

CLOSURE OF PUBLIC POOLS & AQUATIC FACILITIES CORONAVIRUS CONSIDERATIONS



In the face of the **current coronavirus pandemic**, the Australian Government has ordered the closure of public pools, aquatic and leisure centres. The closure and downtime of such facilities requires careful thought to ensure the integrity of pool and spa structures are preserved and that water quality continues to be maintained.

From midnight on 25 March 2020, public pools and aquatic facilities were restricted from being able to continue operations.

Examples of what **may** constitute a public pool or aquatic centre are:

- community and municipal (council) pools
- backpackers' hostels
- caravan and camping parks
- exhibition pools
- gymnasiums, health & fitness studios
- hospitals and hydrotherapy centres
- prisons
- private clubs
- resorts, hotels and motels
- retirement villages
- schools and universities
- sports and leisure centres
- swim schools and workplaces

Important Note

on Classification:

A swimming pool and spa situated in an apartment complex is generally considered a "*residential pool*" and not a public pool or an aquatic facility.

However, there may be varied interpretations and applications of the definition by councils, such as only applying the regulation definition 'publicly accessible' pools to include pools and spas in hotels, motels and other like contexts, but to exclude pools found in apartment buildings.

To assist readers in determining whether a swimming pool and/or spa is a Public Pool or an Aquatic Facility, see Table 1.

CLOSURE OF PUBLIC POOLS & AQUATIC FACILITY

DOES NOT MEAN NO MAINTENANCE

The above examples (if affected) by the coronavirus or other closures must take steps to protect the pool and/or spa during for the entire duration of the closure.

Water Quality:

Without proper ongoing pool and spa maintenance (which includes circulation and treatment of water) various pathogens can grow, such as *Pseudomonas*, *Cryptosporidium*, *E. Coli*, *Shigella*, etc. It can also create a breeding ground for mosquitoes, other pests and the diseases they may carry, which presents a risk not only to bathers but to entire communities.

Operators have an obligation to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases, helping maintain community health, and ensuring public safety by maintaining pools and spas in accordance with standards

Untreated water can also lead to significant and costly consequences to the pool and/or spa interior and associated equipment if left unattended.

Shutting down or

reducing circulation: Entirely shutting down pool and/or spa equipment and circulation should be a last resort measure, and not done without the advice of a pool and spa professional who will consider how to protect the pool and/or spa water, interior and pool surrounds. Additionally, consideration should be given to the impact of turning off equipment or not operating it in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended guidelines, as these actions may void warranty if damaged.

Reducing Circulation: Efficient water circulation is very important because it ensures contaminants are adequately removed as quickly as practicable and that treated water reaches all areas of the pool and/or spa.

As bather load is reduced, the circulation of the pool can be reduced and pumps run at lower speed settings.

Operators and body corporates should consider risks associated with microbial growth and control measures to minimise the risk of infections as a result of biofilm formation within the pool, system pipework and components.

Closure & Downtime

Opportunity: Shutting down or reducing circulation, if it is determined safe to do so, may provide operators and body corporates with an opportunity to undertake scheduled and unscheduled equipment upgrades, renovations, cleaning and servicing.

**Draining Pools
and Spas:**

Draining the water from a swimming pool and/or spa is never recommended. It can cause irreversible structural damage to the pool and/or spa, its interior, surrounds and associated equipment, if not done correctly. Draining a pool and/or spa should only be done by a professional, and only in very specific circumstances, such as remediation or renovation work.

Public Safety:

Public Pools, aquatic facilities and body corporates have a responsibility to workers, the public and residents against harm to their health, safety and welfare through the elimination of foreseeable risks, whether facilities are open or closed.

In event of an incident, public pools, aquatic facilities and body corporates *may* be at risk of litigation if a person was injured through their action or in-action. This may include not properly maintaining a pool and /or spa.

Table 1:

Public Pool /Aquatic Facility National Summary
<p data-bbox="145 226 392 255">NSW RESOURCES</p> <p data-bbox="145 286 448 315"><u>Public Health Act 2010</u></p> <p data-bbox="145 347 440 376">Clause 34 Definitions:</p> <p data-bbox="145 407 1401 470">public swimming pool or spa pool means a swimming pool or spa pool to which the public is admitted, whether free of charge, on payment of a fee or otherwise, including—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="209 470 1241 499">(a) a pool to which the public is admitted as an entitlement of membership of a club, or <li data-bbox="209 499 967 528">(b) a pool provided at a workplace for the use of employees, or <li data-bbox="209 528 1390 591">(c) a pool provided at a hotel, motel or guest house or holiday units, or similar facility, for the use of guests, or <li data-bbox="209 591 751 620">(d) a pool provided at a school or hospital, or <li data-bbox="209 620 1315 683">(e) a pool situated at private residential premises, but only if that pool is used for commercial purposes, or <li data-bbox="209 683 1390 777">(f) any other pool or spa pool declared by the regulations to be a public swimming pool or spa pool, but not including any pool or spa pool declared by the regulations not to be a public swimming pool or spa pool. <p data-bbox="145 808 970 837">spa pool includes any structure (other than a swimming pool) that—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="209 837 730 866">(a) holds more than 680 litres of water, and <li data-bbox="209 866 903 896">(b) is used or intended to be used for human bathing, and <li data-bbox="209 896 943 925">(c) has facilities for injecting jets of water or air into the water. <p data-bbox="145 956 544 985"><u>Public Health Regulation 2012</u></p> <p data-bbox="145 1016 916 1046"><u>Public Swimming Pools and Spa Pools Advisory Document</u></p>
<p data-bbox="145 1111 384 1140">ACT RESOURCES</p> <p data-bbox="145 1171 448 1200"><u>Public Health Act 1997</u></p> <p data-bbox="145 1232 560 1261"><u>Public Health Regulations 2000</u></p> <p data-bbox="145 1292 1385 1355"><u>A Code of Practice to minimise the public health risks from swimming/spa pools Part A: General Guidelines</u></p> <p data-bbox="145 1386 533 1415">The code of practice applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="209 1447 703 1476">▪ public swimming pools and spa pools, <li data-bbox="209 1476 1401 1848">• pools where the public, members and their guests, customers and patrons may have reasonable access as part of a service or workplace and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="272 1541 791 1570">– hotels, motels and serviced apartments <li data-bbox="272 1570 384 1599">– clubs <li data-bbox="272 1599 416 1628">– schools <li data-bbox="272 1628 671 1657">– gymnasiums & health resorts <li data-bbox="272 1657 635 1686">– squash and tennis centres <li data-bbox="272 1686 552 1715">– recreational resorts <li data-bbox="272 1715 683 1744">– hospitals (hydrotherapy pools) <li data-bbox="272 1744 517 1774">– workplaces, and <li data-bbox="272 1774 671 1803">– places of adult entertainment <li data-bbox="272 1803 804 1832">– pools used to provide swimming lessons <p data-bbox="145 1879 1190 1908">The code of practice is not specifically designed to apply to private residential premises</p> <p data-bbox="145 1939 1426 2002"><u>Public Health risks from swimming/spa pools Part B: Information on the control of cryptosporidium and giardia</u></p>

QLD RESOURCES

[Public Health Act 2005](#)

[Public Health Regulation 2018](#)

[Queensland Health Water quality guidelines for public aquatic facilities](#)

The information and advice in this guideline apply to all public aquatic facilities. Public aquatic facilities are those that are commonly used by the public. They include but are not limited to:

- public swimming pools and spa pools
- learn-to-swim pools
- school swimming pools
- aquatic facilities in gyms or fitness centres
- some aquatic facilities associated with apartment blocks, retirement complexes and strata title and body corporate developments
- aquatic facilities associated with holiday accommodation, including holiday parks, hotels, holiday apartment complexes and motels
- water theme parks, with installations such as water slides, wave simulators and 'lazy river' pools
- hydrotherapy pools
- domestic pools when used for commercial purposes (such as private learn-to-swim classes)
- interactive water features

WA RESOURCES

[Health Act 2016](#)

[Health \(Aquatic Facilities\) Regulations 2007](#)

Clause 5. Aquatic facilities

(1) An aquatic facility consists of —

- (a) one or more water bodies; and
- (b) the plant associated with each water body; and
- (c) the concourse for each water body; and
- (d) the toilets, change rooms and similar facilities provided as part of the facility; and
- (e) the lighting for the facility; and
- (f) the fence or fences, and any other structure that excludes access, around each water body; and
- (g) any other structure, building or plant necessary for the operation of each water body.

(2) The following are not aquatic facilities for the purposes of these regulations —

- (a) an aquatic facility operated by a strata company (as defined in the Strata Titles Act 1985 section 3) for a scheme (as defined in that section) in which there are less than 30 lots, each of which is a residential lot;
- (be) an aquatic facility, that is part of a complex that consists of or includes dwelling units, if-
 - (i) there are less than 30 dwelling units in the complex; and
 - (ii) only long-term residents of the complex and their guests are permitted to have access to the aquatic facility;
- (b) an aquatic facility that only uses water directly from the ocean;
- (c) a naturally occurring water body;
- (d) an aquatic facility that is exempt under sub regulation (3).

[Code of Practice - For the design, construction, operation, management & maintenance of Aquatic Facilities](#)

Definitions: Aquatic Facility

A man-made body of water used for sport, recreation or educational water activities, as defined in the Aquatic Facilities Regulations.

NT RESOURCES

[Public Health Act 2016](#)

[Public Health Regulations 2017](#)

[Public Health Guidelines for Aquatic Facilities](#)

5.1 Application

These guidelines apply to all aquatic facilities, including swimming pools, exercise pools, wave pools, recreational pools, wading pools, diving pools, SCUBA diving training pools, spa pools, waterslides, hydrotherapy and other therapeutic pools, that are used or available for use by the general public, employees, customers, tourist like accommodation, recreational and leisure industries, swimming instruction facilities or members of a club, association or body corporate.

SA RESOURCES

[Public Health Act 2011](#)

[South Australian Public Health \(General\) Regulations 2013](#)

3. Interpretation:

public spa pool means— (a) a spa pool that is for the use of persons on payment of an admission or membership fee; or (b) a spa pool that is for the use of persons staying at a hotel, motel, guesthouse, camping or caravan ground or similar place where accommodation is provided on a temporary basis; or (c) a spa pool that is for the use of persons who attend, or live or work on, the premises where the spa pool is located, but not if it is used in connection with a single private residence and is only available for the use of residents or their guests;

[Standard for the Operation of Swimming Pools and Spa Pools](#)

[Guideline for the Inspection and Maintenance of Swimming Pools and Spa Pools](#)

TAS RESOURCES

[Public Health Act 1997](#)

[Public Health Act 1997 Recreational Water Quality Guidelines 2007](#)

Definitions:

“public spa pool” means a pool or other water-retaining structure for human use that incorporates, or is connected to equipment that is capable of heating any water contained in it and injecting air bubbles or water into it under pressure to cause general turbulence in the water, to which the general public has access (whether for payment of a fee or not), or which is for the general use of guests in tourist accommodation;

“public swimming pool” includes any swimming pool, waterslide, wave pool, hydrotherapy pool or other similar structure to which the general public has access (whether for payment of a fee or not), or which is for the general use of guests in tourist accommodation, other than:

- (a) a spa pool; or
- (b) a tidal pool or other similar structure where water flows in and out according to the operation of natural forces;

VIC RESOURCES

[Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#)

[Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019](#)

4 Definitions

In these Regulations—

aquatic facility means –

- (a) a category 1 aquatic facility that is not an exempt aquatic facility; or
- (b) a category 2 aquatic facility that is not an exempt aquatic facility;

category 1 aquatic facility means a swimming pool, spa pool or interactive water feature that—

- (a) is used by members of the public, whether free of charge or on payment of a fee; or
- (b) is used in association with a class or program that is offered free of charge or on payment of a fee; or
- (c) is located at the premises of an early childhood service, school or other educational institution; or
- (d) is located at premises at which residential aged care services are provided; or
- (e) is located at any of the following premises—
 - (i) a public hospital;
 - (ii) a multi-purpose service;
 - (iii) a denominational hospital;
 - (iv) a private hospital;
 - (v) a privately-operated hospital within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Health Services Act 1988;

category 2 aquatic facility means a swimming pool or spa pool that is used by members of the public and located at the premises of the following—

- (a) a residential apartment complex;
- (b) a hotel, motel or hostel; exempt aquatic facility means any of the following—
 - (a) a spa pool that is, or is intended to be, emptied of water after each use;
 - (b) a floatation tank;
 - (c) a spring water pool that has a turnover rate of at least 25 percent of the entire volume of the water in the pool to waste each hour;
 - (d) a waterway within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Water Act 1989;
 - (e) a private dam within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Water Act 1989;

exempt aquatic facility means any of the following—

- (a) a spa pool that is, or is intended to be, emptied of water after each use;
- (b) a floatation tank;
- (c) a spring water pool that has a turnover rate of at least 25 percent of the entire volume of the water in the pool to waste each hour;
- (d) a waterway within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Water Act 1989;
- (e) a private dam within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Water Act 1989;

[Water quality guidelines for public aquatic facilities](#)

1.2 Scope

The information and advice in these guidelines apply to all public aquatic facilities. Public aquatic facilities are those that are commonly used by the public. They include but are not limited to:

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- learn-to-swim pools
- school swimming pools
- aquatic facilities in gyms or fitness centres
- aquatic facilities associated with apartment blocks, retirement complexes and other strata title and body corporate developments
- aquatic facilities associated with holiday accommodation including holiday parks, hotels,
- holiday apartment complexes and motels
- water theme parks with installations such as water slides, wave simulators and 'lazy river' pools
- hydrotherapy pools
- domestic pools when used for commercial purposes (such as private learn-to-swim classes)