

Question on Notice
No. 986
Asked on Wednesday 14 October 2015

MR MADDEN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND PUBLIC WORKS AND MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND INNOVATION (HON L ENOCH) —

Will the Minister advise why it is important for residents of Ipswich West to ensure that their pool fence is compliant with the safety standards by 1 December 2015?

ANSWER

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to protecting the safety of all Queenslanders, especially young children.

The pool safety laws are aimed at saving the lives of young children. Tragically, more young children drown in residential swimming pools than any other body of water, such as rivers, lakes or the ocean.

Prior to the current pool safety laws being introduced in December 2010, drowning was the leading cause of death in children under five in Queensland. This is no longer the case, showing that effective pool barriers help save lives. The Queensland Family and Child Commission has also found that compliant swimming pool barriers are a key contributor in reducing the risk of drowning.

However, it is important to remember that compliant pool barriers are just one layer of protection in the prevention of child drowning incidents. It only takes seconds for a child to slip silently under water. Therefore, it is vital that young children are always supervised around water, especially swimming pools. Teaching children to swim, using safe play areas and water safety education also play an important role in keeping children safe.

The Government has commenced a public awareness campaign about the 1 December 2015 deadline. This campaign includes advertising via television, radio, print and social media.

New materials have also been produced, and are available from www.qbcc.qld.gov.au, to explain how households can make any changes to their pool fence that may be required. Pool owners can download a checklist to take into their own backyard and learn more about the fencing requirements. The checklist provides some common scenarios and can help highlight whether any areas of a pool barrier may need fixing. However, if a pool owner is unsure and needs some professional advice, they can talk to a pool safety inspector. Local Councils will be responsible for policing pool fencing, and on-the-spot fines starting from \$800 may apply.

Not only is the campaign raising awareness of the deadline but with summer approaching, it is also reminding the carers of children that they must supervise their children around pools at all times.