

Media Release

Wednesday 30th November 2016

Media Claim Most Victorian Pools Fail Safety Laws – When Will Government Act?

A Leader newspaper investigation released on Monday confirmed the disturbing accusations that Victoria's pool barrier legislation is failing toddlers and is in urgent need of overhaul.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/victorian-schools-told-all-kids-must-learn-to-swim-in-push-to-stop-drownings/news-story/46c4269fc39fef3e523df9bd152d5052>

A recent survey of eighteen City Councils reveals that the vast majority of backyard pools and spas are consistently failing barrier inspections.

BOROONDARA - 24 pools inspected, zero compliance
DANDENONG - 22 pools inspected, zero compliance
FRANKSTON - No exact figures available but issues 40-55 non-compliance notes a year
GLEN EIRA - 195 pools inspected, more than 98 per cent failed to comply
HUME - 196 pools inspected, "at least 90 per cent" failed to comply
KINGSTON - Could not say how many inspections were made or how many pools complied
KNOX - 100 pools inspected, no figures provided but the "vast majority" failed to comply
MACEDON RANGES - No proactive pool inspection program and no figures available
MAROONDAH - 270 pools inspected in the past 18 months, 98 per cent failed to comply
MONASH - 151 pools inspected, only eight complied.
MOONEE VALLEY - 27 pools inspected, zero compliance
MORELAND - 130 pools inspected, "many" failed to comply
MORNINGTON PENINSULA - 261 pools inspected, zero compliance
NILLUMBIK - 75 pools inspected, 23 complied
STONNINGTON - 60 pools inspected, zero compliance
WHITEHORSE - 100 pools inspected, zero compliance
WHITTLESEA - 49 pools inspected, five complied
YARRA RANGES - 61 pools inspected, nine complied

"Our members are in the field seeing backyard pools seven days a week and many pool barriers have not been maintained and are not safe," says Brendan Watkins, CEO of Swimming Pool and Spa Association of Victoria (SPASA). "It's time for the government to act to ensure that future toddler drownings are prevented."

"SPASA Victoria is strongly of the view that inspections of pool and spa barriers should be mandatory in Victoria in order to improve safety outcomes," says CEO, Brendan Watkins. "We implore the Victorian Government to pass legislation to:

1. **Immediately make pool barrier compliance certification mandatory for all properties sold or leased in Victoria**
2. **Introduce a mandatory barrier inspection protocol that ensures all residential properties with a pool or spa in Victoria are inspected every three years**

SPASA has always maintained a 'safety first' approach. Swimming pools are wonderful additions to the lifestyle of any Australian home. Exercise - and the social capital provided by a pool or spa - is immeasurable. We just want to promote the safest possible outcome for our kids."

In light of the Government's announcement on Monday to ensure that every Victorian child can swim 50m by the end of Primary School, SPASA applauds this initiative – but asks 'what about our pre-schoolers'?

Pool and spa barrier laws are specifically designed to protect children between the ages of 0 – 5 years. Sadly, this age group continues to remain neglected. Between 2004 and 2015, Victoria lost 25 children (0 – 16 yrs) in backyard pool drowning fatalities. For every fatal drowning, there is a larger number of non-fatal drownings which may result in permanent damage to the child, the effects of which cause hardship on Victorian families and impose extra burden on government.

“Since the introduction of mandatory inspections in WA in 1992, there has been an 80% reduction in the rate of toddler drownings*. This Western Australia data proves that mandatory barrier inspection legislation works. As responsible industry leaders, SPASA Victoria will campaign tirelessly until pool and spa barrier inspections are legislated in Victoria”, Mr Watkins said.

*8.7 deaths per 100,000 people in 1992 down to 1.66 deaths per 100,000 people in 2016 (Source: Royal Life Saving Society WA Inc)

Endorsements:

Kidsafe Victoria supports the call for the introduction of mandatory pool and spa barrier inspections in Victoria. "The recent statistics from Knox Council highlight the need to have a co-ordinated, State-wide system in place where pool and spa barriers are regularly inspected," said Jason Chambers, Kidsafe Victoria General Manager.

CEO of **Aquatics and Recreation Victoria**, Anthony McIntosh says, "Victoria's aquatics and recreation industry is very supportive of SPASA's proposed measures, which will unquestionably prevent fatal and non-fatal drownings every year. For pool owners with existing pool barriers, to have the discipline to maintain these to a safe standard over the life of the pool will make an enormous difference to the safety of the pool - week in, week out."

Reference:

<http://www.spasavic.com.au/about-us/pool-spa-barrier-inspections>

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