

Tips to make your pool safer

New pool safety laws—does your pool pass the test?

Swimming pools should be fun. However, drowning is the leading cause of death in Queensland for children aged one to four years. Supervision of kids and teaching them to swim at a young age can save lives. Effective pool fencing also keeps kids safe. This is why new pool safety laws have been introduced.

From 1 December 2010, most pools, including pools on properties where there is a house, townhouse, unit, hotel, motel, backpackers or caravan park, need to comply with a new pool safety standard within five years, or earlier if the property is sold or leased before then.

This fact sheet provides information for pool owners about some of the most common compliance issues for existing pools.

It also provides some simple cost-effective tips that may help you to comply with the new pool safety laws and make your pool safer.

All of these can be completed by the homeowner or a licensed pool safety inspector.

Surrounding garden beds and ground levels

A pool barrier must be a minimum 1200 millimetres above the ground level. The ground level or garden beds surrounding the barrier may reduce this height if they have been raised or grown up over time.



A high garden bed provides easy access to the pool area.

What can I do to comply?

- Remove surrounding garden beds.
- Reduce the height of surrounding ground levels and garden beds.
- Raise the barrier height to at least 1200 millimetres above the ground.*



This garden bed does not reduce the fence height.

* If the work involves more than 2.4 metres of barrier or more than two posts, a pool safety certificate is required from a pool safety inspector or a building approval is required.

Fixed, climbable objects

Fixed, climbable objects can give a child access to a pool area. These objects include:

- taps or light fittings on nearby walls
- branches of nearby trees or shrubs which are below the height of the pool barrier
- other climbable objects, such as bracing on a deck within the vicinity of the pool area.



A power outlet has been shielded appropriately.



A tap fitting is a climbable object and must be shielded or removed.

What can I do to comply?

- Shield any climbable objects, such as deck bracing or wall fittings, with a non-climbable material such as flat polycarbonate sheeting, vertical palings or a shield that has an angle of 60 degrees or more.
- Trim back any branches within 900 millimetres of the pool barrier that are below the top of the barrier. If there are branches on an adjacent property, you may need to negotiate with your neighbour to remove them.



This deck bracing has been covered up with vertical palings.

Pool gates

Non-compliant pool gates can provide a child access to a pool area. Common problems include:

- gates opening inwards towards the pool area
- gates not self-closing from all positions
- gates with semi-functional or non-functional hinges or closing mechanisms that stop the gate from closing properly.



Inward opening gates must be modified to open outwards.



The gate or components may need to be adjusted or replaced to ensure self-closing mechanism works properly.

What can I do to comply?

- Adjust the gate to make it swing outwards away from the pool area.
- Install a striker or latch to make the gate self-closing.
- Adjust the self-closing mechanism or replace the hinges to make the gate self-closing.
- Tighten the hinges to ensure they are capable of holding the gate.
- Oil the hinges if the gate is not closing properly.



This gate is self-closing and in good condition.



A gate cannot be tied or propped open and must self-close from any position.

Windows that access the pool area

A building with windows that open more than 100 millimetres and open directly into a pool area can provide a child with access to the pool.

Installing window locks is not acceptable as they can be easily left unlocked.

What can I do to comply?

- Fix a rivet or screw in the tracks of the window to stop it opening more than 100 millimetres.
- Insert a permanent window chock to stop the window opening more than 100 millimetres.
- Install permanently fixed security screens on windows that open into the pool area.



Windows that provide easy access to the pool area must be secured.



Louvres that create a gap of more than 100 millimetres do not comply.



These windows have fixed security screens.

Climbable pool barrier

The pool barrier itself may be climbable and provide foot or hand holds for a child to access the pool area. Examples include:

- an intersecting fence with horizontal cross rails within reach of the top of the pool barrier
- lattice or another climbable material on the pool barrier
- climbable vegetation.

What can I do to comply?

- Fix a wedge (minimum 60 degree angle) along the horizontal rails of the barrier.
- Shield any lattice or other climbable material with a non-climbable material such as flat polycarbonate sheeting or vertical palings.
- Trim any climbable vegetation on the barrier.



A minimum 60 degree angled wedge along the horizontal rail eliminates a foothold.



Vegetation that can be used to climb into the pool area should be removed.



A flat polycarbonate sheet can be used to shield a climbable object.

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Damaged pool barrier

A pool barrier in disrepair or one that has missing, loose or damaged palings can provide a gap of more than 100 millimetres or reduce the height of the barrier to allow easy access for children into a pool area.

What can I do to comply?

- Repair, replace or adjust the palings.
- Add non-climbable bracing to the barrier to provide greater stability.



A fence in disrepair can lower the height of the barrier or provide a gap for a child to enter the pool area.



Gaps in a fence over 100 millimetres can provide easy access to the pool area.

Movable, climbable objects

A child can use movable, climbable objects to access a pool area. Common objects include:

- pot plants
- outdoor furniture
- step ladders.

What can I do to comply?

- Remove all climbable objects within 900 millimetres of the pool barrier.
- Secure all movable objects in the vicinity of the pool area.



A ladder is a climbable object and must be removed. The vegetation shown is acceptable as it is not climbable.



This gate is being held open by a pot plant, which could also be used to climb into the pool area, and must be removed.