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## **MEDIA RELEASE - SPEARFISHING ACCIDENT AT MORETON ISLAND**

It is with great sadness that we were met with the tragic news of the passing of a well known and liked Brisbane diver, Greg Couldwell, on Monday 7th May 2012 whilst spearfishing off Moreton Island. His diving companions performed resuscitation after his body was retrieved from the bottom, but without success.

The Australian Underwater Federation (AUF) is the governing body for underwater sports and amateur diving in Australia. Spearfishers in South East Queensland are a tight knit fraternity and the AUF offers its sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Mr Couldwell who was a member of our federation. As an AUF member there is some small consolation of insurance benefits for the family of the diver involved.

Spearfishing is a great activity but like all sports it has its potential risks that must be managed properly to reduce risks from shallow water blackout, equipment, boat strike, shark attacks and other causes. The accident rate for spearfishing in Australian water is low with less than 0.5 deaths per year over the past 10 years which makes it safer than SCUBA diving (approximately 9 deaths per year and most in Queensland) or rock fishing (approximately 10 deaths per year and most in NSW).

The AUF Spearfishing motto is 'Safe Sustainable Selective Seafood' and there has been a national initiative called Spearsafe developed to further increase knowledge and improve safety for Australian spearfishers.

[www.spearsafe.webs.com](http://www.spearsafe.webs.com)

Spear safe has attempted to bring together a cohesive view on safety issues involved with spear-fishing through a website, brochure, DVD, stickers and training. The DVD and brochure have been made freely available to over 20,000 people over the past 2 years. The DVD and brochure can be found in many spearfishing outlets including diving, boating and fishing stores. Australian manufacturers of spearfishing gear have also provided this material for distribution. Spearfishing clubs throughout Australia have also received copies of the DVD and brochure for distribution to members and associates. A basic, safety orientated and nationally accredited spearfishing course is currently under development.

Though these continuing efforts the AUF and its members and proactive programs such as Spearsafe aim to reduce risks of injuries and fatalities and save lives of spearfishers and water enthusiast all over Australia.

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The Australian Underwater Federation (AUF) is the national governing body for underwater sports such as underwater hockey, SCUBA, snorkel coaching and training, fin swimming, and spearfishing (a small but selective type of recreational fishing). The AUF is a member of Recfish Australia and is committed to working strategically together with all recreational fishers. The mission of the AUF is-

*Bring sport, conservation and awareness to the underwater world*  
www.auf.com.au



### **Simple safety tips for safe diving**

- 1. Tow a diver (blue and white) flag and float to increase visibility**
- 2. Knife to prevent entanglement**
- 3. Weight belt with quick release buckle**
- 4. Never load speargun out of water and cover speartips**
- 5. Tell someone where you are going**
- 6. Dive with a buddy**
- 7. Do a risk assessment of conditions (weather, visibility, boat traffic, marine life)**
- 8. Never hyperventilate and dive within your limits**

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