

Circular No. 09-35
Date 25 September 2009
Doc ID. A193864

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PROMOTING WATER AND BACKYARD POOL SAFETY AWARENESS - WATER SAFETY WEEK 2009

With the 2009-10 swimming season about to officially commence, the purpose of this Circular is to remind councils of their key role in promoting water safety, including backyard swimming pool safety, within their local government areas to minimise the risk of injury or death associated with water.

The Circular also advises councils about Water Safety Week 2009 and encourages councils to undertake relevant initiatives.

Councils' role in promoting water and backyard pool safety

Many councils carry out water safety functions under the *Local Government Act 1993*, including:

- provision of public swimming pool facilities
- provision of beach patrols and lifesaving services
- provision of education programs and campaigns around pool safety, beach safety, life saving and water familiarisation/learn to swim skills.

Practice Note No15 - Water Safety provides guidance to councils in carrying out these functions and is available on the website of the Division of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet at: www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.

Councils are also reminded of their responsibilities under the *Swimming Pools Act 1992* in relation to backyard/private swimming pools to:

- ensure that they are notified of the existence of these pools within their local government areas
- promote awareness of and enforce the requirements of the Act to install and maintain appropriate pool barriers to the prescribed Australian Standard, as well as a warning sign.

The Division's website has information under the topic 'Backyard Swimming Pools' targeted at the general public about backyard swimming pool safety. This includes the brochure *Swimming Pool Laws* and a link to the Royal Life Saving Society Australia's Home Pool Safety webpage at:

www.homepoolsafety.com.au. This site also includes the *Home Pool Safety Checklist* and other resources relevant to backyard swimming pools. Councils

are encouraged to promote these, and/or other backyard pool safety resources, to pool owners within their areas.

Water Safety Week 2009

The NSW Government's Water Safety Advisory Council will be promoting Water Safety Week 2009 from Friday 2 October to Thursday 8 October 2009 to coincide with the official commencement of the 2009-10 swimming season.

The primary aim of Water Safety Week is to increase community awareness of the importance of water safety in the lead up to summer and the swimming season through focusing attention on a range of events held at the State, regional and local levels.

The week will begin with the traditional 'Raise the Flag' ceremony on Friday 2nd October 2009 to mark the beginning of the beach swimming season and Surf Life Saving patrols. The week will conclude with the NSW Water Safety Awards to be held on Thursday 8 October 2009. Award nomination forms are available from the Austswim website at: www.austswim.com.au/nsw.htm#award.

Councils are encouraged to utilise Water Safety Week to hold water safety-related activities and events, which would normally be held around this time, and to launch or implement any new water safety initiatives.

Examples of initiatives that councils have previously undertaken during Water Safety Week include:

- Free Active Family Fun days at public swimming pools with activities focussing on water safety and survival skills
- Free 'Come and try it' classes in learn to swim, life saving and squad swimming and swimming assessments
- Static displays in council administration buildings promoting the week and displaying information relative to pool and beach safety
- Mail-outs to pool owners within their local government area that may include resources relevant to backyard pools, such as *Swimming Pool Laws* and the *Home Pool Safety Checklist*.

Further information about Water Safety Week events and initiatives can be found on the NSW Government's Safewaters website at: www.safewaters.nsw.gov.au.



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