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STONNINGTON

Pool plan muddies water

Heightened regulations for isolated fencing around pools slammed as costly and 'policy on the run'

Rebecca Di Nuzzo

A STATE Government plan to require some homeowners to fork out thousands of dollars to retrofit their pools with isolated barrier fencing has been slammed by Stonnington councillors.

The measures, which will require fencing around pools built before May 1, 2010, to be brought into line with current Australian standards, were discussed at a council meeting at Malvern Town Hall this month.

Cr Sally Davis said at the meeting the plan was "policy on the run" and could leave some pool owners up to \$20,000 out of pocket.

Until now, pools and spas built before May 2010 could use doors or windows of the home or an existing building as part of their pool barrier.

But if the new building regulations are adopted, all pools and spas will need to be fully enclosed by an isolated fence that does not allow direct access from the house or any other building.

Homeowners found not to be compliant with the tougher standards by October 1, 2020, could be hit with a fine.

Cr Davis, herself a pool owner, said the Government needed to do more homework on how the tougher standards would be implemented.

"I also think that if we're going to take this to the nth degree, why not include fish ponds in gardens," she said.

Cr Matthew Koce said the regulations would not replace the need for supervi-

ion of children around water,

and he called on the Government to instead invest in pool safety education for parents.

About four children drown across the state each year, according to a report prepared by council officers.

Council officers estimated there were about 6000 pools and spas across the municipality. When announcing the new measures earlier this year, 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."

The Government is now considering public feedback on the planned changes. To find out more about the Victorian Building Authority's pool and spa safety standards, visit vba.vic.gov.au



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Stonnington councillor Sally Davis has spoken out against the cost of implementing some of the State Government's new pool safety regulations, Picture: DAVID CROSLING