



Response to:

**Assessment  
Improvements  
Code  
Amendment**



**State Planning Commission  
South Australia**

## ABOUT SPASA AND THE SWIMMING POOL & SPA INDUSTRY

The Swimming Pool & Spa Association of Australia (SPASA) is the peak industry body representing businesses involved in the design, construction, installation, and maintenance of pools, spas, and related products across Australia and New Zealand. SPASA's diverse membership includes large-scale operators, independent builders, retailers, consultants, and service providers, all delivering high-quality products and services that meet the needs of homeowners, builders, and developers.

The pool and spa industry is a key economic driver across Australia, supporting tens of thousands of jobs across Australia and New Zealand, and contributing to a variety of residential and commercial projects, from new builds to luxury pools. SPASA advocates for its members by promoting best practices, ensuring a positive regulatory environment, and offering resources such as technical advice, training, and business support.

SPASA is committed to fostering industry growth through policy development, compliance support, and continuous innovation. With offices across Australia and New Zealand, SPASA provides the tools and resources needed for business success and industry excellence.

## OVERVIEW

SPASA's submission is mainly focused on the proposed changes at **4.2.6. Swimming Pool Pumps – Acoustic Enclosure Policy** of the consultation documentation, with a small comment on **4.3.3. Department for Environment and Water Referrals**.

SPASA also takes this opportunity to again raise the issue of landscaping requirements, which are becoming increasingly challenging to accommodate alongside the installation of a pool or spa, noting that SPASA has raised this in the past without formal response or comment received from the State Planning Commission

We recommend a more flexible and performance-based approach to both noise mitigation and landscaping requirements.

**Noise Regulation:** the rigid requirements for solid acoustic structures and set distances should be removed, allowing for the use of modern noise reduction technologies, such as quieter pumps and advanced enclosures, provided they can demonstrate that the noise levels are below the 52 dB(A) threshold at sensitive receptor locations.

**Landscaping:** SPASA recommends removing or reducing the landscaping requirements for swimming pools and spas, particularly on smaller lots where meeting the minimum soft landscaping guidelines is impractical. Alternatively, the soft landscaping requirements could be applied across the entire property, allowing for more flexibility in the design and placement of pools and spas while still meeting infrastructure and environmental objectives.

**Performance-Based Solutions:** By embracing performance-based solutions and allowing for greater flexibility, the Code would better accommodate the evolving needs of residential development and still achieve its environmental and noise-reduction goals. This approach would better reflect the diverse range of technological solutions available and the varied nature of residential properties, ensuring that homeowners are not unduly constrained by prescriptive rules that no longer suit contemporary urban living.

## 4.2.6. Swimming Pool Pumps – Acoustic Enclosure Policy

### Noise and Equipment Requirements

SPASA agrees that a language change is required, and the revised language should reflect flexible and modern approaches to noise mitigation.

**Recommendation 1:** Remove the **DTS/DPF 19.3** distance requirement where it can be demonstrated that the pump, enclosure, performance solution or combination of can operate less than the maximum 52 dB(A) between the hours of 7 am and 10 pm on any day when measured at a relevant position at a noise affected premises

And replace with revised wording is as follow:

*The pump and/or filtration system is ancillary to a dwelling erected on the same site and has any of the following measures in place:*

- a) Enclosed in an acoustic enclosure; or*
- b) Decibel rating of equipment does not warrant an acoustic enclosure; or*
- c) Incorporates an acoustic treatment, such as:*
  - i. sound dampening casing and/or base*
  - ii. low-noise pump and/or filtration system*
  - iii. noise reduction pump equipment covers*
  - iv. screening features as part of the landscaping*

There is a larger issue SPASA would like to raise and address: the existing regulations set rigid standards for the placement of pumps and filtration systems for swimming pools and spas, requiring both a solid acoustic structure and a specific distance from the nearest habitable room on an adjoining allotment.

While these guidelines are intended to minimise noise pollution, they fail to consider the growing challenges posed by the shrinking size of residential lots, which often make it practically impossible to meet the specified criteria. This one-size-fits-all approach overlooks the availability of innovative treatments, technical solutions, and modern equipment that mitigate noise effectively.

For example, many newer variable-speed pool pumps produce noise levels significantly lower than the prescribed 52 dB(A) limit, even without a solid acoustic structure. These pumps can achieve noise reduction through quieter design features such as sound-dampening casings, low-noise pump units, and advanced performance solutions which are increasingly available in the market. By insisting on the solid acoustic structure and fixed distance requirements, the regulation limits the flexibility to adopt these more innovative and effective noise reduction methods.

In addition, residential lots are becoming smaller, and as a result the solutions currently outlined in the Code, such as placing pumps 5m or 12m from adjoining properties, are no longer feasible. The stringent distance requirements may force homeowners to choose between installing a pool or complying with noise regulations, ultimately leading to inefficient, intrusive, and costly solutions.

SPASA notes that in more recent times, Councils and building inspectors have treated swimming pool heat pumps in the same way as pool pumps, when in fact a swimming pool heat pump is functionally the same as an air-conditioning system, which does not have the same acoustic or distance restrictions. This demonstrates inconsistencies between regulations and reinforces our assertion that this policy is poorly suited to contemporary block sizes and modern building projects. Additionally, enclosing a heat pump in an acoustic enclosure creates heat and airflow hazards.

Accordingly, the change to, “Solid structure that will have a material impact on the transmission of noise” and “solid acoustic structure”, must read “**acoustic enclosure**”, rather than “acoustic structure.”



## Additional Issue: Landscaping Requirements

**Recommendation 2:** Replace the soft landscaping requirements under DTS/DPF 22.1 for the installation of swimming pools and spas shown in **Table 1 - Current Regulation** with the changes shown in **Table 2 - Proposed Regulation (Incorporating Changes)**.

<p><b>PO 22.1</b></p> <p>Soft landscaping is incorporated into development to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>minimise heat absorption and reflection</li> <li>contribute shade and shelter</li> <li>provide for stormwater infiltration and biodiversity</li> <li>enhance the appearance of land and streetscapes</li> </ol>	<p><b>DTS/DPF 22.1</b></p> <p>Residential development incorporates soft landscaping with a minimum dimension of 700mm provided in accordance with (a) and (b):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a total area for the entire development site, including any common property, as determined by the following table: <table border="1" data-bbox="614 676 1332 929"> <thead> <tr> <th>Site area (or in the case of residential flat building or group dwelling(s), average site area) (m<sup>2</sup>)</th><th>Minimum percentage of site</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt;150</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr> <td>150-200</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr> <td>&gt;200-450</td><td>20</td></tr> <tr> <td>&gt;450</td><td>25</td></tr> </tbody> </table> </li> <li>at least 30% of any land between the primary street boundary and the primary building line.</li> </ol>	Site area (or in the case of residential flat building or group dwelling(s), average site area) (m <sup>2</sup> )	Minimum percentage of site	<150	10	150-200	15	>200-450	20	>450	25
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**Table 1 - Current Regulation**

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**Table 2 - Proposed Regulation (Incorporating Changes)**

SPASA suggests taking this opportunity to update the Code to include three-dimensional measures such as rooftop gardens, vertical gardens, green walls, planter boxes, and a variety of other planting options, which achieve these outcomes but do not contribute to an area percentage measurement, and removing dimensional requirements that no longer work for small and complex properties.

The requirement for minimum soft landscaping when considering the inclusion of a pool or spa in the property, has become increasingly difficult to satisfy due to shrinking lot sizes, especially in high-density areas. The guidelines demand a percentage of the property be devoted to soft landscaping, including a specific percentage between the primary street boundary and the primary building line. With some residential lots now smaller than 150m<sup>2</sup>, the area required for landscaping may leave insufficient space for essential features such as pools or spas.

SPASA notes that a dwelling may be built upon, or exceptionally close to, the primary street boundary meaning there may be no opportunity to meet the 30% soft landscape requirement.

The growing trend toward high-density development, along with the increasing demand for private recreational spaces like swimming pools and spas, creates a direct conflict with these landscaping requirements. As dwelling footprint is maximised, and backyard size decreases, it becomes more challenging to incorporate both the necessary landscaping and the installation of a pool or spa. The result is that homeowners may be forced to compromise on either their landscaping or recreational choices, undermining the principle of providing outdoor spaces that contribute to quality of life.

Consideration could also be given to including swimming pools, spas, ponds, or other water features in the definition of soft landscaping, as bodies of water contribute to the lowering of temperatures and enhance the property where they are situated.

The following **example images** are provided to illustrate this point.





### Example images (continued)



### 4.3.3. Department for Environment and Water Referrals

SPASA supports the alterations to clarify the conditions for referral exemption and make it clear that referrals are only required for in-ground pools that are located within the 1956 flood plain.

### For more information

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