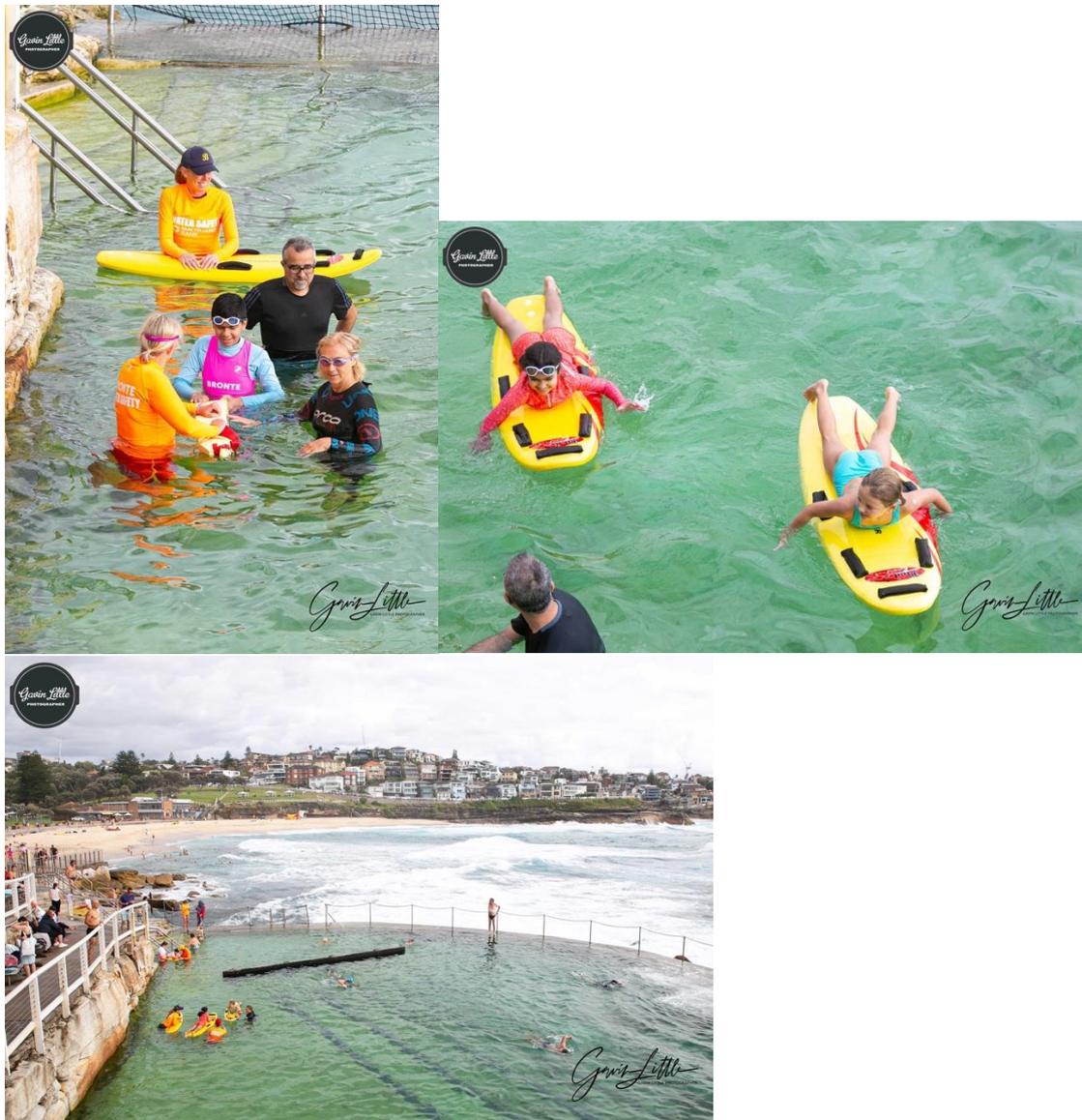


'For we are one and free'

...a magical moment in the Bronte Beach Autism Swim Dippers program

By Sally Bassett & Ingrid Studholme, March 2022



Imagine arriving at the beach to enter the water for the first time. This was the experience for twelve-year-old Daniyal and other participants in the Autism swim Dippers program at Bronte beach this summer. Daniyal like others on the program found safety in Bronte pool. This oceanic sanctuary a place to immerse in saltwater and learn the art of swimming. This great Aussie tradition was a new experience for someone born in Pakistan with an allergy to chlorine. Supported by Bronte Surf Club members this brave young man overcame his fears and learned the joys of swimming. In the ocean pool he was able to explore the feel and resistance of water and discover the possibility of swimming. His young sister also a newcomer to the ocean buddied with another sibling and paddled circuit after circuit of the pool. The smile on her face and sense of calm that overcame Daniyal once immersed in the water brought joy to their parents and everyone in and around the pool. It was Daniyal who taught us words of wisdom such as 'you must not hurt people' and 'you must always tell the truth' along with the new version of our national anthem. We will never forget the magical

moment when all differences disappeared as together, we gazed out along the great Aussie coastline and sang 'for we are one and free'. This moment and program symbolise the power of water and community to unify and heal. We were delighted to hear Daniyal's mother planned to purchase a swimsuit. We hope they and all the wonderful Dipper families continue to embrace their newfound skills and experience the joys of swimming in saltwater.

According to Autism Swim, children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are 160 times more likely to drown than children without ASD. Dippers is a modified nippers and surf education program run by international, social enterprise Autism Swim in collaboration with local Surf Life Saving Clubs along our beautiful Aussie coastline.

Photos by Gavin Little

<https://autismswim.com.au>