

# How to make your pool safer

Swimming pools should be fun, but before pool safety laws were introduced, drowning was one of the leading causes of death in Queensland for children under the age of 5. Supervising young children, teaching them to swim at a young age, and effective pool fencing can save lives.

Laws introduced on 1 December 2010 mean that regulated pools need to comply with the pool safety standard by 30 November 2015, or earlier if the property is sold or leased. Regulated pools include pools on properties where there is a house, townhouse, unit, hotel, motel, backpacker hostel or caravan park.

Here, we give you some simple and cost-effective ways to make your pool safer and help you comply with the pool safety standard laws. These can be done by the homeowner or a pool safety inspector with an unconditional licence.

## 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 over time.



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

This low garden bed keeps the fence effective.



This gate is self-closing and in good condition.

Do not tie or prop open a gate when it's not being used

## What can I do to comply?

- n Remove surrounding garden beds
- n Reduce the height of surrounding ground levels and garden beds
- n Raise the barrier height to at least 1200 millimetres above the finished ground level:
  - If the work involves more than 2.4 metres of barrier or more than two posts, you will need a non-conformity notice (Form 26) from a pool safety inspector **before** starting the work.

## Pool gates

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

- n Gates opening inwards towards the pool area
- n Gates not self-closing and self-latching from all positions
- n Gates with semi-functioning or non-functioning hinges or closing mechanisms that stop the gate from closing completely.



Inward opening gates need modifying to open outwards.

The gate or components may need adjusting or replacing to ensure the self-closing mechanism works properly.

### What can I do to comply?

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

### Fixed, climbable objects

Fixed, climbable objects can give a child access to a pool area. For example:

- n Taps or light fittings on nearby walls
- n Branches of nearby trees or shrubs which are below the height of the pool barrier
- n Other climbable objects such as bracing on a deck near 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?

- n Shield any climbable objects with a non-climbable material such as flat polycarbonate sheeting, vertical palings or a shield that has an angle of 60 degrees or more
- n Trim any branches within 900 millimetres of the pool barrier – if there are branches overhanging from an adjacent property, you may need to negotiate with your neighbour to remove them.

This deck bracing has been covered up with vertical palings less than 10 millimetres apart.



### Windows that access the pool area

A building with windows that open more than 100 millimetres and 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.



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



Windows that provide easy access to the pool area must be fixed permanently closed.



These windows have fixed security screens.

### What can I do to comply?

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

### Climbable pool barrier

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

- n An intersecting fence with horizontal cross rails within reach of the top of the pool barrier
- n Lattice or another climbable material on the pool barrier
- n Climbable vegetation.



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

Remove any vegetation that can be used to climb into the pool area.



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

### What can I do to comply?

- n Fix a wedge fillet (minimum 60 degree angle) along the horizontal rails of the barrier

- n Shield any lattice or other climbable material with a non-climbable material such as flat polycarbonate sheeting or vertical palings
- n Trim any climbable vegetation on the barrier.

### Damaged pool barrier

A pool barrier in disrepair or with missing, loose or damaged palings can provide a gap of more than 100 millimetres or reduce the height of the barrier, giving children easy access into a pool area.



A fence in disrepair can lower the effective 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.

### What can I do to comply?

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

### Moveable, climbable objects

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

- n Pot plants
- n Outdoor furniture
- n Step ladders.

### What can I do to comply?

- n Remove all climbable objects within 900 millimetres of the pool barrier
- n Secure all moveable objects near the pool area.



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

A pot plant could prop open a gate or be used to climb into the pool area and must be removed.

### Need more information?

Visit [www.qbcc.qld.gov.au](http://www.qbcc.qld.gov.au) or call QBCC on 139 333 and we can assist you.