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For immediate release

Media release New Zealand takes to the sea at World Summer Games

The first day of competition has seen our New Zealand athletes competing in bocce, aquatics and athletics. Sam Muir-James, Special Olympics Papakura athlete took to the sea in New Zealand's first competition in Open Water Swimming.

Held at Long Beach in Southern California, the day dawned calm and hot. There were 50 male competitors taking part in the 800 metre divisioning swim. Sam placed 12th and achieved a personal best.

He was supported by Head Aquatics Coach Maria Smith and his parents and other keen New Zealand supporters. "The families are such a critical part of Special Olympics and I am rapt to see 51 family members that have travelled to LA to support our team, said Kathy Gibson, Special Olympics New Zealand Chief Executive Officer. "It was such a thrill for Sam to have his parents egging him on so positively and with such pride, says Mrs Gibson.

"This event has an amazing set up and the people are friendly, helpful and are really looking after the families. The Opening Ceremony last night really made Sam hungry to compete well today. (His efforts) today have made him even more committed to swim Cook Strait which is a goal he has set himself in 2 years, said Jayne Muir-James from Special Olympics Papakura.

Competitors in the Open Water Swimming competition are now put into divisions of eight competitors. The finals will be held at Long Beach on 30th July 2015.

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