

Media Release – **INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE**

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Attention Editors/Property Editors/Chiefs of Staff

SCHOOL HOLIDAY WARNING

UNSAFE POOLS A WINTER “DEATH TRAP”

RESIDENTS URGED TO PUT POOL SAFETY ON TOP OF THE AGENDA

The unseasonably warm winter in Queensland has sparked a swimming pool safety warning for young children.

Property managers overseeing apartment and unit communities in _____ are being urged to keep on top of pool safety, amid fears that a huge chunk of Queensland pools are winter “death traps”.

Many strata communities could be tempted to shift their attention away from pool safety in the winter months, but with school holidays approaching, the peak body for apartment and unit living says extra vigilance is needed.

“It has been unseasonably warm and that means kids looking for somewhere to swim, even in winter,” Strata Community Australia (Qld) President Simon Barnard said today.

In Brisbane, 1 in 4 pools do not meet the standards required for safe pools and with major strata property development going into most Queensland regions, strata managers are being called on to put pool safety at the top of their watch list.

Strata Community Australia (Qld) is the peak industry body for Body Corporate and Community Title Management, and Mr Barnard says strata communities are urged to not become complacent in the winter months about pool safety.

“Swimming pools are a great addition to any strata community, but without regular management, they can become a real risk, especially in communities with a high number of young families” Mr Barnard said today.

“It’s the responsibility of bodies corporate to maintain the best interests of their community, and this extends to safe-proofing communal areas and facilities such as pools and spas from potentially life-threatening situations.”

Statistics from the Royal Life Saving’s National Drowning Report 2015 reveal that swimming pools were the leading location for drowning deaths in children under the age of five nationally, accounting for almost three times that of the next most common location.

Mr Barnard says there's every expectation that the problem of pools not meeting safety standards is widespread and has called for immediate action to eliminate the risk.

"This is an issue that needs to be addressed before it's too late; and we want body corporate committee members in _____ to lead from the front."

Mr Barnard says this can't be something that gets shelved until just before the summer period, calling for an immediate proactive response.

"Beyond the fact that the Queensland winter really isn't that cold in some regions, adventurous children aren't bothered by the mercury."

"The bottom line is, unsafe pools will always present a deadly risk to communities and those in a position to take that risk away need to immediately."

It's worth noting that it's not just managers that Mr Barnard is speaking to, having said today that owners and residents should make their voice heard if they have concerns about their pool being a potential "death trap".

"I implore owners and residents to keep their eyes peeled for any fencing, locks, hinges, or signage that have become weathered, broken or simply don't exist; if they see anything that looks unsafe, they should bring it up with their body corporate immediately to contact their resident manager or caretaker."

"While inspections of strata properties with more than two lots are already subject to regular council inspections annually, this should never be an invitation to let the guard down."

"Life threatening situations can take place at any time at any place, and managers need to ensure that they aren't treating these inspections as far off deadlines."

"Without maintaining suitable fencing, child proof locks, CPR signage and any gardens that may surround the pool; communities with young children are being kept in the firing line."

"SCA (Qld) is determined to lead the pack nationally and support bodies corporate to achieve a dramatic reduction in pool related emergencies across 2016 and into the future."

"The only way we can make this a reality is to ensure that all parties; managers, owners and residents communicate with one another and work to maintain a safe community."

Estimates have over 1.1 million Queenslanders living in strata communities, and some pools are still unaccounted for in safety compliance testing.

ENDS