



08 May 2017

Frankston Standard Leader, Melbourne

Author: Kate Ashley- • Section: General News • Article type : News Item
Audience : 54,070 • Page: 5 • Printed Size: 214.00cm² • Market: VIC • Country: Australia
ASR: AUD 1,047 • Words: 354 • Item ID: 770846747

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CAMPAIGN

New pool rules put safety first

Leader campaign leads to groundbreaking overhaul of fencing laws

**Kate Ashley-Griffiths and
Suzan Delibasic**

BACKYARD pools and spas will have to be fully fenced under groundbreaking reforms proposed by the State Government.

The changes mean houses will no longer be able to form part of a pool barrier and uniform standards will apply for all pools regardless of when they were built.

Leader launched a Make Pools Safe campaign last

summer, calling for changes following the drowning death of a Croydon South toddler in his unfenced backyard pool.

Less than two months after the campaign was launched, the government admitted that more needed to be done and told Leader in January that pool fencing rules would be reviewed.

Pool and spa owners will be given a grace period and will have to comply by 2020. It will cost up to \$3000 on average to install compliant barriers and safety gates.

The State Government also confirmed changes to the Building Act, which will grant inspectors new powers to enter premises and check whether barriers comply.

A statewide pool register was also being considered as well as mandatory inspections every three years.

Last week Planning Minister Richard Wynne said it was time for “a proper overhaul of our regulations”.

“We don’t want another family going through the harrowing ordeal of losing a

child in these circumstances,” Mr Wynne said.

“We know that bringing pools and spas up to scratch will be a significant cost, but we make no apology for taking action to prevent these tragic deaths.

“Always keep an eye on kids close to water, because failing to do so can lead to devastating consequences.”

The government will also consider a new education campaign to remind adults of the need for supervision.

The coroner had last week called for urgent reforms following yet another backyard drowning inquest into the death of a Melton South toddler at a rental property.

It is the fourth time since 2012 the Coroner has recommended the government introduce new laws, including a statewide pool register.

But successive governments have failed to act until now. People can comment on the proposed changes from mid-May.

