

Media Release

State Government Defies Coroner & Rest of Australia on Toddler Safety

The Victorian government has yet again been urged by a coroner to implement better pool safety measures following the drowning death of a two-year-old boy, who left his sleeping mother and entered a backyard pool through a faulty gate.

The death of Elijah Meldrum on September 14, 2015 was preventable, according to coroner Audrey Jamieson, who found the rental property's tenants failed to inform their landlord and letting real estate agency that the pool's two gates were not working.

In findings published on Monday, the coroner said Elijah's death occurred amid "...the seemingly perpetually inadequate regulation of swimming pools in Victoria".

Ms Jamieson's call on the state government to overhaul pool fencing regulations and establish a program similar to that in Queensland is the fourth time since 2012 that a Victorian coroner has recommended action to prevent child drownings.

Figures released by the Coroners Court show 26 children drowned in domestic pools in Victoria between 2000 and the start of 2015. In most cases, fences or gates were either faulty or left open.

"In Victoria, it is relatively simple for properties with pool safety barriers and gates that do not meet regulatory standards to remain undetected," Ms Jamieson said.

Since Queensland introduced tougher regulations in 2010, the state's rate of child drownings in pools has halved, the coroner said.

The introduction of mandatory inspections in WA in 1992 has seen an 80% reduction in the rate of toddler drownings*. This Western Australia data proves that mandatory barrier inspection legislation works.

(*8.7 deaths per 100,000 people in 1992 down to 1.66 deaths per 100,000 people in 2016 (Source: Royal Life Saving Society WA Inc)

SPASA Victoria is strongly of the view that inspections of pool and spa barriers should be mandatory in Victoria in order to improve safety outcomes. We implore the Victorian Government to pass legislation to:

- 1. Immediately make pool barrier compliance certification mandatory for all properties sold or leased in Victoria**
- 2. Introduce a mandatory barrier inspection protocol that ensures all residential properties with a pool or spa in Victoria are inspected every three years**

As responsible industry leaders, SPASA Victoria will campaign tirelessly until pool and spa barrier inspections are legislated in Victoria.

See current media coverage:

[SPASA Victoria CEO Brendan Watkins Speaks on 3AW With Neil Mitchell](#)

[Watch 7 News article – Victorian Coroner Calls For Urgent Pool Safety Changes](#)

[The Age - Toddler's Drowning Prompts Coroner to Call for Action on Backyard Pool Fences](#)

[Coroner Audrey Jamieson's report 'Finding Into Death Without Inquest' dated 1 May 2017](#)

For more on SPASA's Victorian Mandatory Barrier Inspection Campaign:

<http://www.spasavic.com.au/about-us/pool-spa-barrier-inspections>

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