

Daily Mercury

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\$1.10*

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OUR POOLS ARE NOT UP TO SCRATCH

Alarming 90% of pools fail inspection under new safety regulations

By **TOM WILLIAMS**
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NINETY per cent of Mackay residences are failing pool safety tests, as people selling or leasing their homes rush to have pools inspected by Wednesday's deadline.

The toughest pool safety regulations in Australia will come into effect this Wednesday (December 1), in response to alarming figures released by the Queensland Government Department of Infrastructure and Planning, revealing between January 2004 and May 2010, 35 children under five drowned in residential pools in Queensland.

The new regulations make it mandatory for those buying, selling or leasing a house to have a safety certificate issued by a certified pool safety asses-

sor. But Mackay homeowners are finding it difficult to locate inspectors in this area, according to REIQ Mackay zone chairperson Stacey Arlott.

"People are telling me that it is very difficult to get one of the inspectors out to their home, and the deadline is looming.

"The public are very naive to these new laws, when I have been mentioning the new regulations to sellers they are oblivious to the changes," Ms Arlott said.

"There should have been more time for buyers and sellers, the only way they have been informed is (by) snippets in the paper."

"People are failing because they don't even know about the new laws.

"The more times the inspector has to visit a home, the

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Trish Cochrane's pool is checked by Coastal Building Approval Service director Gordon Heelan.

PHOTO: PETER HOLT 261110209

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Homeowners rush to have pools checked before new deadline

Push to train more safety inspectors to meet demand

By TOM WILLIAMS

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MORE people will be trained as pool inspectors to meet demand as homeowners rush to have their pools approved before they buy or sell.

The push is being driven by strict new regulations that come into effect on Wednesday.

The new laws have been introduced in a bid to curb the number of children drowning in backyard pools. Drowning is the leading cause of death in Queensland for children aged one to four years.

With 90 per cent of Mackay households failing initial inspections, certified inspectors in Mackay are run off their feet with appointments.

A pool safety inspection course is expected to be run in Mackay before Christmas.

The two certified course providers, AssentTECS and the Royal Life Saving Society, have received interest from numerous Mackay residents interested in the course.

A spokesperson for the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning Stirling Hinchliffe said while most non-compliances were minor, small defects could cost lives.

"This is exactly why the State Government has introduced mandatory pool safety inspections and certificates as part of the tough new laws," the spokesperson said.

"It's important to remember not every pool owner in



Pool inspector Gordon Heelan goes over the new guidelines with pool owner Trish Cochrane.

PHOTO: PETER HOLT 26110217

Queensland needs to get an inspection by or on December 1.

"Only those selling their properties from that date will need to get a pool safety certificate within 90 days of the point of sale; and landlords will need a certificate before they lease or renew a lease on a property with a pool.

"Pool owners who do not sell or lease will have five years to adjust and comply."

The spokesperson said numerous inspections licenses had been and continued to be issued on a daily basis throughout Queensland.

The laws apply to pools

associated with houses, townhouses, units, hotels, motels, backpacker hostels, home stay accommodation and caravan parks.

If no pool safety certificate is in effect, before entering into a contract of sale for a property with a pool, the seller must give the prospective purchaser a notice of no pool safety certificate, informing the purchaser that the pool may not comply with the regulations.

If a pool inspector inspects a pool and is not satisfied that it complies, they will issue a pool safety nonconformity notice, advising owners how their

pool does not comply and what has to be done to rectify the problem.

Some pool safety inspectors are licensed to carry out minor repairs and pool owners can carry out some repair and maintenance work themselves.

Once a pool inspector has given notice, the owner has three months to undertake the repairs and arrange a new inspection of the pool.

If owners do not comply, they can be hit with penalties of up to \$16,500 for individuals and an on-the-spot fine of \$1600.

For more information, visit www.dip.qld.gov.au/poolsafetyguidelines.

REGULATIONS

- Apply to pools associated with houses, townhouses, units, hotels, motels, backpacker hostels and home stay accommodation
- Come into effect from this Wednesday, December 1
- Pool owners not selling or leasing have until November 30, 2015 to comply
- List of inspectors at www.dip.qld.gov.au/poolsafetyregister
- Non-compliance penalties: Up to \$16,500 for individuals and a \$1600 on-the-spot fine

Mackay pools fail safety checks

FROM PAGE 1

more the homeowner or purchaser has to pay".

Gordon Heelan, director of Coastal Building Approval Service (CBAS), one of the Mackay businesses that carry out the inspections, said that once the laws came into effect, there would be increased pressure on sale contracts and settlement periods.

"The new legislation introduces updated restrictions on permanent and temporary pools and spas, including (some) inflatable wading pools," Mr Heelan said.

"We do a comprehensive 10-page report on the pool area and how the house can comply.

"So far, about 90 per cent of the houses have failed the first inspection, mostly with small issues, which can be easily rectified.

"The main issues we are seeing are faulty locks; climbable objects near the pool fence or changes to the surface height of lawns or gardens over time," Mr Heelan said.

"Whilst some people may see these new laws as an inconvenience they could be the difference between life and death.

If a pool safety certificate is not in effect before settlement, a seller must give the buyer a notice of no pool safety certificate (form 36). The buyer then has 90 days from the date of settlement to obtain a pool safety certificate.

However, Ms Arlott pointed out there may be issues for those who have signed contracts for settlement after December 1.

"If a house goes under contract before December 1 and, for some reason, the new laws have been overlooked, the new buyer could be hit with some big fines," she said.

Mr Heelan said regulations for current pool owners who were not selling or leasing their properties would be phased in over the next five years.

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