Background Effective pool fencing legislation is a cornerstone of child drowning prevention, but can Australia improve further?

Aims/Objective/Purpose

A) Estimate the prevalence of swimming pools per 100 households and children under 5 years per household swimming pool in Queensland.

B) Explore perceptions regarding effectiveness of updated pool fencing legislation in Queensland.

Methods Data from the 2011 Queensland Social Survey (QSS)—were used and additional questions asked were: ‘How many children under the age of 5 years reside at your residence?’, ‘Do you have a swimming pool at your residence?’, ‘How effective do you think that tightening the pool fencing legislation will be in reducing child drowning deaths?’

Results/Outcome There were 1265 respondents (response rate=32%). 26 per 100 households had a swimming pool. 11.4% of households with a pool also had children under 5 years. 57% of respondents believed tightening pool fencing legislation would be effective in reducing child drowning deaths (22% ‘very effective’, 35% ‘effective’), 40% of respondents were either unsure or doubtful. Pool owners were significantly more likely to doubt the effectiveness of the legislation. Perceptions of effectiveness of the legislation did not differ as a function of the presence of children under 5 years (p>0.5).

Significance/Contribution to the Field Between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2011 there were fourteen children who drowned in home swimming pools in Queensland, a rate of 1.7 per 10 000 home swimming pools per annum. Pool owners were less likely to think that tightening the legislation would be effective.