

20 September 2017

Media Release

Pool and Spa Owners Urged to Take Action to Reduce Toddler Drownings

Former Olympian Matt Welsh OAM has joined Kidsafe Australia to help save lives over summer at the launch of their 'Saving Lives' Pool Party Campaign.

The Swimming Pool and Spa Association of Victoria (SPASA) is delighted to continue to collaborate with Kidsafe on this important campaign and this year for the first time has financially committed to help fund this vital annual safety check program.

Kidsafe's national 'Save the Date' campaign calls on all pool and spa owners to sign up to Kidsafe's '[Pool Party](#)' event on Facebook and pledge to check the safety of their pool or spa barrier when they change their clocks at the beginning of daylight saving time on Sunday October 1.

SPASA Victoria was excited to see this initiative launched on 19th September, as an important follow-on to many years of advocacy work done on pool and spa safety in Victoria. Visit SPASA's pool and spa safety advocacy page here www.spasavic.com.au/pool-spa-safety-campaign.

Between 2004 and 2015, Victoria lost 25 children in backyard pool drowning fatalities. SPASA Victoria is strongly of the view that inspections of pool and spa barriers should be mandatory in Victoria.

SPASA Victoria CEO Brendan Watkins said, "Pool and spa barrier inspections are currently mandatory in only three states - NSW, QLD and WA. Since the introduction of mandatory inspections in WA in 1992, there has been an 80% reduction in the rate of toddler drownings."

While safety barriers can be effective in reducing the risk of drowning incidents, evidence suggests that a large number of drowning deaths are the result of barriers that are faulty, or non-compliant with Australian standards.

"Common faults or non-compliance issues include gates and doors that are no longer self-closing or latching, gates that are propped open and climbable objects near the barrier," said Kidsafe Ambassador Mr Welsh. "There is no better use of 15 minutes of your time than checking the safety of your pool barrier in preparation for the warm summer months ahead. By doing so, you could save a life."

This October 1st, take 15 minutes to check the safety of your pool barrier – because Safe Barriers Save Lives.

For further information on the campaign, please visit kidsafevic.com.au and to find out more about pool and spa barrier regulations visit www.vba.vic.gov.au/consumer-resources/building/pages/swimming-pools



This campaign is proudly supported by SPASA Victoria, the Play it Safe by the Water Campaign, Safetech Hardware and Protector Aluminium.



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Key messages:

- Drowning is one of the leading causes of death for children under 5 in Australia, with backyard pools being the most common location for drowning incidents to occur
- 20 seconds is all it takes for a toddler to drown
- Simply having a pool/spa barrier in place isn't enough on its own to keep children safe. A large number of swimming pool drowning incidents are a result of faulty or non-compliant pool/spa barriers
- Regular maintenance is necessary. It takes approximately 15 minutes to check your barrier thoroughly using Life Saving Victoria's Home Pool Safety Assessment
- Active adult supervision is the key to keeping children safe around water
- **Need help?** Visit kidsafevic.com.au to use the free Home Pool Safety Assessment

Common issues with pool fences include:

- Gates and doors that don't self-latch or self-close
- Climbable objects near the barrier e.g. pot plants, chairs, pool pumps near the pool fencing which could allow a child to climb over the fence
- Excess space under the fence, and;
- Misuse (e.g. propping the pool gate open)

Action

- All you need to complete the audit is your phone/tablet, or a print out of the online pool barrier questions and a tape measure



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