



## Watch your Kids

It has been said that the Price of Freedom is Eternal Vigilance. I can tell you that the price of a child's life is **constant vigilance** especially when it comes to water. Any body of water; including swimming pools, bath tubs, washing machines, buckets full of water, home paddle pools, puddles of water in any form what so ever, dams, lakes, rivers and of course the ocean; is a potential death trap for a child.

Drowning is a silent killer. If you think your child will cry out for help if they fall into a body of water, then think again. Unless your child has developed their Personal Aquatic Survival Skills to the stage where they can hold the water with their hands and feet well enough to get their mouth out of the water, they will not be able to call out because their mouth will be under the water.

I feel there is a growing complacency in the general community when it comes to swimming pools. Of course the pool needs to be fenced and the pool gate needs to close to Australian Standards however children are very resourceful creatures and pull chairs over to the fence and gate, climb on one another's backs not to mention pool gates need constant maintenance so they close correctly. You can't rely on pool fences to ensure your child's safety around the pool. There is only one sure method of water safety and that is to make sure you keep your child in sight at all times or are confident they are in a secure environment e.g. inside a secure space in the house or play pen or room.

It is easy to get distracted when you are working around the house. The phone rings, another sibling needs attention, the sink overflows etc., are some sources of distraction. As a father of five I know how easy it is to get distracted and forget about where your child is for a few minutes and that's all it takes to have a very serious water incident.

Death by drowning is a tragedy but near death by drowning resulting in severe brain damage is an even greater tragedy because you will be reminded of your lack of vigilance for a long period of time as each day you will see a child whose potential has been snuffed out by a few minutes of distraction.

Be aware that the real danger times can be when you and your child are in a situation that is not familiar to you or your child e.g. at a party, or over at a friends house, or on holidays.

There are no short cuts to ensuring your child will not be a victim of a death by drowning or near death by drowning.

**KEEP THEM IN SIGHT TO KEEP THEM ALIVE.**

Chris Shapland.