MEDIA RELEASE

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LIFE JACKETS FOR ROCK FISHERS IN RANDWICK

Minister for Emergency Services David Elliott today announced a 12-month trial of mandatory life jackets for rock fishers in Randwick, as the Government prepares to introduce legislation to increase safety along the state’s coastline.

Randwick Local Government Area has the highest rate of rock fishing drownings in NSW, with Little Bay and Cape Banks some of the most dangerous locations. Enforcement officers from Randwick Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Primary Industries and the NSW Police Force will warn rock fishers not wearing a life jacket about the rules after December 1 this year.

There will be a 12-month grace period before the law is enforced with a $100 fine. The Government will review the trial after 12 months and consider adding other LGAs to the program.

Mr Elliott will this week introduce the Rock Fishing Safety Bill 2016 into Parliament, making it mandatory for people to wear life jackets when rock fishing in the Randwick LGA. The legislation enables other locations to be included after the 12-month trial.

“Rock fishing is one of Australia’s deadliest pastimes, and of the 10 people who died in NSW in 2015-16 not one was wearing a life jacket,” Mr Elliott said.

Earlier this year, a working group was established to determine where the high-risk locations were, using information such as the number of fatalities and near drownings at a site, usage and accessibility. The working group found Randwick to be a high risk LGA which led to Government selecting that location.

A new education campaign targeting culturally and linguistically diverse communities will complement the legislation and will include a dedicated advertising campaign and improved warning signs at rock fishing sites.

Transport for NSW’s Old4New van will visit popular rock fishing areas, including the Coogee area, and across the state in spring and summer to offer discounted life jackets. Standard approved life jackets that meet the requirements under the new law are available for purchase from around $20.

Furthermore, the Water Safety Fund Community Grants Program is now offering $4.5 million over three years to not-for-profit and community groups to deliver water safety initiatives. To apply, go to www.watersafety.nsw.gov.au

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