



Media Release

5th October 2013

Closing the Gate on Backyard Pool Drowning

Day 6 – Top 5 Non Compliance Issues with Pool Safety Barriers

Countdown for Pool Owners Action by Daylight Savings Sunday 6 October 2013

The Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group (VMBSG) and Australian Institute of Building Surveyors (AIBS) today released a list of the top 5 issues affecting the safety of pool barriers and their compliance with Australian Standards. They **urged Victorian backyard swimming pool owners to conduct lifesaving safety checks on all swimming pool and spa safety fences and gates as part of the countdown to daylight savings on Sunday 6 October, in the lead up to the summer months.**

The ‘Close the Gate on Backyard Pool Drowning’ campaign was launched on Monday 30 September at Fed Square by the Victorian State Coroner, Judge Ian Gray.

Ashley Hansen, VMBSG President, said, “Pool and spa safety barriers are subject to damage from the elements and general wear and tear over time, which can affect the barriers performance and the level of protection that it offers.”

The top 5 issues affecting pool barriers released by the AIBS include:

1. Gates and doors that are no longer self closing

“The pool gate is usually one of the first areas where safety issues arise as it is the part of the barrier that is constantly used”, said Con Giazi, AIBS President, Victorian Chapter.

“A common scenario is that the pool gate is no longer self-closing, which means that the gate does not comply with Australian Standards. This scenario is also commonly seen with doors that are able to be used as part of barriers for pools and spas that were installed pre 2010.”

2. Gates and doors that are no longer self latching

General wear and tear of the locking mechanism means that many gates and doors will no longer self latch when they close. If the gate or door is not properly locked, children may be able to gain unsupervised access into the water area.

3. Gates that are propped open

Sometimes, especially during summer and pool parties, the pool gate is propped open (e.g. with a chair or esky) to allow adults easy access to the pool area while they are carrying food and drink. Con Giazi said, “This practice is dangerous as it also allows children unsupervised access to the water area— the pool gate should remain closed at all times.”

4. Ground movement

Ground movement may cause parts of the barrier, including the gate, to shift. Ashley Hansen noted that even a light shift may mean that the gate no longer functions properly or that gaps appear in and under the barrier.

5. Climbable objects on the neighbour's side of a boundary fence

Lastly, Ashley Hansen noted that objects on the neighbour's side of a boundary fence which may enable a child to climb over and gain access to the water area were also a common issue.

The AIBS encourage all home owners with a pool or spa to regularly check and maintain their safety barriers to ensure that they are in proper working order.

For more information on pool fencing laws and booking an inspection, homeowners can visit <http://www.kidsafevic.com.au/safety/outdoor-safety/pool-fence-safety>.

The campaign calls for all pool and spa owners to visit www.kidsafevic.com.au and utilise the pool and spa area checking tool, developed by Life Saving Victoria.

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The campaign forms part of the Victorian 'Play it Safe by the Water Campaign' and is supported by the following partners: Lifesaving Victoria (LSV), Ambulance Victoria, Aquatics and Recreation Victoria, Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, Department of Justice, Aquatics and Recreation Victoria, Master Plumbers Association, Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group, Victorian Building Authority, Real Estate Institute of Victoria and Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Local papers are encouraged to contact their local building surveyor for comment.