



Tuesday, 8 October 2002

MEDIA RELEASE

Summer the Season for Child Drowning

Summer is fast approaching and so is the season for drowning deaths and near drowning incidents of West Australian children. "The near drowning of a 4-year-old child at Bayswater Waves on the weekend and the tragic death of a 2 year old yesterday in Scarborough highlights the need for continued reinforcement of safety practices in and around water," said Sue Wicks, Executive Officer of Kidsafe WA.

Kidsafe WA urges homeowners to make sure that pool barriers comply with Australian Standards and current state regulations and that children are supervised when in and around water. "This time of year, when people are getting their pools ready for the summer, it is an opportune time to make sure that pool barriers and gates are functioning properly and that necessary maintenance is performed immediately," said Ms Wicks. "Like any safety equipment, pool barriers can only function at the optimum effectiveness if they are properly maintained and used."

Children under 5 years of age are the most at risk of drowning. Between 1995 and 1999, 50 children under the age of 14 years drowned in Western Australia, about half of these were under 5 years of age. For the same period, 247 children were admitted to WA hospitals after an immersion incident or near drowning.

"The drowning death of children in swimming pools is unacceptable when there are relatively simple means of preventing those deaths. Prevention of child drownings is a combination of factors," said Ms Wicks. Kidsafe WA says that barriers that restrict unintended access to the water by children, that are maintained and used properly, combined with constant adult supervision when children are in and around the water, all work together to reduce the risk of children drowning. It is also important that pool owners learn CPR. No one needs to suffer the anguish caused by the drowning death of a child.

- End -

Contact
Sue Wicks

Executive Officer

9340 8509 or mobile 0409 533 789