

GIVING EFFECT TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE OMBUDSMAN'S 2017 MAJOR OWN-MOTION INVESTIGATION, INVESTIGATION INTO WAYS TO PREVENT OR REDUCE DEATHS OF CHILDREN BY DROWNING

The Ombudsman has today tabled in Parliament a report on giving effect to recommendations arising from the investigation into ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning.

1. Background

“As Ombudsman, I undertake an important responsibility to review certain child deaths, identify patterns and trends arising from these reviews and make recommendations about ways to prevent or reduce child deaths. Arising from this work, I identified the need to undertake a major own motion investigation into ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning,” said Western Australian Ombudsman, Mr. Chris Field.

“On 23 November 2017, I tabled in Parliament the *Investigation into ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning (the 2017 Report)*. In the Foreword of the 2017 Report I noted:

I have found that a range of work has been undertaken by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety and the Building Commissioner to administer their respective responsibilities in relation to swimming pool safety. I also found, that there was important further work that should be done. This work is detailed in the findings of this report. It will be critical that this work is undertaken with strong cooperation between the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, the Building Commissioner, local governments and other key stakeholders, including intra-agency, inter-agency and cross-sectoral arrangements – this is the most efficient and effective way to achieve positive change.

Arising from my findings in the 2017 Report, I made 25 recommendations about ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning.

In the 2017 Report, I indicated that I would actively examine the steps taken to give effect to the recommendations and report the results of this examination to Parliament in 2018 (**the 2018 Report**)” said Mr. Field

2. Methodology

- The Office gathered and analysed information from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (**the Department**) and the Building Commissioner (**the Commissioner**) on steps taken to give effect to the recommendations arising from the Investigation;
- The Office provided a draft report for comment; and
- Having considered comments, the Office finalised the 2018 Report.

3. Summary of findings

“I am very pleased that in relation to all of the recommendations, the Department and the Commissioner have either taken steps, or propose to take steps (or both) to give effect to the recommendations. In no instance has the Office found that no steps have been taken to give effect to the recommendations.” said Mr. Field

“The Department, the Commissioner and local governments have made particularly positive progress in the areas of improving consistency and quality of swimming pool inspections, and the training and professional development of swimming pool inspectors.” said Mr. Field

“In the 2017 Report I commented that ‘it will be critical that this work is undertaken with strong cooperation between the Department, the Commissioner, local governments and other key stakeholders, including intra-agency, inter-agency and cross-sectoral arrangements – this is the most efficient and effective way to achieve positive change.’” said Mr. Field

“In light of this comment it is very pleasing that the 2018 Report has found a very evident level of national collaboration in relation to portable swimming pools, and Western Australian leadership in relation to portable swimming pools.” said Mr. Field.

4. Continued monitoring

“The 2018 report sets out the steps taken, or proposed to be taken, to give effect to the recommendations arising from the 2017 Report, however, the work of my Office in ensuring that the recommendations of the 2017 Report are given effect does not end with the tabling of this report.” said Mr. Field

“My Office will continue to monitor, and report on, whether steps continue to be taken to give effect to the recommendations arising from the 2017 Report. The next such report will be provided in my Office’s 2018-19 Annual Report.” said Mr. Field.

5. Concluding observations

“The death of a child by drowning is a tragedy – for the child’s life lost and for the families and communities who have been personally affected by the tragic death. It is my sincerest hope that the positive steps that have been taken to give effect to the recommendations of the 2017 Report will contribute to preventing and reducing these tragic deaths in the future.” said Mr. Field.

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The report titled *A report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from the Investigation into ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning* is available from the Ombudsman’s website at http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Improving_Admin/Al_Reports.htm.