

NEWS

SENIORS
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Be water wise and stay alive

By ROXANNE MCCARTY-O'KANE

Water skills course for over-55s

RELAXING on the beach, sailing your own boat and wetting a line all feature heavily on people's bucket lists.

So when people retire to the Sunshine Coast, it is little wonder they quickly endeavour to cross these things off.

But did you know older Australians are at a greater risk of drowning?

The Royal Life Saving Society National Drowning Report 2011 found about 120 people aged 55 or older die by drowning each year.

Half of those are from accidental drowning, compared with about 40 children under the age of 14.

A further 534 older people are admitted to hospital each year for injuries that occur while they are involved in aquatic activities, including boating and fishing.

A dedicated group of lifesavers at Bulcock Beach's Ithaca Caloundra-City LifeSaving Club have set out to wind back the statistics.

The popular Grey Medallion two-day course will be held once more during Seniors Week and club secretary Patricia Barry encourages seniors to come along to brush up on their water safety.

"The course is designed specifically for over-55s and covers a range of personal survival and water safety techniques, teaches skills to deal with an emergency situation, dry rescue skills, CPR, using a defibrillator and practical first aid," she said.

"You do not need to be able to swim, have a six-pack or wear budgie smugglers to do this

course." Mrs Barry said in the five years the course had been running, they had taught people from the age of 40 up to mid-80s.

Some have gone on to become volunteers at surf clubs, helping out with tasks such as manning the radios and mentoring younger members.

The next Grey Medallion course will run on Wednesday, August 22, and Thursday, August 23, from 9am to 3.30pm at the club on The Esplanade, Bulcock Beach.

The \$35 course includes workbooks, pool entry, medallion and morning teas.

Numbers are limited.

For more information or to book your place, please contact Patricia on 0403 071 651 or email secretary@caloundracity.asn.au



WATER SKILLS: Ithaca Clubhouse at Bulcock's Beach is holding another Grey Medallion water survival course for over 55s. Patricia Barry and Margaret Marsh prepare.

PHOTOS: KARI BOURNE