Pool Fencing – Can Australia go much further?

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1976

“...Drowning and near-drowning accidents involving children have become an unfortunate part of modern day living...” Pearn and Nixon 1976

Children 0-4 years Drowning Deaths in Australia 2002/02 to 2011/12

Drowning Deaths of children 0-4 years by Location, 5 year Average, 2011/12

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
National Drowning Report 2012
Proposed drowning prevention strategies

Recommended
- Pool Fencing

Promising
- Community CPR Knowledge
- Increase Adult Supervision
- Increase Life guard Presence
- Pool Alarms and Other Monitoring Devices
- Use of PFD's
- Swimming lessons

Unproven
- Decrease boating while intoxicated
- Increase awareness of risks
- Inspect swimming areas
- Isolate unsafe areas
- Pool Covers
- Promote boating safety education
- Rescue equipment

Ineffective
- Change Child Behaviour

Why do children drown in swimming pools

- Lack of or ineffective barrier (80% unknown 15%)
- Lack of supervision (83%)
- Water familiarisation (11% unknown 73%)
- CPR (40% unknown 39%)

- 0 stratagem present 64%
- 1 stratagem present 28%
- 2 stratagem present 6%
- 3 stratagem present 1%
- 4 stratagem present 1%

Bugeja & Franklin 2012
Pool Fencing in Queensland

- Pool need to be registered
- All pools need to have a CPR sign
- Four sided pool fencing
- Self-closing / self-latching gate
- Inspection on sale or lease (certificate)
- New pools need a certificate
- Climbable objects near the fence
Why do pool fences fail
What is the lesson?

People are important for pool fencing to be effective
Questions

• ‘How effective do you think that tightening the pool fencing legislation will be in reducing child drowning deaths?
• ‘Do you have a swimming pool at your residence?;
• ‘How many children under the age of 5 years reside at your residence?’;
In Queensland

- 25.6 swimming pools per 100 households.
- Between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2011 there were 14 children who drowned in home swimming pools.
- Rate of 1.7 per 10,000 home swimming pools per annum.
Effectiveness of legislation change

Bar chart showing the percentage of responses:
- Very effective: 22.2%
- Effective: 35.3%
- Neither effective nor ineffective: 15.0%
- Ineffective: 14.4%
- Very ineffective: 10.0%
- Don't know/No response: 3.0%
Males

Owners

Older people

Wealthier people

Separated or married

No Child

No pool at residence

No pool at residence

No pool at residence

No child under 5 at residence

No child under 5 at residence

Pool at residence

Pool at residence

Child under 5 at residence

City

Town

Rural area

Single

Widowed

Separated

Married

De facto

Only speak English at Home

Speak a language other than English at Home

Greater than $100,000

$52,000–$100,000

$26,000–$52,000

Nil–$26,000

Female

Rent

Owned

20–24

25–34

35–44

45–54

55–64

65+

Decreasing effectiveness

Increasing effectiveness

2.90

2.55

2.37

2.41

2.37

2.4

2.4

2.4

2.6

2.6

2.6

2.6

2.6

2.6

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Challenges

• No. of pools + increasing
• Ageing fencing
• Complacency
• Enforcement
• Skills – CPR
• Supervision
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