

Homeowners and renters urged to put safety first with secure, compliant pool fences

A compliant, secure and properly maintained swimming pool fence is an essential measure in seeking to ensure the safety of young children around backyard swimming pools.

With Royal Life Saving Australia's latest drowning statistics showing that 54 per cent of drowning deaths in swimming pools were children aged under five, the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) is using its support of the 2015 Kidsafe Victoria 'Closing the Gate on Backyard Pool Drowning' campaign to remind homeowners and tenants of the importance of having a secure safety fence and gate on their pools.

Jarrold Edwards, VBA Director of Technical and Regulations, said that in addition to ensuring pool safety fences comply with Australian Standards, it is vital that anyone living with a swimming pool or a spa maintains strict supervision of children around pools and spas at all times.

"Drownings can be prevented by increasing the supervision of children around pools and spas and ensuring safety barrier compliance," Mr Edwards said. "Evidence shows that a large percentage of drowning deaths in pools are a direct result of faulty fencing or barriers that don't meet Australian Standards.

"Equally tragic, but equally important, are the findings from Coronial Inquiries into backyard pool drownings dating back to 2003 that show four out of six testified deaths of children in pools occurred at rental properties that were occupied by the victims' families.

"It is therefore vital that tenants, landlords and real estate and letting agents, as well as owner-occupiers, are aware of the importance of ensuring pool and spa fencing is compliant, secure and maintained," Mr Edwards said.

Anyone who lives in a property with a pool or spa can visit [Kidsafe Victoria's website](#) and their link [Water Safety - Kidsafe Victoria](#) for more information about the 'Close the Gate on Backyard Pool Drowning' campaign to help ensure the safety of children around pools and spas.

The VBA reminds all Victorians with pools and spas to take the following precautions:

- Any pool or spa that can hold a depth of 30cms (the length of a school ruler) of water must have a compliant safety fence around it. This applies even to relocatable and inflatable pools and spas.
- All pools and spas built since 2010 require a four-sided fence, with no direct access from the house to the pool or spa surround.
- A building permit is required to build a pool or spa and the fencing. Work must begin within 12 months of the building permit being issued, and be completed within six months of it starting.
- Use an appropriately registered building practitioner to do the work. Find a practitioner at the VBA website www.vba.vic.gov.au.
- Gates on pool and spa safety fences must be self-closing and self-latching, regardless of when a pool was built – they must never be propped open.
- Pot plants, Eskies, chairs and other items that may be used by children to climb into the pool or spa area must also be kept away from the fencing.
- Maintain strict supervision of children around pools and spas at all times.

For information about pool and spa safety fence requirements, refer to the VBA's website for the [About pools, spas and their safety barriers information sheet](#).

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