



# Don Page MP

**Minister for the North Coast  
Minister for Local Government**

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Tuesday 23 October 2012

### **GOVERNMENT DELIVERS ON BACKYARD POOLS SAFETY**

NSW Local Government Minister Don Page today announced the passage of new backyard pools regulations which will help safeguard children.

“While there is no substitute for parental supervision, these new regulations, which parliament passed today will strengthen safeguards and protect children,” Mr Page said.

“The new laws place the onus on backyard pool owners to certify that their pool barriers are up to standard.”

The new laws covering the State’s 340,000 backyard swimming pools will include a compulsory new Statewide register; certification of pools as compliant; mandatory inspections before a property with a pool can be sold or leased; and mandatory periodic inspection of pools associated with tourist accommodation and unit blocks.

“Children’s safety is paramount, and very young children are most at risk,” Mr Page said.

“The new rules will mean that every pool owner must take responsibility to make sure their pool complies with current regulations.

“Every child drowning is a tragedy to families and communities, not least because it is preventable through ensuring responsible supervision and safe pool fences.”

On average six children drown in NSW backyard swimming pools each year, with many more suffering permanent brain damage from near drownings. Last year 30 children aged four and under were victims of near drownings in backyard pools.

The new laws - which were developed after extensive consultation with Royal Life Saving Society, councils, water safety advocates, pool owners, State agencies and industry organisations - will:

- Require that any property with a swimming pool must be inspected and registered as compliant before that property can be sold or leased (50 per cent of backyard pool drownings occur in rented premises).
- Establish a new offence for failing to register a swimming pool (maximum penalty \$2200).

- Require pool owners to self-register free-of-charge on a Statewide, online register and certify to the best of their knowledge that their pool barrier complies with the regulations.
- Require councils to develop a locally appropriate and affordable inspection program in consultation with communities.
- Require council to report each year on the number of pools inspected and the level of compliance of pool barriers.
- Require mandatory, periodic inspections of pools associated with tourist and visitor accommodation and unit blocks.
- Clarify that, where an existing swimming pool that is exempt from the Act's fencing requirements is fenced voluntarily, the new fencing must meet the Act's requirements for a compliant, four-sided barrier and the exemption will be removed.

Pool owners will have 12 months to register and self-certify their pools and comply with current regulations.

Research indicates that by increasing compliance with pool barrier requirements the rate of infant death by drowning could be reduced by up to 41 per cent.

The State Government will also be conducting an education campaign reminding people of their responsibilities.

**Media – Jonathan Porter 0418 945 538**