

Pools plan queried

THE Victorian Government says its plan to introduce a register of all household pools and spas across the state will improve safety but industry figures say reforms should go further.

Planning Minister Richard Wynne announced the mandatory register on Friday, as well as regular inspections to ensure the effectiveness of pool and spa safety barriers.

"We're creating a dedicated database of every household pool and spa in Victoria, and ensuring they're regularly inspected to make sure they comply with high safety standards," said Mr Wynne.

"Too many families have had to endure the heartbreak of losing a child in a drowning tragedy and it has to end."

Under the regulatory changes, households will need to register their pool or spa with their local council, and declare their barriers compliant.

A regular regime of inspections as frequent as every three years will then be enforced.

Dimi Ioannou, a principal lawyer at Maurice Blackburn who specialises in public safety issues, welcomed the government's plans to improve backyard pool safety, but was disappointed a move to fully fence all pools has not been pursued.

"Adults should always properly supervise children around backyard pools, but a pool

fence provides an added safety measure that goes hand in hand with adult supervision," Ms Ioannou said.

Mildura-based Cookies Pools and Spas managing director Cliff Cooke also welcomed the proposal but said faulty fencing and latches were a cause for concern, rather than a lack of four-sided or "isolated" fencing.

"I fully support what has been released from the government," Mr Cooke said.

"There's been different regulations from the 80s, 90s and 2000s about pool fencing and what they were going to try to do was to bring everything up to current standard, which meant older pools with the older gardens and fencing would have a fence all the way around the pool, and that just won't work.

"It's a huge cost and there are a lot of cases where it wouldn't be feasible. It's been proven that it's not going to necessarily make pools any safer.

"What will make them safer is if all of those pools have doors, fences, latches and gates that are

actually working. That is what is going to save the lives of kids."

The government will introduce the regulatory overhaul to Parliament in June, with the new register and a self-assessment tool expected to be in place before the next summer.



Cliff Cooke