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Doctors warn, 'Kids can drown without a sound'

As the summer school holiday begins, doctors from Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and The Children's Hospital at Westmead are urging parents and carers to be vigilant with children in and around water.

Last summer, 23 children presented to both hospitals following a drowning or near-drowning incident between December 2016 and February 2017 but doctors don't want to see this happen again.

"We experienced one of the worst summer seasons in terms of drowning. 41 people in NSW lost their lives with 15% of those being in children under five.

"Our Network and other safety organisations, are aiming to prevent this from occurring again. We want the statistic to be zero," Dr. Mary McCaskil, Emergency Medical Director at the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, said.

"Most parents and carers think they will hear something if their child is drowning, but in fact it is very silent and rapid. Sadly, even a non-fatal drowning can result in devastating brain injuries and lifelong disabilities for the child in just a couple of minutes," continued Dr McCaskil

To help raise awareness about water safety, the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network's Kids Health child health promotion unit has launched the '**Kids can drown without a sound!**' campaign with a focus on portable and inflatable pools.

The campaign emphasises four key priorities to help prevent drowning in children:

- 1. Have a compliant pool barrier that is used correctly and maintained regularly**
- 2. Adult supervision of children (within arm's reach) in and around water is essential**
- 3. Teach children water familiarisation and swimming skills**
- 4. Learn CPR and remember that any attempt is better than no attempt**

Sue Wicks, Kids Health Department Head at the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, said that adult supervision of children in and around water is the best protection against drowning.

"However it is easy to be distracted by everyday tasks, like answering the phone. Compliant pool barriers add another layer of protection to restrict children gaining access to the pool when supervision is interrupted," explained Ms Wicks.

"Swimming and water familiarisation classes are also essential in developing skills and confidence in children around the water. Learning CPR is a vital skill in case the unthinkable happens."

For more information about the campaign, to access the resources (in 17 languages) and free online CPR training, please visit www.kidshealth.org.au/drowning-prevention

For media enquiries, contact:

Nikkie Beltran, Public Relations, 9382 4818 or 0400 395 389 or
Sarah Palmer, Public Relations, 9845 0512 or 0428 112 023