



Don Page MP

Minister for the North Coast

Minister for Local Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTER TAKES ACTION TO PROTECT TODDLERS FROM HARM IN BACKYARD POOLS

The NSW Government will move to protect toddlers by introducing new legislation to ensure backyard pools comply with regulations.

The new laws covering the State's 340,000 backyard swimming pools will include a compulsory new Statewide register; certification of pools as compliant; mandatory inspections before a property with a pool can be sold or leased; and mandatory periodic inspection of pools associated with tourist accommodation and unit blocks, Local Government Minister Don Page said today.

"Children's safety is paramount, and very young children are most at risk," Mr Page said.

"Whilst proper supervision is critical, it is important that every pool owner takes responsibility to make sure their pool complies with current regulations," Mr Page said.

"Every child drowning is a tragedy to families and communities, not least because it is preventable through ensuring responsible supervision and compliant barriers.

"It is totally unacceptable that NSW is overrepresented in national backyard swimming pools statistics."

On average six children drown in NSW backyard swimming pools each year.

"In addition to the totally unacceptable levels of child drowning, each year about 36 children in NSW suffer permanent brain injuries from swimming pool accidents," he said

The new laws - which were developed after extensive consultation with councils, water safety advocates, pool owners, State agencies and industry organisations - will:

- Require that any property with a swimming pool must be inspected and registered as compliant before that property can be sold or leased.
- Establish a new offence for failing to register a swimming pool (maximum penalty \$2200).
- Require pool owners to self-register free-of-charge on a Statewide, online register and certify to the best of their knowledge that their pool barrier complies with the legislation.
- Require councils to develop a locally appropriate and affordable inspection program in consultation with communities.
- Require mandatory, periodic inspections of pools associated with tourist and visitor accommodation and unit blocks.
- Clarify that, where an existing swimming pool that is exempt from the Act's fencing requirements is fenced voluntarily, the new fencing must meet the Act's requirements for a compliant, four-sided barrier and the exemption will be removed.

Pool owners will have 12 months to register and self-certify their pools and compliant with current regulations.

Research indicates that by increasing compliance with pool barrier requirements the rate of infant death by drowning could be reduced by up to 41 per cent.

The State Government will also be conducting an education campaign reminding people of their responsibilities.

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