



Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Tuesday, 13 April 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Pool Safety Laws

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.26 am): Today I invite Queensland pool owners to have their say on a regulatory impact statement for the proposed second stage of the state government's tough new pool safety standards. The statement lists the benefits and the costs of the draft pool safety standards ahead of their expected introduction in December. The draft second stage of the state government's pool safety regulations could see pool safety inspections included at the point of sale or lease, greater powers of entry for council pool inspectors, fences for all portable pools deeper than 300 millimetres, the phase-out of child safety doors that form part of a pool barrier and the broadening of laws to include indoor hotel-motel, caretaker residence and caravan park pools.

The release of the regulatory impact statement follows the introduction of stage 1 of Australia's toughest new pool safety laws on 1 December 2009. The Bligh government asked an expert committee—including Kidsafe, the Royal Life Saving Society, the Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit and the Local Government Association of Queensland—to conduct the most exacting review of pool laws in nearly 20 years. The committee released a consensus report with 23 findings, all of which will be implemented.

The Bligh government is not prepared to take risks with the safety of young children around pools. Last year alone, eight children drowned in Queensland pools. In the last six years, 35 children have drowned in the state's residential swimming pools. In addition, it is estimated that 50 children a year present to emergency departments for immersion injuries, some of whom suffer brain damage due to lack of oxygen. Parents remain the first line of defence. They must always watch their kids around water and teach them how to swim from an early age. In addition, I encourage all Queenslanders to undergo a CPR course. The Bligh government is determined to help prevent these drownings and near drownings.

The draft laws will see almost 70 per cent of Queensland pool owners required to undertake some upgrade work within five years, or earlier if the property is sold or leased, to ensure their pools comply. The estimated average cost for pool owners to upgrade a fence to meet the new standard has been estimated at \$430. Similarly, where pool owners do not comply with existing pool safety requirements, the average cost has been estimated at an additional \$730. The bulk of the cost estimates contained in the regulatory impact statement are the maintenance costs for people to upgrade their pools in order to meet the pool fencing standards they should already be meeting now.

If one child is saved or protected from injury as a result of these new measures, the costs will be worth it. The release of the regulatory impact statement for public consultation will give pool owners time to have their say and prepare for the second stage of the Bligh government's tough new swimming pool safety standards. The regulatory impact statement, outlining the fine detail of the new safety standards, will be available for public comment from the Department of Infrastructure and Planning's website until 16 May.