



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**September 19<sup>th</sup> 2017**

## **October 1 - Save the Date; it's the Date that could Save; Pool and Spa Owners Urged to Take Action to Reduce Toddler Drowning Deaths**

Olympian Matt Welsh OAM, today joined Kidsafe Australia to help save lives over summer at the launch of Kidsafe's [`Safe Barriers Save Lives' Pool Party Campaign](#).

This national, save-the-date campaign calls on all pool and spa owners to sign up to Kidsafe's pool party event on Facebook and pledge to check the safety of their pool or spa barrier on Sunday October 1<sup>st</sup>, in the lead up to the summer months.

Figures released last week in the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia's (RLSSA) National Drowning Report show that in 2016/17, toddler drowning incidents increased by 32%. During this period, 29 Australian children aged 0-4 years drowned. The majority of these drowning incidents (45%) occurred in backyard swimming pools.

While safety barriers can be effective in reducing the risk of drowning incidents, evidence suggests that a large number of drowning deaths are the result of barriers that are faulty, or non-compliant with Australian standards.

"Common faults or non-compliance issues include gates and doors that are no longer self-closing or latching, gates that are propped open and climbable objects near the barrier" said Kidsafe Ambassador Mr Welsh.

With four young children, Matt Welsh understands the risk that swimming pools can pose to kids – as a decorated Australian swimming champion, he also knows the benefits that learning to swim and growing up around water can provide for children.

"There is no better use of 15 minutes of your time than checking the safety of your pool barrier in preparation for the warm summer months ahead. By doing so, you could save a life", said Mr Welsh.

While pool and spa barriers play an important role in reducing the risk of childhood drowning, Kidsafe is reminding the public that nothing can replace active adult supervision of children in and around water.

This campaign is proudly supported by Safetech Hardware Australia



“Children drown quickly and silently. Together with a compliant pool barrier, it is important that children are always actively supervised by an adult when in and around water to help keep them safe. For toddlers, this means an adult being within arm’s reach at all times” said Mr Welsh.

“This October 1<sup>st</sup>, take 15 minutes to check the safety of your pool barrier – because Safe Barriers Save Lives.”

For further information on the campaign and to access resources including RLSSA’s home pool safety checklist, please visit [kidsafe.com.au](http://kidsafe.com.au)

Media Enquiries

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **Key messages:**

- Drowning is one of the leading causes of death for children under 5 in Australia, with backyard pools being the most common location for drowning incidents to occur
- 20 seconds is all it takes for a toddler to drown
- Simply having a pool/spa barrier in place isn’t enough on its own to keep children safe. A large number of swimming pool drowning incidents are a result of faulty or non-compliant pool/spa barriers
- Regular maintenance is necessary. It takes approximately 15 minutes to check your barrier thoroughly using RLSSA’s home pool safety checklist
- Active adult supervision is the key to keeping children safe around water
- **Need help:** Visit [kidsafe.com.au](http://kidsafe.com.au)

#### **Common issues with pool barriers include:**

- Gates and doors that don’t self-latch or self-close
- Climbable objects near the barrier e.g. pot plants, chairs, pool pumps near the pool barrier which could allow a child to climb over the fence
- Excess space under the fence, and;
- Misuse (e.g. propping the pool gate open)

**Action:** All you need to complete the audit is a copy of RLSSA’s home pool safety checklist and a tape measure.

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