also provide critical knowledge about water safety, which can help prevent future tragedies.

We urge other local governments and organisations to implement similar programs to ensure that CALD communities have access to necessary resources and training. We also encourage community members to participate actively in these programs and utilise the available support services.

For those impacted by these recent tragedies, several support services are available:

- **Lifeline:** Offers 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services (13 11 14).
- **Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL):** Provides round-the-clock support for mental health crises (1300 555 788 Metro, 1800 676 822 Peel).
- **Royal Life Saving Society WA:** Provides water safety education and drowning prevention resources (www.royallifesavingwa.com.au).

The Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia remains dedicated to working with government agencies, community organisations, and local authorities to enhance water safety education and prevent further tragedies. By fostering collaborative efforts, we can create a safer environment for all residents, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background.

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