MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL HOME POOL SAFETY FORUM

Held on Wednesday 19 October 2005
at the Royal on the Park Hotel, Albert Street, Brisbane

Purpose of the Event:

Water Safety in the home environment is a key component of the *National Water Safety Plan 2004-07* and Drowning Prevention of the 0-5 age group has been identified as the number one priority.

The objective of the *National Home Pool Safety Forum* is to identify *best practice* across the relevant issues and determine the optimal model for consistent application throughout Australia.

Attendees:
There were some 50 attendees from across the following range of stakeholder groups:

- Representatives of AWSC Council member organisations
- Representatives of State/Territory Water Safety Councils
- Representatives of interested Commonwealth and State Government departments
- Representatives of Local Government
- Representatives of Injury Surveillance Units and Researchers
- Representatives of the Home Pool Building Industry and associated industries

Supported by:
## PROGRAM

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<td>Opening of the Forum by Dr Ted Campbell (Director General – QLD Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation)</td>
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<td>Dr Rob Pitt (Director – Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit (QISU))</td>
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<td>Max Maffucci (Group Manager, Building Services - Standards Australia)</td>
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<td>Implications of the recent changes and emerging trends – discussion from the floor</td>
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<td><strong>Legislation - Analysis of State/Territory Pool Fencing Legislation</strong></td>
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<td>Introduction – what are the major issues? - Facilitator: Rob Bradley (CEO – RLSSA)</td>
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<td>• The Australian Building Code – Ed Knight – Assistant Project Manager, Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB)</td>
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<td>• Queensland - Ron De Veer – Manager Building Standards, Building Codes QLD</td>
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<td>• Victoria – Cathy Acocks - Victorian Pool and Spa Working Party &amp; Water Safety Manager, Victorian Department of Justice</td>
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<td>Identifying the strengths and weaknesses</td>
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<td><strong>Education – Successful Education Programs</strong></td>
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<td>Identifying the target groups - Facilitator: Justin Scarr (RLSSA Operations Manager)</td>
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<td>Public Awareness of Toddler Drowning prevention –</td>
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<td>• Case Study: RLSSA “Keep Watch – Toddler Drowning Prevention campaign” - Richard Franklin (RLSSA Research and Health Promotion Manager)</td>
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<td>• Case Study: Northern Territory Government – “Infant Water Familiarisation Voucher System – Five under Five” (Graham Franklin/Amanda Shipway – NT Water Safety)</td>
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</table>
4.3 Education of Home Pool Owners – required knowledge of legislation and compliance requirements

5. **Compliance – Successful Compliance Measures Implemented**

5.1 Issues affecting compliance – inspection and enforcement

   Facilitator: Richard Franklin (RLSSA Research and Health Promotion Manager)

5.2 Case Studies:
   - Queensland  (Ron De Veer – Manager Building Standards, Building Codes QLD)
   - Maroochy Shire Council (Leonie Williamson – Coordinator Swimming Pool Compliance Program)

5.3 Selecting the ingredients of the ideal model

6. **Observations from and Impacts on the Home Pool Building and related Industries**

6.1 Observations and impacts of the introduction of legislation and increased compliance measures on industry sectors:
   - Pool Builders and Suppliers
   - Pool Fence Manufacturers
   - Building Surveyors
   - Home Pool Inspectors

6.2 Home Pool building inspectors – access, education and training

7. **Best Practice – identifying the ideal model**

7.1 Features of the ideal model? Do these features already exist?

7.2 Process for promoting best practice across all jurisdictions – “a coordinated approach”

7.3 What are the barriers to implementing best practice?

7.4 Are there exceptions and anomalies not addressed by the current system?

7.5 Are there emerging issues not addressed by the current system?

8. **Recommendations**

8.1 Confirm recommendations

8.2 The Next Steps: Process and Timeframe for implementation

9. **Thank you and Forum Closure**
POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND OUTCOMES:

The following points were agreed to in principle with further examination required to put them into an appropriate context and implementation strategy.

The meeting agreed that a holistic, integrated approach to Home Pool Safety is required to ensure behavioural change.

- All Stakeholder groups must be engaged and committed to the process.

The three major areas to be addressed are:

- Legislation
- Education
- Compliance

1. LEGISLATION:

1.1 Strengthening the Australian Standard
- General agreement on four-sided barriers, removing the current three sided option

1.2 Amendment to the Australian Building Code
- ABCB needs to be engaged to support higher standards than are currently in the Australian Building Code.

1.3 Consistency of Legislation is seen as essential.
- Remove pre-existing conditions from the legislation – a cut-off date for compliance needs to be established
- Consistency to be achieved by retrospective legislation – a reasonable phase-in period is recommended
- Currently available “exemptions” need to be analysed and removed from the legislation at the earliest opportunity.
- Current exemption categories vary across jurisdictions but include:
  - Indoor pools
  - Inflatable pools
  - Waterfront properties
  - Handicapped

- Requirement for compliance to be ensured at the point of sale of the property
- The best opportunity for quality installation and compliance is when new homes with pools are built

1.4 Greater Awareness by the Pool Building Industry
- Greater steps need to be taken to ensure that building suppliers are aware of their obligations to meeting the standards
- Building materials and equipment to be labelled as “standard compliant”

1.5 A Register of Home Pools to be established as a directive within each jurisdiction – (Victoria has commenced this process)

1.6 Contracts between Pool Builders and Home Owners to include the requirement for the Pool Fence to be in place “before the pool is filled”. (This clause is contained in SPASA Queensland contracts)
2. EDUCATION

2.1 Education is an essential ingredient that needs to be addressed in two parts:

- **General public awareness of the 0-5 drowning issue** must continue on an ongoing basis. The parents and carers of children 0-5 are the main targets for this education.
  
  Examples of Best Practice:
  - Keep Watch Toddler Drowning Prevention program
  - "Free Water Familiarisation Classes" such as the free voucher system used in the NT

- **Education of the legislative and compliance requirements**, including the technical requirements is essential for the Home Pool owner and those builders and suppliers

- **An Information Package to be produced** for the Pool Builder to provide to Pool owners – explaining the requirements. In the form of a user friendly guide or fact sheets – multi-lingual.

3. COMPLIANCE

There are two main areas of concern relating to the lack of compliance.

1. Only a small number of local councils have a compliance system in place
2. The level of compliance by Home Pool owners is poor with over 80% non-compliance found in some local government areas

3.1 **Mandatory Inspections** are recommended for all Home Pools

- Inspections to take place every 2-3 years

3.2 **Quality Inspection systems** are currently in place in some jurisdictions but are hampered by:

- Lack of resources – financial and human
- Lack of power of entry in some jurisdictions

3.3 **A Dramatic Increase in Compliance Levels is needed**

- Concern was expressed at the low levels of compliance of Home Pool Owners currently being found throughout the nation. Over 80% non-compliance is experienced in some QLD local government areas.
- Concern over the lack of consistency between inspection systems currently being used

3.4 **Pool Inspector Training Program**: A specific training program is required for Home Pool Inspectors

- The level of training required is not as extensive as required for Building Certifiers
- A reference group hosted by RLSSA has been established to identify the training needs and content

3.5 **Fining Systems** for non-compliance were successful in letting the public know that the issue is serious

- Fines to be enforced as a last resort when the Home Pool owner has refused to cooperate.
3.6 Inspection System Funding Models:
   - Self-funding models where the Home Pool owner is levied a small fee as part of their Council Rates is seen as the most practical method. (Some local Government areas in WA use this approach).

THE NEXT STEPS:

Rob Bradley advised that the Royal Life Saving Society Australia would undertake to move this issue forward on behalf of the Australian Water Safety Council and the stakeholder groups.

1. Proceedings from the Forum, including the powerpoint presentations delivered on the day will be posted on the AWSC website by 20 November 2005 – www.watersafety.com.au

2. Development of the conference agreements and recommendations to be produced in the form of a Discussion Paper for wider distribution and response – Circulation by 20 February 2006

3. Meetings with key groups identified in this forum to be convened during February – June 2006

4. Home Pool Safety to be a major session at the National Water Safety Conference – to be held on the Gold Coast - 17-19 August 2006.

5. A formal implementation plan to be adopted and rolled out from late 2006.

The chairman thanked the delegates and presenters for their contribution to the day and in particular thanked the Queensland Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation for their support of the forum.

Forum Closed: 4:15pm

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