

POOL+SPA

SPRING 2018
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CONTENTS



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- 4 POETIC LICENCE — RED TAPE REDUCTION OR RECIPE FOR DISASTER?
- 10 MAKING WAVES
- 14 GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS — WATER QUALITY IS MORE THAN CHEMICAL BALANCE
- 24 PROJECT COMPLETE — SAFER SWIM SCHOOL
- 26 KID-PROOFING OUTDOOR SPACES
- 30 PROJECT COMPLETE — SWIMMING WITH SWALLOWS AND DRAGONFLIES
- 35 POOLSIDE PLANTING
- 40 SEVEN SIGNS OF A DIFFICULT CUSTOMER
- 42 COMING EVENTS



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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Pool+Spa*. Awards season is over, the biennial SPLASH! trade show is behind us, industry conferences and summits are done for another year. You may have even managed to sneak in a well-earned break before the season ramps up. It has certainly been a busy few months. The SPLASH! event on the Gold Coast was a huge success and, as it was the first time I had attended, gave me a fantastic opportunity to meet members of the industry. It was such a pleasure for me to put faces to names and to hear your thoughts on the industry and the *P+S* media channels. I am sure this heralds the beginning of some fantastic professional partnerships.

When I last wrote this column, we were in a period of unusually warm weather and no significant rainfall across many regions. Sadly for our farmers, that situation has continued unabated over winter for some parts of the country, with all signs pointing to a dry spring and summer ahead. Spring, though, has sprung, which means it's action stations for many of you as demand starts to ramp up and thoughts turn to lazing by the pool for many Australian families.

If you're looking for poolscaping inspiration, we've got plenty of content in this issue to get the ball rolling. We've also got some great business advice on how to spot a difficult customer *before* the trouble starts as well as tips to keep your customers coming back. Sometimes, through no fault of your own, a job takes a turn for the worst. You're sure to find some insights in our coverage of an aquatic centre's ongoing problems and how a little lateral thinking can often save the day. Our cover story this issue is an analysis of the proposed changes to building industry licensing schemes in NSW. While it may not necessarily affect you directly — either geographically or by trade — as members of an industry seeking to formalise and nationalise skills training and qualifications, you're sure to learn a thing or two about how (not) to do it.



I hope you enjoy this issue of the magazine.

All the best,
Dannielle Furness
Editor

POETIC LICENCE

RED TAPE REDUCTION OR RECIPE FOR DISASTER?

Dannielle Furness

Proposed changes to home building licensing laws in New South Wales aim to make doing business easier, but detractors say entire industries may unravel.

Earlier this year, NSW Fair Trading (NSWFT) released a public consultation paper titled 'Easy and transparent trading: empowering consumers and small business'. Backed by Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation Matthew Kean, the paper outlines a series of initiatives the NSW Government says will improve productivity and benefit the state as a whole through efficiency gains.

What are the proposed changes?

The 50-page document covers a range of recommendations including extending licence durations and restoration periods, increasing owner-builder permit thresholds and broadening the Automatic Mutual Recognition (AMR) scheme for certain building-related professions, making it easier for occupational licence holders to practise in other jurisdictions.

The suggestion that has drawn the highest degree of criticism is the removal of 13 categories of home building licences. According to the report, NSWFT oversees approximately 40 categories of residential building and specialist work licensing under the *Home Building Act 1989* (the Act). Those 40 categories range from general residential building work through to 'minor trades' such as splashback or paving installers, painters and plasterers. These so-called minor trades are currently under threat of extinction when it comes to licensing.

While NSWFT acknowledges that the Act provides a safeguard for the consumer, it is keen to point out that there are additional sources of protection in place that provide necessary assurances, should those existing licensing schemes be revoked.

It suggests, for example, that there is adequate provision under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL) which "implies into consumer contracts guarantees that... services must be fit for purpose and be provided with acceptable care and skill or technical knowledge". It is also at pains to point out that common law principles including contract law and tort law deliver benefit to the consumer. Comforting though this justification may be, it

also reads as 'the good news before the bad' when reviewing the proposal document.

What trades are affected?

So how bad is the bad? Well, that depends on whether the proposed changes fly. The published list of occupations, trades and activities affected by proposed licence removals is as follows:

- Decorating
- Painting
- Fencing
- Glazing
- Kitchen and bathroom benchtop installation
- Splashback installation
- Paving
- Shower screen installation
- Ducting/mechanical ventilation
- Shade sails and systems installation
- Dry plastering
- Wet plastering
- Minor maintenance/cleaning

There are six pages of explanatory notes to accompany the recommendation for removal of licences in these 13 categories — significantly more than any other section within the proposal document. A cynical reader might deduce that NSWFT was expecting some blowback and wanted to ensure all its Is were dotted and Ts crossed.

Anticipated or not, the blowback came. The Master Painters Association was initially not impressed, but has since signalled that the painting category will be dropped from the proposed reforms as a result of discussions with the Minister. This has not been formally confirmed by NSWFT or Kean's office.

The Association of Wall and Ceiling Industries of NSW didn't take too kindly to the news either, apparently, with Executive Director Jane Barnes condemning the government's contradictory messaging in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article published late August.



THESE ALTERNATIVES ONLY PROVIDE A PLAN OF ACTION IN THE EVENT THAT A PROBLEM IS ENCOUNTERED.

“On the one hand, the NSW government is encouraging people to take up trades, and subsidising apprenticeships... and on the other hand the government is saying they want to remove the licensing,” she said.

And therein lies the problem.

What replaces licensing?

NSWFT comprehensively outlines the nature of licensing schemes in its lengthy justification. It also offers up some (regulatory and non-regulatory) alternative solutions, including a trader conduct regulation scheme.

Such a scheme would allow any person to trade or work in the industry or occupation but require them to pay compensation, remedy deficiencies or face other penalties in the event that they fail to satisfy certain standards.

A negative licensing scheme is another suggestion, under which any person can trade in a certain industry or occupation without an authority but confers power to the regulator to prohibit that person from continuing trade in the event of misconduct. The only non-regulatory options appear to revolve around consumers better completing due diligence prior to entering into a contract.

Whereas the current licensing framework offers assurance to the consumer prior to a particular service being carried out, these alternatives only provide a plan of action in the event that a problem is encountered. Imagine behaviour on the roads if this methodology was introduced to replace current driver licence schemes.

Kean may very well have expected not to get this through the consultation process, with the *SMH* article suggesting he could walk away from proposed reforms and quoting him as saying “if the overwhelming view is that consumers and tradies will be worse off, then we won’t go ahead”. Again, a cynic might suggest that a politician’s promise isn’t necessarily an airtight arrangement.

The justification

The NSW Government is responsible for the management of 769 licence types, so it’s understandably looking to reduce some of the administrative burden. It commissioned the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to conduct a review of all licences, with a red tape reduction target of \$750 million per annum. Recommendations within the proposal are all drawn from that review, including licence removals.

While some initiatives within the proposal probably have merit, the justification for shaking up the licensing system may be interpreted as being a little self-serving for the government. Much of the argument revolves around cost reduction outlined as follows:

1. Cost to the government — administration and enforcement of licensing schemes
2. Cost to the trade or individual — opportunity cost, which is deemed twofold: a) the stifling of innovation through prescribed work methods; and b) loss of economic freedom in the event of licence refusal or cancellation
3. Cost to the consumer — as licensing schemes create a barrier to entry and subsequently reduce competition

Those last two may be a little harder to swallow than the first. The whole thing is also a weaker argument than a move to broaden the AMR scheme and allow occupational licence holders to operate in other jurisdictions. Anything that creates national parity is a positive step, but not if it comes at the expense of the trade or consumer.

Of course, there’s no point in creating regulation for regulation’s sake and you’re unlikely to find much opposition to a reduction in red tape. However, at a time when apprenticeship numbers are in decline and other government initiatives are seeking to both strengthen and simplify regulatory aspects the building sector, some of these proposed changes seem a little half-baked. Here’s hoping the government can find the balance between cost reduction and common sense.

Just do it

The Just Do It slogan was coined in 1988 by New York advertising agency Wieden+Kennedy. It became a trademark of shoe company Nike which — along with the instantly recognisable Swoosh logo — took the company from 18 to 43% market share in North America and \$877m to \$9.2bn in worldwide sales.

Thirty years later the slogan has become a parody, thanks in part to actor Shia LaBeouf's send-up of '90s motivational speakers in a YouTube video that has so far enjoyed more than 34 million views.

A leader understands that the simplistic motivation of 'just do it' doesn't translate into actual business or staff engagement on its own. When do we just do it... or expect our staff to? When do we take action to make the most of opportunity and what do we see as an acceptable level of risk in the face of potential gain?

Most of us rely on decades of our own failed strategy and tactics, which we take for granted and call experience. That experience means we can often make decisions quickly or launch early before seeking confirmation or support from others.

Making the call to launch early was the focus of Michael Masterson's 2008 book *Ready Fire Aim*. He encourages entrepreneurial thinking and advocates hitting the 'go' button on a product or service as soon as practical and then worrying about how to make improvements. According to Masterson, waiting for consensus means a product may never see the light of day.

Understanding the acceptable level of risk and when to take action is a day-to-day occurrence in your own business. It's your money and your responsibility, but growing your business often means empowering others to make a call. An efficient and effective team has a level of authority that means they can carry out what is needed without seeking approval.

At what level is there acceptable risk and how comfortable are you? What about your staff? There are four distinct levels when it comes to individual decision-making and taking action:

Instructed — Executes on process and directions set by superiors. Follows orders and carries out simple tasks with limited or no choice.



Approved — Weighs up options, but only acts only after a manager approves.

Informed — Has both the responsibility and power to decide but remains ultimately accountable to a superior.

Decisive — Has complete authority to act.

As a business leader, you bear the ultimate responsibility, so you need to accept the consequences of decisions — yours and those of the staff to whom you have delegated responsibility. This means creating an environment of transparency and trust. It also means having a system for fair assessment and feedback of both successes and shortcomings.

According to the *Harvard Business Review*, a one-hour response to an online customer enquiry is seven times better than a two-

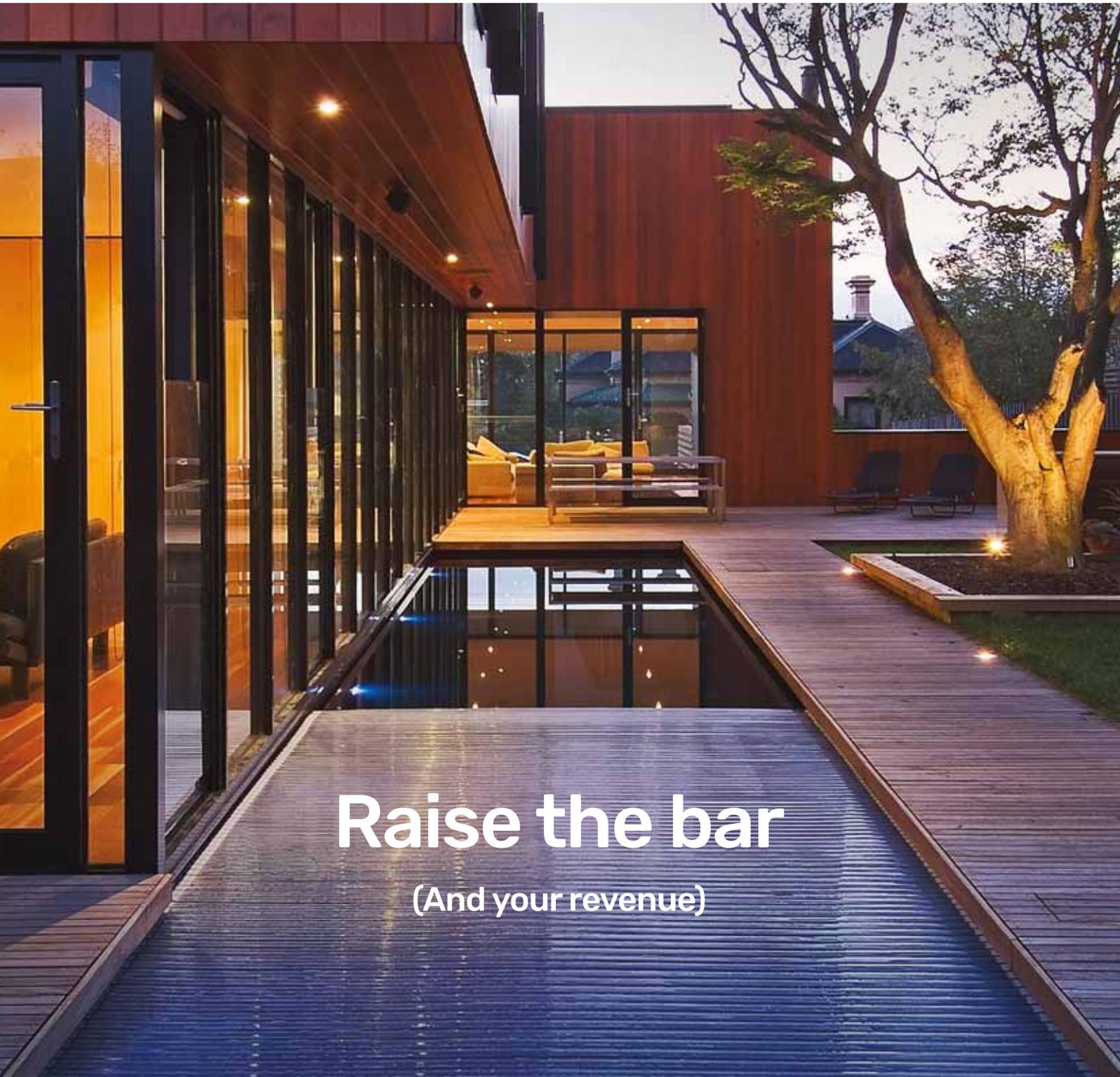
hour response. People want answers quickly and your team is no different when it comes to feedback. They must also be allowed to fail, because that's where lessons are learned, but how and when failure is identified and fed back to your staff is important. It is just as important — if not more — as celebrating success.

We all have a basic human need to be involved and feel part of a team, so your staff need to know they are supported. But it's about more than support. If you want your team to just do it, they can't be put off at the first sign of failure or by their boss's reaction. Nothing stymies initiative and creativity more than unhelpful or misguided criticism.

It can be difficult to let go of the reins and empower your team, but business growth ultimately depends on it. Smart business leaders know it and encourage a just do it ethos... maybe it's time you did too.



Lindsay McGrath
CEO
SPASA Australia



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MAKING WAVES

Unlicensed pool builder fined \$175K

The Adelaide Magistrates Court has found an unlicensed builder in breach of consumer protection laws and subsequently fined him \$175,000.

Peter John Wooton, sole director of Simplified Installs t/as Australia Pools and Patios, had entered into contracts with seven clients for installation of swimming pools and associated works, according to the Attorney-General's Department of South Australia.

The contracts ranged in value from \$33,000 to \$130,000, and in most cases, works delivered were either substandard or incomplete. Some clients also complained of damage to property as a result of works undertaken by Wooton. Three clients had paid deposits and received nothing in return.

The court was told that in many cases, Wooton had used a fake builder's licence number on invoices, and that Wooton also entered into a contract with a client worth around \$130,000 after being warned by authorities that his actions were illegal and when he knew his business was in financial trouble.

In court, Wooton admitted to breaches of the Australian Consumer Law and the Building Work Contractor's Act. Magistrate Brett Dixon fined him \$175,000 and ordered he pay a total of \$58,964.40 in compensation to four clients. In addition, Wooton was barred from managing companies for the next seven years.

"These were significant breaches that left a number of consumers out of pocket," Commissioner for Consumer Affairs Dini Soulio said.

"Wooton never held an appropriate licence and continued to engage in work, even after he'd been warned his actions were illegal.

"I'm pleased to see the court recognise the seriousness of these offences and impose a significant fine and order compensation," Soulio said.



'Private use' of work vehicles clearly defined

LNA Master Landscapers Association has provided some useful information on new Australian Tax Office (ATO) issued guidelines for fringe benefits tax (FBT) on work vehicles. The association says changes may call for small to medium-sized business owners to reconsider the use of company cars or cars provided as perks.

Under ATO regulations, an employer can claim FBT exemption on complying work vehicles issued to employees — provided that private use of the vehicle is deemed "minor, infrequent or irregular". That loose definition was relatively open to interpretation, so the ATO has now provided clarity and set specific limits on private travel. From the 2019 FBT year onwards, employees are allowed up to 1000 km of private travel in company cars per year, provided that no single return journey exceeds 200 km.

As LNA points out, this is not a change to laws or rules, it is merely clarification on a particularly 'fuzzy' issue. It means that log books need to be completed and private use confined to that threshold or there may be penalties to pay.

FBT exemption only applies to vehicles that meet ATO-set parameters, so if you need further information on eligible vehicles or clarification on the new guidelines, be sure to consult your tax agent or accountant.



New Plumbing Code released

Standards Australia (SA) has released the new Plumbing Code. AS/NZS 3500:2018 Plumbing and drainage Parts 1–4 have been published following extensive work by industry, technical experts, regulators and consumers to ensure the code addresses the needs of the broader community.

Published as part of the AS/NZS 3500, the release aligns with the new three-year cycle of the National Construction Code, which SA says enables them to be primary reference documents in the National Construction Code, and serve as nationally applicable standards guiding the plumbing sector in each state and territory.

Newly published standards include:

AS/NZS 3500.1:2018, Plumbing and drainage Part 1: Water services

AS/NZS 3500.2:2018, Plumbing and drainage Part 2: Sanitary plumbing and drainage

AS/NZS 3500.3:2018, Plumbing and drainage Part 3: Stormwater drainage

AS/NZS 3500.4:2018, Plumbing and drainage Part 4: Heated water services



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MAKING WAVES

Changing of the guard at Tru Pools

Sydney aftermarket business Tru Pools, owned and managed by the Guthrie family for more than 50 years, is joining the Poolwerx system.

Retail outlets in Roseville and Turrumurra — along with eight mobile service units — have been acquired by Poolwerx Franchise Partners David Cameron and Malcolm Price. Cameron and Price have well-established operations in Lane Cove and Killara respectively. They now have four stores and 22 vans between them, making Poolwerx the industry's dominant presence from upstream of the bridge to the Upper North Shore.

"I have admired the Tru Pools operation and Rob Guthrie personally for going on 20 years, and our businesses have always had similar attitudes and values. Then we had David and Malcolm at the right stage of their enterprise development and keen to purchase, so it was a natural, easy fit," said Poolwerx CEO John O'Brien (pictured).

O'Brien emphasised the simplicity of the deal.

"One of our jobs as franchisor is to facilitate sales and acquisitions as people enter and leave our system — and Rob has been in the pool and spa aftermarket all his working life (and president of SPASA NSW/ACT for the past eight years). So everyone had a good read on value, and realistic expectations, and Rob was especially pleased that his employees and clients would continue to be well looked after under the Poolwerx banner. Meantime, David and Malcolm gain new efficiencies of scale and Poolwerx continues to grow its brand presence and network strength," he said.

O'Brien said his team is eager to talk to independents and small networks with a view either to acquisition or partnering under the Poolwerx umbrella — which now comprises 140 stores and almost 500 mobile units in ANZ and the USA.

"There are a couple of scenarios that work. You have people like Rob who are keen to move onto their next life phase but realise that they are a big part of the value of the business personally. So realising the enterprise value of their many years of hard work means figuring out how to remove themselves from the business seamlessly. Our brand qualities and systems fill that gap.

"Then you have independents happy to continue on for some time but who realise that they need a reliable exit strategy. Poolwerx adds profitability, capital value and a sense of certainty. All of a sudden it's the business itself that has identity and purpose rather than (solely) the person behind it.

"With the training and support we provide to franchise partners, we have the unique ability to attract people from outside the industry and give them the skills needed to run the business successfully. That opens up a whole new pool of purchasers," O'Brien said.



120 years and still going strong

Back in 1898 Albert Henry Pierce established AH Pierce (later known as Pierce Pool Supplies), a supplier to councils and retail stores throughout NSW. Forty years later, while the world recovered from the Great Depression, the government agreed to lend large sums of money to municipal and shire councils for investment into infrastructure programs including public swimming pools and sewerage plants, in an effort to get the economy on track.

As with most business success stories, Albert saw opportunity and began importing dry chlorine powder for use in pools and water treatment plants. Little was known about water treatment at the time and pool operators were encountering many problems. Albert's son Harold took over the family business and was regularly travelling throughout Australia supplying councils with his products — and becoming an industry expert in the process. Harold became a conduit for information to the industry and was eventually encouraged to form what we now recognise as the Australian Recreational Institute (ARI).

AH Pierce went on to develop and supply a wide range of products for use in public pools. The company remained in the hands of the family until 2008, when it was purchased by International Quadratics (IQ). As IQ's commercial pool division, Pierce Pool Supplies services the public pool industry throughout ANZ. It continues Harold Pierce's legacy by offering products, expert advice and training, and continues to invest in the development of problem-solving chemicals and hardware.

This year AH Pierce celebrates its 120th birthday — 80 of those specifically in the pool industry — making it the oldest existing aquatic business in Australia. It's a milestone that is close to the hearts and minds of all team members and partners. David Lloyd, Managing Director of IQ and Pierce Pool Supplies, is delighted.

"This is a special birthday for us all, and I am so proud that Pierce Pool Supplies continues to thrive and evolve in the commercial aquatic space," he said.

"Feeding a business to sustain its presence and growth, I think, affords a company some well-earned bragging rights! I couldn't be happier when I look back on the company's history and all the people that have contributed to our time in market. I would like to give a special and sincere thank you to all our ongoing loyal customers, as our existence is only here because of your support," Lloyd said.





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MAKING WAVES

Swimart celebrates 35 years

Swimart is celebrating 35 years in the pool and spa business. From humble beginnings with a single retail store established in 1983, the franchise group now boasts 75 stores across ANZ and a fleet of over 220 mobile service vans. The company was founded by Soon Sinn Goh, three years after migrating to Australia from Malaysia, and is owned by ASX-listed Waterco.

Franchise Development Manager Alex Johnson says agility has been key to the company's success.

"We are an agile company that is customer-focused and service-oriented, and we work closely with our franchise partners to educate pool and spa owners about how to get the most out of their investment," he said.

That close connection is evidenced through some long-standing franchise relationships. Bob Tully and Reg Blue have remained with the group for decades.

Tully was working at Brian Archer Swimming Pools when it was purchased by Swimart back in 1984. He became the company's first franchise manager, purchasing the Campbelltown store soon after, which he still runs today.

"Swimart provides its franchisees with fantastic marketing and advertising support, and it's really good with keeping up with products trends and technology. It's good to be part of a company that moves with the times. It's also good to have loyal customers, some of whom have been with us for more than 20 years," Tully said.

Reg Blue started out as Swimart store manager in 1989 before purchasing the Camp Hill franchise in 1995, which he still continues to operate.

"I saw the potential in the Swimart franchise and, having worked as a manager for a Swimart franchisee I saw how successful the business model was. I believe the company's success comes down to a reputable brand, quality products and high-quality training and support. Swimart has also been instrumental in educating Australian pool owners about water safety and healthy," Blue said.



Swimart founder
Soon Sinn Goh.



Borden Natural Pool —
hydrobotanical beds.

© City of Edmonton website.

First public natural swimming pool opens in Canada

While private natural swimming pools are becoming more commonplace, public natural pools are not. In a Canadian first, Borden Natural Pool, a chlorine-free public natural swimming facility, has just opened in Edmonton, Alberta, according to a recent report by Ben Cox on technology website New Atlas.

The completed pool.

According to the facility's website, the pool depends on rock filters and natural processes in the regeneration basin to clean the water. Water treatment replicates naturally occurring filtration processes and the water purification system includes:

- The Neptune filter: Layers of granite rock filter the water to remove large particles — leaves, dissolved solids and larger organic materials. A biofilm on top of the rock filters out smaller microorganisms.
- Hydrobotanical beds: 'Constructed wetlands' that contain plants which filter phosphates, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and other contaminants.
- Intense UV from the sun: This controls bacterial levels before water is recirculated into the public basins.

The project kicked off with a feasibility study in 2010 and involved community consultation prior to design. Construction kicked off in the Northern Hemisphere spring of 2016, with works completed in late 2017 and the grand opening in time for summer.



Supplied by NSPF.

US push for Aquatic Health Code adoption

The US-based National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF) is spearheading a movement for widespread adoption of a Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC). The foundation released a position statement recommending that all state, territory and local health departments; aquatic facilities; and the industry at large evaluate and adopt all or part of the MAHC, with a view to protecting staff, patrons and the very future of aquatic centres.

The NSPF said the code is based on scientific data and best practices gathered by both public health

officials and industry experts. Unlike legislation, adoption of the code is voluntary, which means it can be quickly justified and implemented.

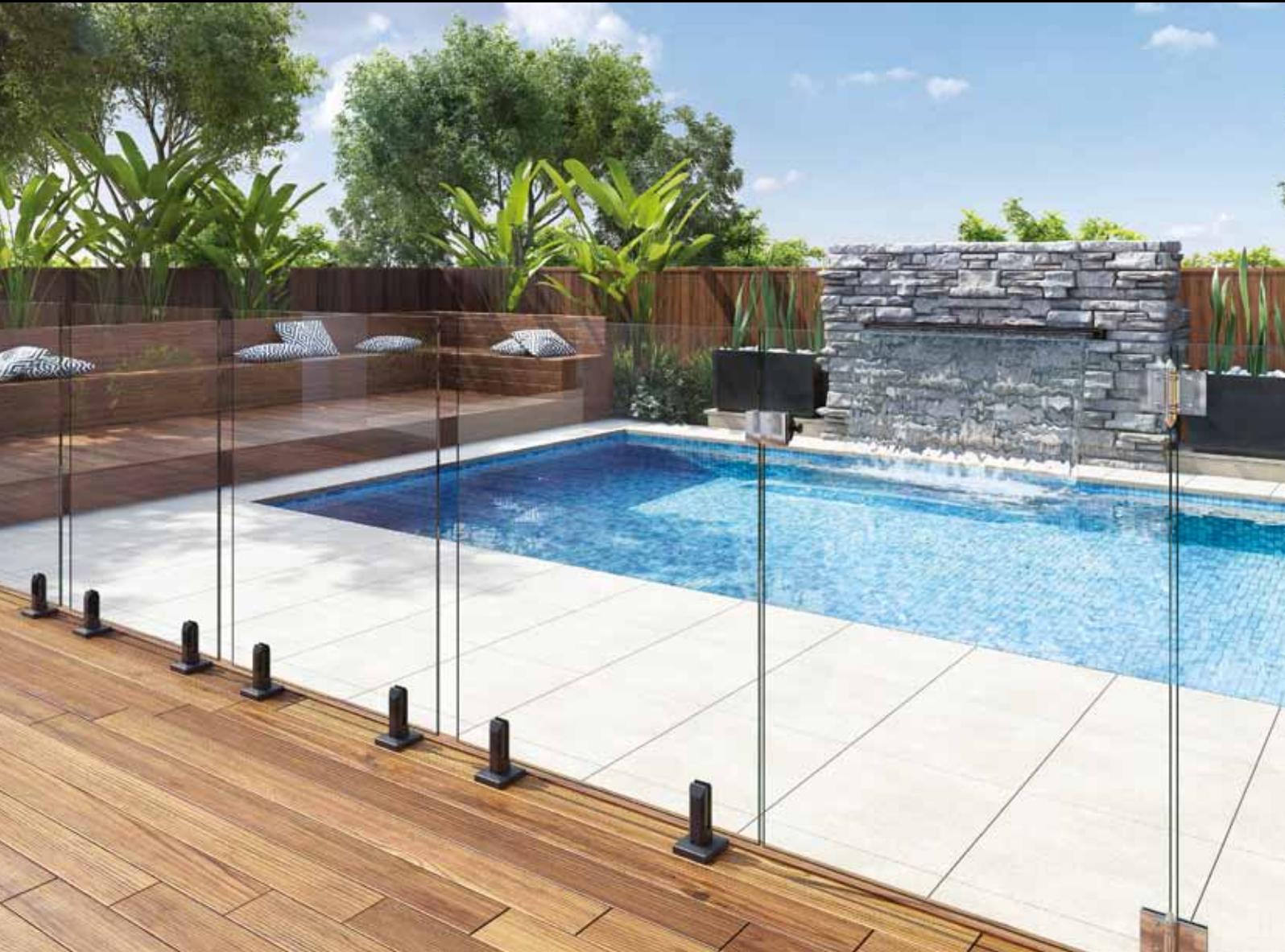
There are more than 85 environmental health codes related to the design, construction and operation of public swimming pools in the US. The NSPF said that while the codes are helpful, the lack of cohesion into a national standard has the potential to thwart public health efforts.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 493 outbreaks associated with treated recreational water in 46 US states and Puerto Rico between 2000 and 2014. Each year, around 200,000 people seek emergency care for injuries associated with swimming pools and nearly 700 experience fatal drowning in the US alone.

A five-state study of inspection data found that 12.3% of routine inspections resulted in immediate closure due to violations that posed serious threats to public health. The NSPF said without adoption of a uniform code, the proliferation of dissimilar codes will continue to produce high incidences of recreational water illness and drowning rates.



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GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

WATER QUALITY IS MORE THAN CHEMICAL BALANCE

South Hedland Aquatic Centre in WA underwent an upgrade back in 2011. Plagued by ongoing water quality issues the facility closed and reopened a number of times, until a more permanent closure in 2015 drove the Town of Port Hedland to seek a conclusive solution.

South Hedland Aquatic Centre (SHAC) in WA's Pilbara Region is a valuable health and leisure hub for the local community. It features a large outdoor pool for lap swimming, as well as diving and deepwater aquarobics facilities and a children's leisure pool that incorporates slides, obstacles and water features.

Ongoing issues, including recurring *Escherichia coli* outbreaks and the repeated presence of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in backwash samples, left the centre with no choice but to shut the doors until a permanent solution was found.

The Town of Port Hedland (TPH) consulted experts from a range of fields for advice; several pool contractors were invited to weigh in, with more than one recommending a complete plant replacement — a cost the town was reluctant to consider. Site inspections carried out by representatives from both the State Health Department and the Leisure Institute of Western Australia were inconclusive with respect to a suitable solution. At one point, even the information technology (IT) staff from TPH were dispatched to site, as the installation incorporated programmable logic controllers (PLCs) and it was thought the IT gurus may be able to shed some light.

The issues

TPH had essentially lost faith in the commercial pool industry and basically resolved to rectify the issues without any industry input. Despite the scepticism, David Watson from Shenton Aquatic was invited to ascertain the issues. As he saw it, five key problems were at the root of TPH's dissatisfaction:

- A series of pipe glue joints had failed and were buried under paving and/or concrete slabs.
- There was a steady presence of *E. coli* in the AquaTower feature of the kids' area.
- Testing uncovered a constant and persistent *P. aeruginosa* bacteria count — primarily in backwash, but also in the water bodies themselves.
- The facility had a non-functioning wave machine that required more staff to operate than there were total users.
- Ongoing issues with heat pumps.

Watson is a self-proclaimed problem solver and gladly accepted the challenge, while also appreciating the TPH's trust and support, given its concerns around the industry's ability to resolve the problem.



A detail man, Watson assessed the situation thoroughly. He looked beyond the mechanics of the installation and factored in other details including the pool interior material, location, make-up of the water supply, the bathing populace, prevalent flora and fauna, operational behaviour and log books, as well as some expected particulars such as pump makes and models.

Watson said this approach gave him a feeling of place, expectation and an understanding of how the community uses the pool. It presented a high-level view of the main issues — and he uncovered several at SHAC.

The water

Part of the problem was the mains water make-up. Watson reviewed water quality data analysis provided by Water Corporation and noted several things.

1. The readings for sulphate, chloride and potassium were all ion-specific, meaning the reading is not what you would see testing for these parameters using a pool test kit in the field.
2. Water hardness shown is total hardness, not calcium hardness, as would normally be tested. Based on the reported calcium

ion concentration (42–47), this equates to a calcium hardness equivalent to calcium carbonate of 105–120 mg/L.

3. The pH result was 7.84 to 7.98. Pool professionals would normally aim for less than this (around 7.2 to 7.6). In a simplified explanation, Watson said this result meant a pH incoming main of around 8.2 would not be surprising. This likely meant that each time the balance tank was topped up the dosing systems would respond disproportionately, based on the pH being attained in the balance tank and not necessarily representing the entire pool volume.

Installation concerns

SHAC incorporates horizontal sand filters. While the Western Australian Department of Health had previously required backwash water to be tested and clear of the same bugs as the pool water once a month, this requirement has since been relaxed. According to Watson, installing the backwash lines so they completely empty after each backwash is the key to preventing bacteria growth. He thinks this simple and effective lesson has been lost in the murk of construction.

“The SHAC pool featured a filter of some two metres in height, connected to a backwash pipe rising about four metres to discharge into an above-ground tank. I’ve seen this on many sites and have noted that the pipe often contains water — it may not be full, but is potentially damp all the way back to the filters.

“This arrangement may work in locations where the climate is less aggressive, but at South Hedland it became a perfect underground petri dish environment that consequently kept back-infecting the entire system,” he said.

The perfect storm

There were other factors that contributed to continuing system failure. The make-up of Port Hedland mains water increased the tendency for the water to ‘plate’, creating a sticky surface that subsequently provides optimum conditions for a bacterial colony to emerge and thrive.

The region’s ambient temperature — which is warm even by WA standards — also contributes to the problem. Although the pipe work is underground, that temperature is likely to sit in the mid-thirties for most of summer, which is clearly not ideal as the incubation temperature for bacteria is typically 32°C.

Watson decided to research *P. aeruginosa*, the repeat offender in the backwash system. He found that treatment for infection in humans often required reducing iron levels which, according to several medical texts, slowed and eventually deactivated the bacteria. He figured SHAC’s proximity to Port Hedland — a major hub for iron ore exports — meant that iron egress into the pool water was highly likely. As a constant in the environment, iron is not easily treated and removed, so any rectification process would have to consider this.

Further exacerbating the issue, *P. aeruginosa* is chlorine resistant. Watson suggested a CT value of 15 is generally accepted, which would mean continuous exposure to chlorine at a constant value of 1.5 mg/L for 10 hours or 15 mg/L for one hour (or any other combination equalling 15) to have any effect. He pointed out that ‘continuous exposure’ was key here.

“This is important when looking at *P. aeruginosa*.

“To get continuous exposure, we first need to get at the bug, which can be a problem in pools. Even in the best maintained pool, this little bug likes to hide. It will find a space in the tiles, a gap in the pool shell or some dirt in a corner of pipework and hide there. This makes chemical treatment difficult, as the chemical needs to break down not just the bug, but all the dirt above and around it, while still maintaining enough strength to kill the bug once it reaches it,” he said.

Filter media is an ideal habitat for this particular bacteria, meaning it should be removed and disposed of at the first detection of *P. aeruginosa*.

When Watson thought about the bug’s propensity for hiding, he turned his mind to the installation’s infrastructure — specifically the pipework, which is constructed from acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS). ABS has some great qualities: shatter resistance, thermal insulation and impact tolerance, for example. But Watson wondered if, like polystyrene, it also contained minute holes and crevices. Could this be the ultimate *P. aeruginosa* breeding ground?

He sourced some increasingly high magnification images of ABS, utilising scanning electronic, atomic force and, finally, transmission electron microscopy. The images clearly showed that ABS featured small catches, crevices and other suitable hiding spots for bacteria.

Conclusions drawn

Taking all of this information into account, Watson speculated that most likely the backwash line wasn’t clearing and that the water contained in the line (besides containing normal detritus) exhibited a plating tendency. He figured this, combined with the high ambient temperature, was providing ideal incubation conditions.

He then looked to operational activities. Chemical treatment happens post-filter so backwash water is, for the most part, raw mains. He asked to see a demonstration of the standard backwash procedure, which he found flawed by his estimation.

“The procedure went something like:

1. Isolate filter from incoming water.
2. Isolate filter from outgoing water.
3. Open backwash valve.
4. Open valve at the back of filter (a drain valve intended only for maintenance).
5. Remove air relief/vacuum breaker.
6. Drain the filter so water is observed just above the sand bed (observation port in lid).
7. Run blower to agitate the sand (which simply moved the dirt about on the filter bed).
8. Carry out some form of rinse.

“I was a bit taken aback and asked the operator where the procedure had come from. He produced written instructions that outlined *almost* exactly what he had done. The exception was removal of the air relief, which the centre had started doing to encourage faster emptying.

“I then demonstrated the original equipment manufacturer’s method of air-powered backwashing, which highlighted what I saw as errors in the original instructions. These were to open the backwash valve and let the filter drain off some water (the water above the top of the inlet pipe). This provides room for the aeration and agitation that occurs and pushes a small amount of water out of the filter,” he said.



EVEN IN THE BEST
MAINTAINED POOL,
THIS LITTLE BUG
LIKES TO HIDE.

Watson revisited the installation with this process in mind. As the backwash line rises above the top of the filters, he said this particular procedure was immediately identified as impractical, because the line could easily be full rather than empty. He suggested undue importance was being placed on opening the drain valve, as it was only necessary to provide space for agitation and not for any other purpose.

Rectification and recommendations

Given the breadth of problems, rectification of the issues at SHAC required a many-pronged approach.

The ABS backwash line was replaced with PVC alternative and an air gap was introduced, ensuring it drained completely on each cycle. Additional upgrades and minor improvements included replacement of some pipeworks entering the balance tank. This exposed previously hidden works, including pipes from the original pool which, rather than being removed, had been cut off and left open in the balance tank.

At one point, the 50 m pool returned a bacteria count, even after the backwash line had been replaced. It was identified as a failure to replace elbows in the line and immediately rectified by the contractor.

Watson recommended an alternate backwash routine which involved fewer steps, discounted removal of the air relief and relied on the equipment as installed. It resulted in the filters expelling dirt which was easily observable from the sight glass in the filter lid and meant the filter beds were cleaner. The process incorporated purging the backwash line (as thoroughly as possible) by opening a small valve near the backwash tank. In the weeks following, the pool water delivered satisfactory results.

Plumbing changes and a new filtration system for the AquaTower in the kids’ area completed the works.

The combination of rectification works delivered exactly what TPH was after — a permanent solution to the ongoing problems which had plagued SHAC off and on for years. By looking beyond the equipment installation and considering other potential external factors, Watson was able to deliver a functioning system without an unnecessary and costly plant replacement.

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State of the nation

Spiros Dassakis, Chief Operating Officer, SPASA Australia

Australia has always punched above its weight. We're the sixth-largest country on the planet and the world's largest island — although the smallest continental land mass. The country extends around 7.7 million square kilometres, but that represents around just 5% of the world's almost 150 million km² total.

The 1966 census recorded a population total of 11,540,764 and by 2017 that had reached 24,770,700 — an increase of more than 53% in 50 years. Looking at those figures another way; the current Australian population represents a mere 0.33% of the world's total.

While we are small in number, our economy is ranked 13th in the world based on a GDP of around \$1.5 trillion. We export over \$300 billion each year and import around \$350 billion. The latest published World Economic League table predicts we'll be the 11th-largest economy by 2025.

Despite significant population growth, marriage numbers are steady and divorce rates in decline. In 1996, there were just over 106,000 marriages and 52,400 divorces. By 2016, those numbers were closer to 118,400 and 46,600 respectively.

We love our real estate. Median house prices in 1996 were \$211,000 for Sydney and \$131,000 for Melbourne — today those figures are closer to \$906,000 and \$710,000, respectively. House pricing long-run trends analysed by Bank for International Settlements (BIS) suggest that an average 8% annual increase ranks Australia's growth rate as sixth-highest among developed nations. We have the fourth-highest global life expectancy ranking according to World Health Organization data, trailing behind Singapore (3rd), Switzerland (2nd) and Japan (1st). In 1996, the average life expectancy was 78 years, while today it's just under 83 years. We're more educated than ever before — there are nearly four million children currently enrolled in schools, another 1.3 million students in universities across Australia and an incredible 4.2 million individuals enrolled at other registered training organisations. So, what's the point of all these facts and figures? No matter how you look at it, we Aussies are small fish in a very big sea, but we continue to succeed on the world stage in an incredible number of ways. We consistently better our global counterparts across a broad range of measures, but why?

We've always been a nation of go-getters and much of our folklore is based on that spirit of innovation. We have a long and proud history of achieving great things and being acknowledged as an economic force to be reckoned with. Every now

and then, it's a good idea to take stock and look at who we are, where we've come from and where we want to be. More than ever, we need to embrace our strengths and trigger that spirit of innovation, our innate respect for others and the burning ambition that has led to our past accomplishments — all necessary qualities when facing the challenges that coming decades will bring.



Spiros Dassakis

PRODUCT PAVILION



INTELLIGENT POOL MONITORING

ICO from Pool Systems is an artificial intelligence device that measures, analyses, anticipates and makes adjustment suggestions. The device features integrated sensors that take readings of water temperature, pH, ORP and conductivity/salt levels.

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Pool Systems

www.poolsystems.com.au

SALT WATER CHLORINATOR

The Aquarite + is an advanced and highly efficient salt water chlorinator, suitable for pools and spas. By converting salt into natural chlorine it creates sanitised soft water, without harsh side effects.



The compact and sophisticated unit is simple to operate and comes with the ability to schedule automatic timers that can be used to turn the filtration pump on and off. With additional upgrade kits, it can also measure and control the pH and ORP, control a heater and be operated remotely using an app.

The system contains an easy-to-read display, giving the user useful information. It automatically monitors pool temperature and salt levels and will display a warning when attention is required.

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RESIN FLOORING

Flowcrete Australia has launched Flowsports Aquatic, a range of high-performance resin flooring solutions for aquatic, leisure and recreation facilities.

The Flowsports Aquatic collection features a number of solutions that have been designed to provide decorative, safe and reliable floors for areas such as internal and external pool concourses, walkways, amenities, change rooms and grandstand seating zones.

The new systems were designed to meet the specific flooring criteria within swimming pool environments, such as waterproofing, withstanding exposure to large quantities of water, minimising slips and trips, preventing unhygienic conditions and facilitating a fun and active space.

Flowsports Aquatic consists of five new floor finishes, providing a choice of options for the specific flooring challenges present across areas within a leisure facility.

The range includes Flowsports SRQ, a decorative epoxy system that uses coloured quartz granules to create an attractive, durable and non-slip surface underfoot. It is suitable for internal applications including pool surrounds, walkways, change rooms and amenities.

For spaces where additional moisture tolerance is required, the hybrid resin-based solution Flowsports SRQ PU can be applied. If time is of the essence, then Flowsports SRQ Rapide is the system to go for, as its methyl methacrylate (MMA) enhanced formulation means that it can be installed in a fraction of the time of alternative materials.

The range also includes two low VOC, flexible, texture polyurethane-based systems, Flowsports ID for interior spaces and Flowsports ED for exterior areas. Both are available in a variety of solid colour finishes and provide enhanced protection against impacts, UV rays and chemicals. The range can incorporate drainage, an important health and safety factor as it avoids water ponding and becoming both a slip hazard and a prime site for bacterial growth.

Flowcrete says the seamless, impervious and chemical-resistant nature of the solutions means floors are easy to clean and won't be affected by pool sanitising chemicals.

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POOL HEAT PUMP RANGE

The EvoHeat Advanced EVO DHP-R premium domestic pool heat pump series now offers greater control and energy savings. The range is designed with a host of features including a smartphone controller app, intelligent full colour touch-screen controller and stainless steel cabinet.

The EVO Advanced DHP-R pumps are said to be up to 600% more energy efficient than other technologies, with a heat output of up to 5.4 kW for every 1 kW of paid electricity. The low ambient air performance is designed to provide stable performance from as low as -7°C.

The EvoHeat smartphone controller app for iOS and Android allows users to remotely turn their heat pump on and off, adjust temperature setpoints, set multiple timers, record the last 30 days of pool heating data and receive real-time notifications.

A full-colour touch-screen controller allows users to monitor real-time power consumption. The controller also allows users to adjust temperature setpoints, set timers and record temperature and power records.

Evo Industries Australia Pty Ltd

www.evoheat.com.au



IN-GROUND TRAMPOLINE

The Cooke Industries in-ground trampoline is easy to install, providing a cost-effective alternative to traditional above-ground options. Installation is simplified, with no requirement for pouring footings or building retaining walls. Simply dig a hole in the desired location, place the assembled trampoline into the pit and backfill soil to the frame edge.

Because kids are jumping at ground level, they can't fall from height or get underneath the trampoline mat and risk being hit from above. The trampoline is designed to enhance the overall landscape rather than overwhelm it, and provide increased safety.

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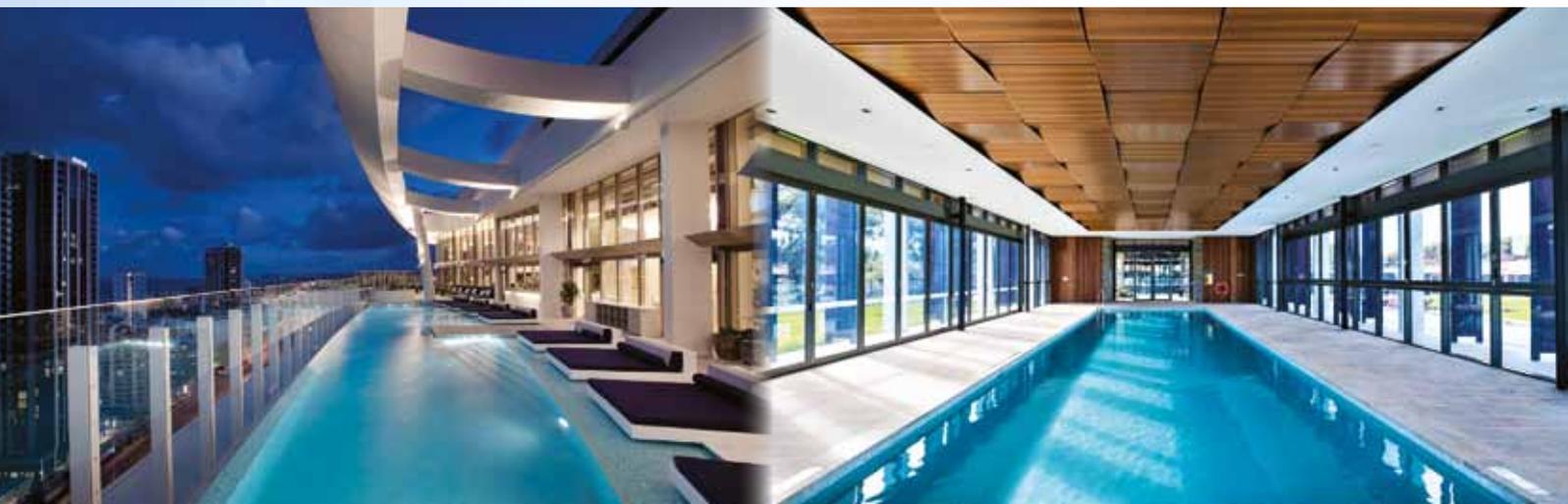
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PROJECT COMPLETE

SAFER SWIM SCHOOL

Shawn's Swim School operator Shawn Read had been searching for a floor covering solution for some time. He and his team were tiring from the daily grind of cleaning heavy poolside matting designed to reduce slipping on the concrete surround.

The loose-lay matting required constant attention and costly replacement every few years. Visually, it did nothing to enhance the established learn-to-swim school based in the rapidly growing outer Melbourne suburb of Hoppers Crossing.

Read spotted Life Floor at a trade show and realised he may have found a solution to his problem.

"I specially attended the SPLASH! show to search out flooring suppliers. When I watched the Life Floor sales guy drop an egg and saw it bounce without breaking, it got my attention," Read said.

Life Floor is a tile flooring system designed especially for aquatic applications where people are barefoot. Thanks to its foam rubber construction, the non-abrasive tiles are soft underfoot. Manufactured in the United States using an EVA closed cell polymer, Life Floor is antimicrobial and impervious to just about anything.

After a four-month trial in a small change room, Read was convinced of the flooring's suitability. He elected to install around 200 m² in total, completely covering the concrete floor around the school's 25 m four-lane indoor pool.

Installation was carried out over the school's summer holiday closure and overseen by an authorised Life Floor staffer shipped in from the US, who also trained a number of local installers while here. The tiles are affixed to the floor using a proprietary waterproof contact adhesive product and there is no requirement for grout.

Read opted for a simple offset pattern using the highly slip-resistant ripple texture tile in blue and grey, with a black wet edge pool tile and die-cut depth markers.

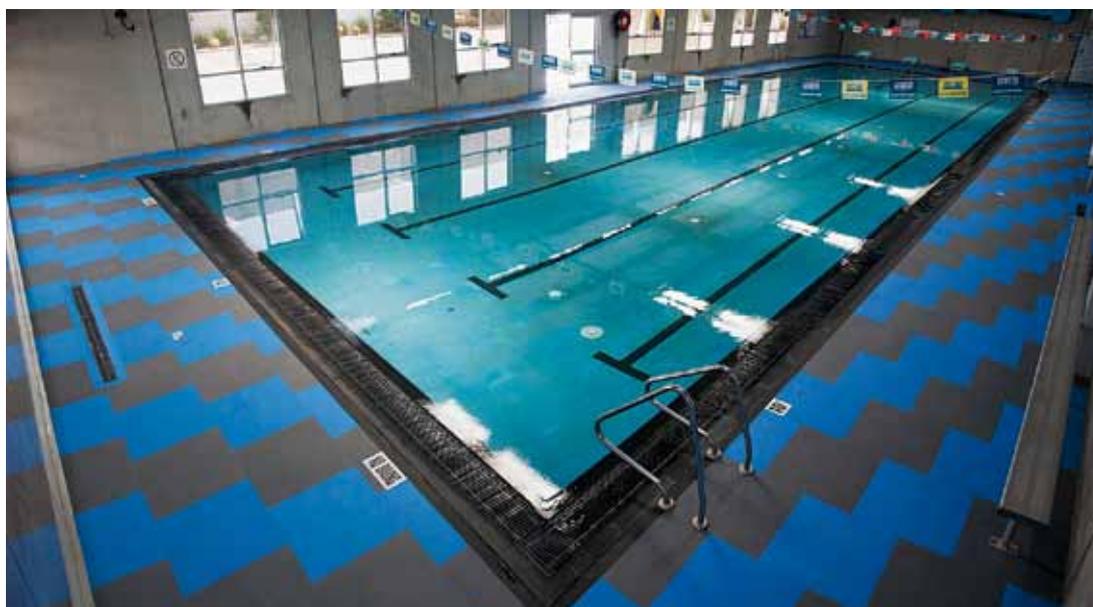
"After examining flooring options, speaking with industry colleagues and based on my many years of experience in the learn-to-swim sector, I concluded that Life Floor offered an innovative solution to my issues," Read said.

Cleaning and maintenance has proven straightforward and Read appreciates the durability of the product.

"We have had to keep an eye on anyone entering the pool deck in



Before: The unsightly matting was heavy and required constant maintenance.



After: Life Floor's foam rubber tile flooring system improved the visual appeal of the pool deck and made it safer.

work boots or high heels as it likely the tiles could be scuffed, but that hasn't been issue at all.

"The visual transformation has been fantastic and it's great to eliminate lifting and hosing those heavy mats every day. Life Floor is less slippery, softer on the feet and a much safer floor solution — particularly for youngsters. Everyone loves it, because it's so nice to walk on and the cushioning and grip are amazing," he said.

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KID-PROOFING OUTDOOR SPACES

Landart Landscapes' Matt Leacy* shares his top tips for creating safe and engaging outdoor spaces that not only look great, but are also enjoyable for kids.

Backyards and other outdoor spaces can be beautiful, relaxing and engaging. When there are kids involved, there is also a requirement for safety, so they can run and play as they please without the threat of accident or injury.

You don't need to compromise an outdoor aesthetic to ensure a safe and fun backyard. With smart and strategic landscape design, you can achieve both — and it doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg.

Soften surfaces

If you have kids running around frequently, it's worth looking at how you can soften surfaces to decrease the chance and severity of damage that can come with falls, accidents and the like.

Cut back trees and plants with sharp branches and consider introducing some soft plantings, hedges and groundcovers to act as barriers around potentially dangerous garden beds and hard-

scapes. In terms of plantings that look great and work to soften the environment, the best choice depends partly on the particular outdoor space and aesthetic.

Woolly Bush (*Adenanthos sericeus*) is the softest, most beautiful plant to touch. Kids love them because they look a little pine-like and spiky, but when you touch them they are soft and silky. For groundcovers I recommend *Dymondia*, *Zoysia* and *Dichondra*, as these can be walked over without being destroyed. They are also relatively hardy and able to contend with cooler weather conditions.

Synthetic grasses are also another good option for softening hard ground surfaces. They're not quite as soft and nice as the real thing, but they're a fantastic substitute for south-facing play areas where grass won't grow. They can be laid directly over concrete to help soften and green up an area.

If there are lots of slippery surfaces in areas like patios, walkways and swimming pool decks, adding some non-skid, non-slip surfaces such as pavers or rubber flooring will reduce the risks of falls.



Avoid any potentially toxic or prickly plants that kids might come into contact with. Steer clear of varieties like cactuses, oleander (as a general rule, anything with white sap) hydrangeas, chillies, azaleas, agave and some succulents. If you're unsure, consult your local garden centre or a landscape designer.

Design and zone to attract kids to safe areas

The easiest way to boost safety and control the ways that kids interact with outdoor spaces is to create child-friendly zones that attract their attention and keep them away from potentially hazardous areas. Kids will be less likely to hang around dodgy areas if you've created a safe and engaging outdoor space with lots of fun and engaging activities.

As a starting point, think about what kids love to do and then introduce elements accordingly. Kids that love to draw will be pulled in by a little wall or fence to use as a chalkboard. Large-format pavers can also double as hopscotch squares and on-ground chalkboards.

Photography: Jason Busch courtesy of Landart Landscapes



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Other kid-friendly outdoor features include swing sets, rope swings, in-built trampolines, sandpit areas, and mounted and stationed cubby houses. In-built trampolines, in particular, are great as they're generally safer for children than above-ground trampolines — and they also tend to blend more seamlessly into existing landscapes. In-built trampolines do, however, require a hole to be dug in the ground as well as proper aeration underneath, so it's worth engaging a professional to handle the installation.

If you're open to using synthetic grass in a kids' zone, a putt-putt green can also be a fun option to help keep the kids occupied. Adding some comfy beanbags, pillows and camping gives kids little reason to spend time anywhere else.

When deciding where to create a kids' zone in the backyard, it's important to consider several factors. Think about what area will work best in terms of preserving the existing outdoor aesthetic, as well as where it's easy to supervise the kids and ensure they're properly protected from the elements — rain and sun included.

Areas surrounded by large, secure trees can work well, but you'll need to be diligent with pruning to prevent dangerous falling branches and the like — especially in windy conditions and environments. If there's not much access to natural shade or wind cover, man-made options like retractable awnings, big beach umbrellas and gazebos can be options worth considering so that the space can be used by kids regardless of the weather.

Pool safety essentials

Every Australian state and territory has jurisdiction-specific pool fencing laws aimed at reducing risks associated with pool drownings, and all pools need to be fenced in compliance with local building codes and registered with local council.

In particular, pools need to comply with certain height requirements. In NSW, for example, pool fences need to be at least 1.2 m high — and if the pool backs up onto a boundary fence, the boundary fence need to be at least 1.8 m high. There are also minimum requirements pertaining to the height and size of security latches, gaps and horizontal pales.

When installing a pool fence, take the time to properly consider the fence design and how it will affect the existing space — both from a practical and aesthetic perspective. An ugly pool fence can significantly degrade the look, feel and value of an outdoor



space — so it's advisable to engage a landscape designer to ensure you make the right choice.

A professional designer can help to marry compliance and design, matching the need for safety with the need for a fence that enhances the overall outdoor space. They'll consider things like the ideal fencing material, as well as how factors such as level changes and garden beds can be utilised to integrate the fence into the rest of the backyard and make it disappear as much as possible.

**Matt Leacy is a qualified structural landscaper, designer and horticulturalist. He is a current board member and former president of the LNA Master Landscapers Association.*

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PROJECT COMPLETE

SWIMMING WITH SWALLOWS AND DRAGONFLIES

Oxfordshire locals Kate and Ben Brown operate Turley Farm Barns, which includes holiday accommodation and an entertainment venue. The 25-acre working farm is home to a variety of animals and is a setting that attracts holidaymakers from around the country.

The Browns wanted to create a swimming environment that would enhance the picturesque landscape rather than detract from it, and the rural location and its surroundings lent itself to a natural pool rather than concrete or fibreglass options. Just as important was the fact that Ben and Kate did not want to swim in chlorine and the other chemicals associated with more traditional pools — they wanted the experience of swimming in a totally natural environment.

They turned to Mountain Pools for a natural pool alternative using a pool filtration solution from Waterco.

A natural swimming pool, or pond, uses biofiltration to keep the water clean, clear and healthy. Mountain Pools Managing Director Tim Gunning said if it's designed well, it will blend seamlessly into the garden and encourage wildlife.

"A natural pool is an oasis for microorganisms, plants and insects that all form part of the ecosystem, resulting in a crystal clear pool that when the sun does shine, is there to be enjoyed by man as well," he said.

Gunning, in conjunction with the Natural Pools swimming pool company, designed and built a 250 m rectangular pool with a large regeneration area where impurities are absorbed by specialist plants as nutrients and harmful bacteria are destroyed by natural water organisms.

"The flowers and plants are not only vital to the purity of the water and workings of the pool but also give the pool a stunning look throughout the seasons.

"Two timber walkways lead to the pool where people can sit and enjoy the serene setting with a beverage or use them as diving platforms," he said.



Assisting the filtration process is Waterco's Exotuf 702 bead filter, 2 x Aquamite 1 HP pumps and an MC16 MultiCyclone, an ideal combination for natural pools and ponds.

The MultiCyclone removes debris through the process of centrifugal filtration prior to reaching the Exotuf filter, ensuring the best mechanical and biological filtration is achieved.

The pool's regeneration area and plants attract local wildlife, with dragonflies and swallows enjoying the pool as much as the owners and guests.

"A number of guests have commented how much they enjoy using the pool when staying at the farm," said Ben, who swims at least 20 pool lengths each day.

"We would highly recommend a natural pool to anyone. Without doubt it has far exceeded our expectations.

"It was a great journey from the initial water colour design to the first time we took a swim. It was worth every penny," he said.

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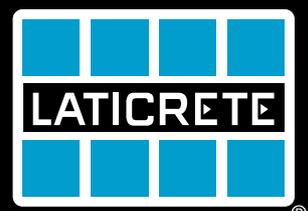


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*See Data Sheet DS-1036 for complete product information.



**Globally Proven
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POOL FENCING

Sentrel manufactures vertically tensioned cable balustrade and pool fencing in both classic timber and maintenance-free aluminium styles. The design incorporates marine-grade vertical cables and a contemporary aluminium system that can be ordered without a handrail, or a choice of handrail options — matching aluminium or timber. The system is fully compliant with Australian Standards.

By combining the stair and deck balustrade with gate and pool fencing options, Sentrel delivers a seamless, coordinated and contemporary poolside look. While the appearance is light, simple and stylish, the structure is strong and durable.

Pre-made panels facilitate fast and easy installation and the clean contemporary lines ensure that the view is uninterrupted. Sentrel balustrade and pool fencing complements timber, steel or concrete rendering, adding warmth to any design.

Sentrel Pool Fencing

sentrel.com.au



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INVERTER HEAT PUMP

The new range of high-performance, energy-efficient EnergyLine Pro inverter heat pumps from Hayward maintains a constant water temperature using energy-saving inverter technology.



With many of the same features as the standard EnergyLine Pro heat pumps, the Inverter range offers a more efficient and quieter alternative.

Inverter technology constantly measures water temperature and adjusts the speed of the unit's compressor and fan, ensuring the most efficient setting to match heat loss. On start-up, the unit slowly ramps up compressor and fan speed based on accurate measurement of inlet water temperature, air temperature and setpoint temperature.

As the water temperature nears the set-point temperature, the unit slows down and reduces heating capacity. This increases the COP (Coefficient of Performance — the ratio of heat output to consumed power) and realises efficiency gains. A higher COP means a more efficient heat pump and equates to lower running costs.

Traditional on/off heat pumps are sized to effectively heat a pool. This means they are generally oversized for maintenance heat requirements, leading to frequent on/off action. Inverter pumps are also sized to heat a pool, but the automatic slowing and heat reduction functions offer a more efficient and smaller-sized unit to be used for holding the setpoint temperature.

Hayward Pool Products Australia

www.hayward-pool.com.au

APVMA APPROVED BACTERIA REMOVAL

The C-5 Tablet from IQ and Pierce Pool Supplies has recently obtained APVMA approval, making it the only chlorine dioxide precursor product to be registered by the APVMA and compliant with all Australian health department requirements.



C-5 is a simple-to-use 'peel and pop' tablet that can be applied directly into the water to kill *Cryptosporidium* and other bacteria in commercial and residential pools.

Suitable for use either as a maintenance dose or bacteria treatment, the tablet activates instantly in the water. It eliminates OHS concerns as no mixing of chemicals is required.

Traditional methods of bacteria treatment can be expensive and time-consuming, whereas the tablet method reduces pool closure time, preventing loss of revenue.

The tablet provides shock dosing at 1 ppm, removing the need for neutralisation.

International Quadratics
www.interquad.com.au



CEMENT-LOOK PAVING

Zement from Rocks On is a concrete-look material suitable for both indoor and outdoor designs. The product is available in a range of finishes and sizes, including large-format (600 x 1200) pieces, as well as 20 mm pavers.

The product comes in four colours — steel, coal, black and white — and is available in a variety of finishes. Zement is a non-staining anti-slip porcelain and is suitable for commercial and residential designs, including custom pool step edging and lamination.

Rocks On
www.rockson.com.au



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Nicole Hatherly

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Seth Godin



MATT CHURCH





POOLSIDE PLANTING

Creating a backyard oasis takes considered planning and good design.

With the right plant selections a backyard pool area is transformed into a private oasis, providing luscious shade and setting the scene for memorable outdoor entertaining and enjoyment. However, the choice of plants can be the difference between hours of pleasure or pain for pool owners — so it's important to learn more about plantings that drastically reduce pool maintenance and optimise the joys of pool ownership, leaving more time to dive in and enjoy.

Consulting a professional landscape designer can add value to your project and ensure a coordinated and structured plan. However, if you are going it alone, here are some suggestions to make it easier. There are a few fundamentals to consider when choosing poolside plantings.

Size, position and maintenance

Firstly, the design and plant placement should consider the size and position of the pool in relation to boundary fences and structure. It must also ensure plans are compliant with local building authority and council regulations. When choosing poolside plants, check

growing guides to ensure the new tree or shrub won't outgrow the space. Plants will ideally be there for a while, so make sure you aren't planting a tree that will reach 10 metres in a few years' time.

Secondly, consider the maintenance and pruning required to keep plants manageable. Steer clear of plants with invasive root systems that might interfere with the pool structure, paving or underground plumbing. Select plants that will be hardy enough to withstand the harsh conditions of reflective heat from the pool and surrounding areas.

Finally, keeping the pool pristine and crystal clear is a high priority. Consider the effect that falling leaves, flowers or berries may have on filtration and cleaning equipment, as well as possible staining of paving or coping.

Picture the scene

Once all potential sources of headache for pool owners have been mitigated, the next step is to consider the landscape. Imagine a beautiful, naturally shaded seating area around the pool, with tall evergreen screening to maintain privacy and attractive flowering ground cover and shrubs adding perfume and colour.



Cycas adds a tropical look.

Let's start with setting the stage for the garden design. Large trees and hedging are a great way to create cooling shade, build a backdrop to smaller plantings and provide screening from the neighbour's yard. *Laurus* 'Green Stem' is a Bay Laurel that creates a fantastic hedge and is particularly suited to the temperate south-eastern climate. It features dark-green foliage and stunning bright green new growth and just needs a clip twice a year to maintain a manicured formal look.

Acmena 'Firescreen' is a low-maintenance lilly pilli featuring glossy mid-green foliage and coppery new growth that fades to bronze. It has few berries and is quick growing, making it ideal for privacy. For a classic design, *Magnolia* 'Teddy Bear' and *Magnolia* 'St Mary' are evergreen magnolias that grow in a wide variety of conditions. Both produce beautiful fragrant flowers during the warmer months. *Prunus lusitanica* is another hedging shrub that produces glossy dark-green leaves with slender spikes of small, scented white flowers in late spring and creates a dense, thick dark-green screen when clipped. Any flower drop can be limited with a little summer pruning.

For a bigger block, *Magnolia alba* is a large evergreen tree featuring delicate small flowers and grows to around six metres tall. It's ideal as a large informal screen and on a warm humid night, the scent from the flowers will fill the garden with its fragrant perfume.

Create some depth with secondary hedging or interest with more informal plantings. *Ficus* 'Figaro' is a super-tough evergreen shrub with lush green foliage producing very little mess from dropping leaves or dead flowers. It can be grown and shaped into tight narrow positions. *Viburnum odoratissimum* 'Dense Fence' is another dense, fast growing, evergreen shrub featuring rounded olive-green foliage with subtle red new growth. It is excellent for creating privacy and ideal for coastal gardens.

Cycas revoluta — also known as the sago palm — is another exceptionally hardy plant featuring dark-green foliage. It will grow in most conditions and is ideal for recreating a tropical resort 'look and feel' garden.

Create shelter

It is important to create a refuge from the sun near the pool. This can be achieved through built structures or by incorporating specific plants that create cool shelter from the heat. Grown from deciduous Plane Trees or large-leafed Maples, *Living Pergolas* stand approximately three metres tall. The foliage is trained horizontally along a trellised wire, creating a living roof structure that provides shade in summer and dappled sun in winter. It is ideal for creating an entertaining area near the pool and a proud sculptural statement.

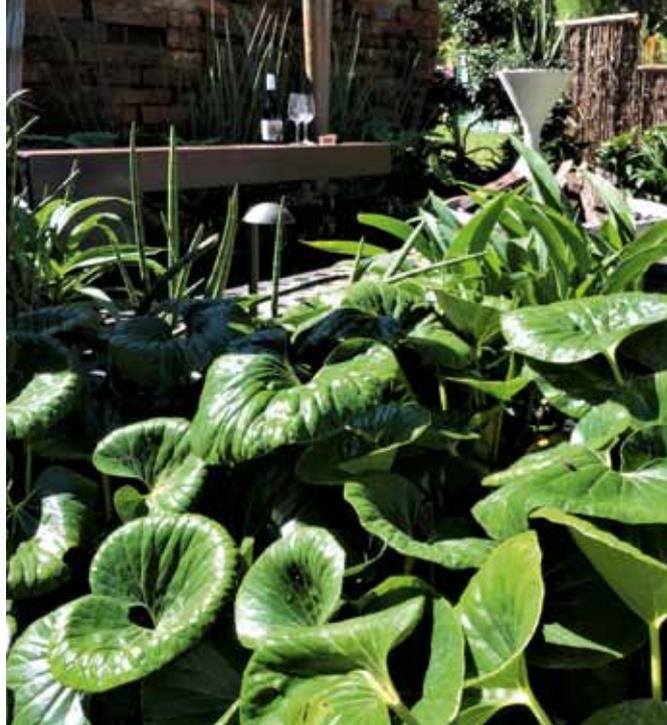
It is tempting to assume that evergreen varieties have a natural advantage over deciduous trees when planted near pools. While deciduous trees do drop their leaves, they tend to do so only once a year in late autumn, when the pool is less likely to be used. Meanwhile, some evergreen varieties drop small leaf amounts all year round, so it's important to carefully select the right varieties and minimise the need for leaf skimming through the summer months.

Use smaller underplantings to create a contemporary look and visually soften the hard lines of pool paving and fencing. *Philodendron* 'Xanadu' is popular for its lush foliage and dramatically lobed leaves and can be planted in drifts for a mass tropical display. *Buxus microphylla* is another small, rounded evergreen shrub that is densely foliated with bright-green, glossy leaves. It is ideal for planting individually under trees or as a small clipped hedge and performs well in semi-shaded areas. It also grows well in decorative pots or containers for a formal look.

Right: *Magnolia St Mary* will grow in a variety of conditions.



Far right: *Ligularia reniformis* is great for underplanting a hedge.



Other smaller plantings to create texture and colour close to ground are *Liriope* 'El Marco', an evergreen perennial, perfect for use in modern native, tropical and formal designs and *Rhaphiolepis* 'Spring Pearl', which features dark-green leathery leaves. This evergreen shrub is a great low-maintenance choice for beside the pool. You can add texture to the garden with the stunning and sculptural *Ligularia reniformis*; a lush perennial that features large, glossy, dark-green 'tractor seat' foliage and is great for underplanting a pleached hedge or feature tree. Remember, when selecting any flowering plants, look for summer blooming varieties that can be enjoyed at their best during the pool season.

By getting the foundations right, the backyard pool is transformed into a backyard sanctuary. An escape from the hustle and bustle of the busy weekday just a few steps away from

the back door. Without a garden to complement it, the outdoor pool is simply an amenity, so it is important to take the time to create a design that works best and choose healthy, well-grown plants from a quality nursery. Speak with knowledgeable staff at garden centres and consider all the key points covered above to create the perfect poolside garden that will be enjoyed for years to come.

Warners Nurseries
www.warners.com.au



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BioLab Australia & New Zealand

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The Life Floor foam rubber flooring system is specifically designed and engineered to perform in aquatic environments and to minimise slips and falls. When a fall does occur, the non-slip 'soft fall' construction ensures that bumps and bruises are minimised, as the non-abrasive surface is soft on bare feet and won't skin knees.

Designed to be durable, Life Floor is completely waterproof, meaning it will not only absorb water or other liquids, it will also last as long underwater as it does above. The closed cell construction of the material does not support the growth of microbes and it is also stain resistant. Life Floor says the material outperforms other rubber composite products in terms of chlorine and UV resistance.

Sport + Venues (Australia)

www.sportandvenues.com.au



POOL AND SPA SANITISATION PRODUCTS

Waterco's Poppits pool and spa range is designed especially for swimmers with asthma or sensitive skin. Endorsed by the National Asthma Council Australia, and the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ as the 'Sensitive Choice' in pool and spa sanitisation, the range is specially formulated to be gentle on skin, kind to asthmatics and good for the environment.

Rather than relying on chemicals to purify water, the range of sanitising products uses an oxidation process to increase the levels of active oxygen in the water, which in turn removes bacterial threats. Waterco says this eliminates itchy skin, red eyes and the need to rinse after every swim — all without any detectable taste or smell.

A starter kit is available including: sanitiser, oxidiser, multifunction water balancer, water conditioner and clarifier, test strips, spa filter cleaner and instructions for use.

Waterco Limited

www.waterco.com.au



COMPOSITE DECKING

CleverDeck composite decking is made from recycled polyolefin (plastic from post industrial waste), wood flour (sawdust) and discarded rice husks, making it one of the most environmentally friendly composite decking options available. It is much easier to maintain than timber decking and takes on a weathered effect after 4–12 weeks of exposure to the elements.

CleverDeck 138 mm-wide solid WPC composite decking comes in five standard colours: Chocolate, Mahogany, Saltbush, Slate Grey and Walnut. Boards have an indented grain/sanded finish on one side and a plain coarse sanded finish on the other, providing a choice of 'looks'.

Also available is an 86 mm decking board (in Mahogany only) with a coarse sanded finish on both sides of the board. The Eco-board version is available in a rough sanded 86 mm Mahogany finish without the indented grain. All CleverDeck composite boards are available in 5.4 m lengths and come with a 10-year warranty against rotting and white ants/termite attack.

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SEVEN SIGNS OF A DIFFICULT CUSTOMER

Jon Mailer, CEO, PROTRADE United

We've all been there... the customer who makes life so difficult you wonder why you went into business in the first place. Here's how to spot them early and take steps to turn things around.

If you have been in business for a while, you've probably had to deal with a difficult customer that refuses to pay, drags the job out into unprofitability, or keeps you up at night because of the way they behave and treat you personally.

Every trade or construction business will deal with difficult clients at some point in time. The good news is, there are several red flags that you can look for in the early stages. Spotting one or more may make you reconsider the project, or charging a premium to allow for the hassle factor.

1. Extreme price haggling

With big-ticket items, potential customers are unlikely to seek out only one price when making a purchasing decision, but it may be worthwhile asking straight up how many other businesses will be competing for the job at hand. More than two may indicate you have a cost-focused shopper on your hands. When price is the primary concern for a client, you'll probably encounter a degree of haggling right from the start. This customer is not afraid to remind you constantly that plenty of other companies would take this job at a cheaper rate.

Quibbling over price at the very start usually means quibbling over price at the very end. If you're up for the constant negotiation, then that's okay. But, it's also okay to understand some clients will recognise the value in the service that you offer, appreciate it and be prepared to pay the asking price — without the haggling.

2. Future work enticement

This category of customer talks a great deal. Before you're even into it, they'll present you with the promise of more work... on the proviso that everything goes well. You can probably take this enticement with a grain of salt. This customer tries to butter you

up with the promise of more work, generally hoping that you'll cave in and provide a discount on job number one.

It is far better to approach each job as a standalone project, independent of anything else that may (or may not) eventuate. It's also easy not to get caught out — just price each project individually and tell the client that, while you would really appreciate the additional work if it comes to fruition, your preference is to focus on one project at a time. As a potential customer, they can't really fault you for concentrating on the matter at hand.

3. Disorganisation and delays

While not every disorganised person is a potentially difficult customer, the one who turns up late to every meeting, is missing vital information and takes forever to respond with answers or decisions will inevitably be a drain on your resources. Unless this person can dramatically change their behaviour and personality traits, it may be a sign of things to come and could cost you hours (if not days) in lost profit.

4. Unrealistic time expectations

From project commencement, this customer expects you to drop everything for them. They will contact you 24 hours a day, seven days a week over the most minor detail and assume you will respond... quickly. Everything is seen as an emergency, and if it's happening in the early stages of negotiation, you can imagine what the future will bring. A reasonable customer understands that you have other projects in the pipeline and that, as a professional, you can manage that workload effectively.

5. Badmouthing other trades

As the adage goes, "what Peter says about Paul says a lot about Peter", and it's usually not pretty. If your customer complains and moans about other trades, it's highly likely that you will be

thrown into that mix at some point. This is pretty poor behaviour and, as a minimum, you should be cautious when dealing with customers like this. Better yet, avoid them like the plague. They may have had an unfortunate experience with another trade but, if they're still actively telling other people, the situation was probably never resolved to anyone's satisfaction. Not a good sign, but probably a good indication of character.

6. A disinclination to document

This one never fails to amaze. A work agreement or contract that clarifies the understanding and expectations of both parties is a no-brainer, for both your protection and your client's. This should outline how variations will be handled, payment details, time frames and what will happen in the event of delays. If you have a customer that is not prepared to sign anything from the start, or is unwilling to put variations in writing, then any lack of action encountered will probably backfire badly. Plenty of trades have lost out or been driven to bankruptcy over a lack of documentation and unsigned agreements.

7. That feeling in your gut

Trust your intuition. Sometimes the job looks right on paper — it's in your wheelhouse and you've got capacity to take it on — but you've got a feeling things are going to take a difficult turn with a particular customer. Go with that feeling. If you are uncomfortable about a job, or the individual requesting it, turn it down with no regrets. You cannot lose money on the jobs you do not take.

Unfortunately, many small business owners are still inclined to contend with difficult customers, taking a series of small hits before the hard lessons are learned. By identifying some of the early warning signs, you can hopefully spot these customers and avoid some of the more expensive outcomes.

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Coming Events

October

What: World Aquatic Health Conference
When: 10–12 October
Where: Charleston, South Carolina, USA
Website: www.theWAHC.org

What: Interbad 2018
When: 23–26 October
Where: Stuttgart, Germany
Website: www.interbad.de

What: 2018 International Pool | Spa | Patio (PSP) Expo
When: 31 October–2 November
Where: Las Vegas, USA
Website: www.poolspapatio.com

November

What: Piscine Global Europe 2018
When: 13–16 November
Where: Lyon, France
Website: www.piscine-expo.com

December

What: Canadian Pool and Spa Conference & Expo
When: 03–06 December
Where: Niagara Falls, Canada
Website: www.poolandspaexpo.ca

What: Salon Piscine & Spa
When: 08–16 December
Where: Paris Porte de Versailles
Website: www.salonpiscineparis.com

January 2019

What: Spatex 2019
When: 29–31 January
Where: Coventry, UK
Website: www.spatex.co.uk

February 2019

What: ForumPiscine 2019
When: 13–15 February
Where: Bologna, Italy
Website: www.forumpiscine.it

What: Everything Under the Sun
When: 22–23 February
Where: Orlando, Florida
Website: www.underthesunexpo.com

August 2019

What: SPASA Leadership Convention
When: 29 August
Where: Adelaide, South Australia
Website: www.spasa.com.au

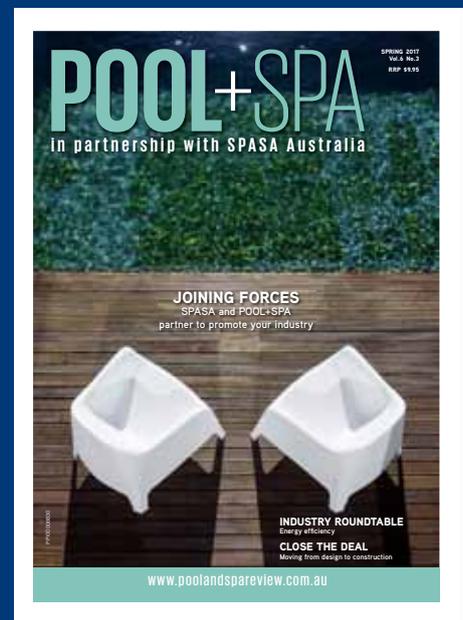
October 2019

What: Piscina & Wellness
When: 01–18 October
Where: Barcelona, Spain
Website: www.piscinawellness.com/en/home

What: Pool Expo
When: 02–05 October
Where: Istanbul, Turkey
Website: www.poolexpo.org/en

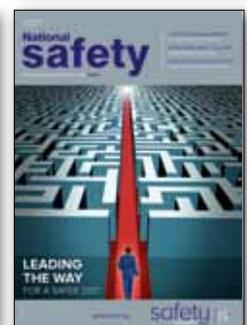
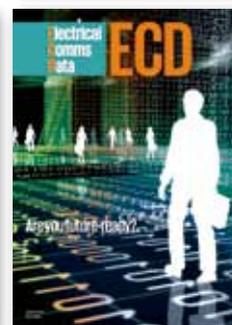
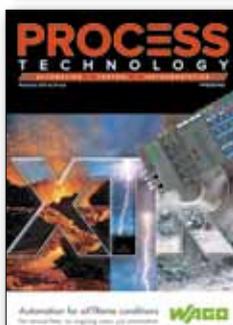
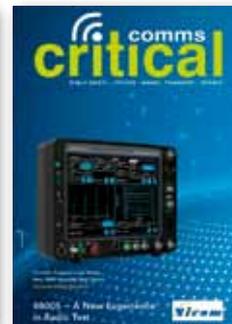
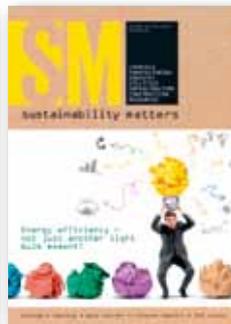
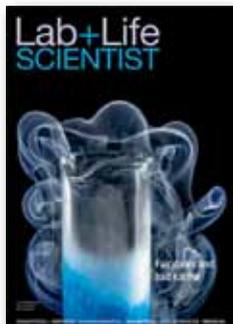
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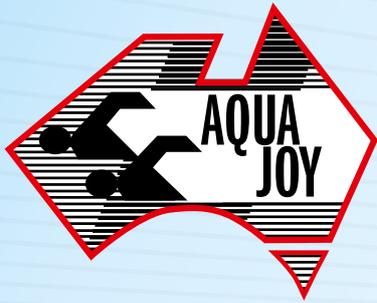


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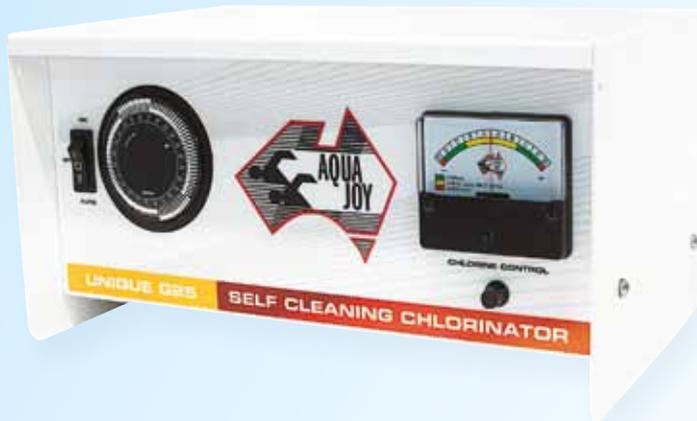


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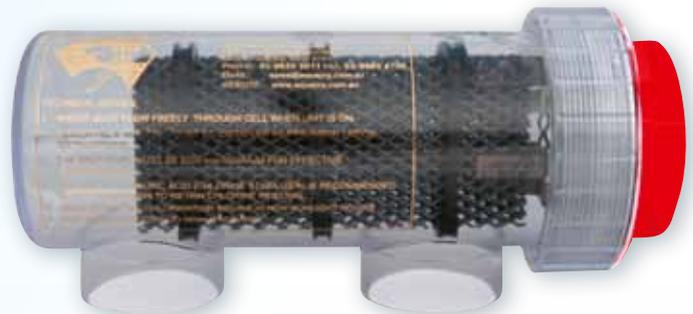
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