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More changes can help stop drownings

KIDSAFE Victoria believes we need a mandatory pool and spa register and a mandatory pool and spa barrier inspection system in Victoria, in order for government reforms to have a significant impact on reducing rates of fatal and non-fatal child drowning.

Our call is in response to the Victorian Government's recently released Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) as part of the Building Regulations Sunset Review.

The RIS outlines proposed changes to the state's swimming pool and spa barrier laws, with the main focus being the introduction of uniform laws requiring all home pools and spas in Victoria to have four sided isolation barriers, irrespective of when they were installed.

While Kidsafe Victoria is supportive of the proposed changes outlined in the RIS, these on their own won't be effective in reducing

the number of fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents in home pools and spas.

Evidence suggests a large number of child drowning deaths in home pools are as a result of barriers that are faulty or non-compliant with Australian standards.

The introduction of legislation requiring all pools and spas to have four sided isolation barriers on its own will not effectively address this situation - four sided barriers can and will experience faults and non-compliance due to wear and tear over time.

Kidsafe Victoria, together with a number of other industry stakeholders, believe it is vital other measures are also introduced to effectively reduce the rate of childhood drowning in home pools and spas.

These include:

- establishment of a mandatory pool and spa register;
- mandatory inspections of all home pool and spa barriers once every three years - this will require the introduction of a Swimming Pool and Spa Safety Inspectors course to reduce the reliance of undertaking inspections which is currently limited to registered building surveyors and building inspectors; and
- a mandatory certificate of compliance for home pools and spas prior to sale or lease of a property.

Jason Chambers,
general manager, Kidsafe Victoria