

Media Release

10th October 2007

ACTION TO REDUCE PLAYGROUND INJURIES

Each year around 65,000 Australian children are admitted to hospital for treatment of an injury and around 200 children will die as a result of injury.

National Kidsafe Day aims to raise public awareness to the extent of child injury and the measures to prevent childhood injuries.

National Kidsafe Day 2007, Wednesday 10th October, focuses on playground safety.

Nearly 10% of all child injury hospitalisations are playground related. This equates to over 6,000 children admitted each year from playground injury, while countless more sustain injuries that do not require hospital admission. What's more, these numbers appear to be rising. Swift action needs to be taken to reverse this trend.

Removing play equipment is not the answer. Play is a vital part of children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Instead, playgrounds need to enable a balance between fun, learning and safety.

The key steps to increase the safety of playgrounds include; 1) adherence to Australian Standards for playground design, 2) age appropriate play equipment, 3) routine inspections and maintenance, and 4) adequate adult supervision

The newly developed "Playspace Resource Kit" is being launched nationally on Kidsafe Day. This kit contains practical information for childcare centres, local governments and other such organisations to assist them to ensure that their playgrounds are of a standard to help reduce the number of injuries sustained on Australian playgrounds.

As well as launching this practical Resource Kit, Kidsafe will commence a campaign for the mandating of 5 key elements of Australian Playground Standards.

"Currently Australian Standards for Playgrounds are voluntary," says Ms Margaret Cavanagh, Manager of the Kidsafe NSW Playground Advisory Unit. "Many playgrounds fail to comply with the Standards specifications for fall height, fall zones, under surfacing, entrapment or maintenance. This puts children at increased risk of injury."

Recent research shows that the introduction of the playground surfacing Standard (AS/NZS 4422) in 1996 has decreased the incidence of head injury in playgrounds however the incidence of long bone and upper limb injury has increased in the same time period. Kidsafe is calling for government and industry to support the updating of this Standard to include testing for long bone injury.

The five key components of Australian Playground Standards that Kidsafe will campaign for mandatory compliance with are:

- 1) Maximum fall heights of equipment,
- 2) Minimum fall zone requirements,
- 3) Under-surfacing to meet set standards to minimise head and long bone injuries,
- 4) Prohibition of entrapment risks, and
- 5) Requirements to ensure structural adequacy of equipment.

Kidsafe believes that if all public playgrounds complied with these key components, child injury would be significantly reduced.

Kidsafe Australia calls upon governments, industry, playground providers and parents to support the mandating of these key elements as minimum requirements for playground safety.

For further information on keeping children safe, or to find out what your state Kidsafe Agency is doing on National Kidsafe Day 2007, contact your state Kidsafe Centre.

ENDS

Media Enquiries:

Margaret Cavanagh 0412 296 780

State Contacts:

ACT	Eric Chalmers	0402 097 339
New South Wales	Margaret Cavanagh	0412 296 780
Northern Territory	Saskia Strange	0432 380 698
Queensland	Robyn Allen	(07) 3854 1829 or 0410 531 048
South Australia	Helen Noblet	(08) 8161 6318 or 0411 109 369
Tasmania	Jenny Branch	0417 381 721
Victoria	Aleks Natora	0419 836 244
Western Australia	Sue Wicks	0412 242 142