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December 2011/January 2012



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Welcome to SPLASH!



In this edition we've decided to tackle the vexed issue of online retailing. It has been a threat to bricks-and-mortar retailers of all stripes for quite a while. And as each day goes by, yet another survey shows the ever-increasing power of the internet.

The latest research for PayPal says Australian online commerce will grow by more than 12 per cent next year, reaching nearly \$40 billion in 2013. Much of this, they say, is on the back of smartphone commerce – that is, buying online through your iPhone or Android. (If you have one of those phones, scan the QR code on the

front cover of this issue, and you'll be taken to the smartphone version of www.splashmagazine.com.au.)

What is clear is that internet commerce is not going away. Retailers need to decide how to adapt to the new environment by taking advantage of the elements of online that can help their own business, and by making a feature of those things the internet can't do, such as personal face-to-face interaction and a sensory in-shop experience.

We spoke to many professionals with expertise in pool and spa retailing, online retailing and also from the regulatory side, and found it's not all doom and gloom. On the contrary, there are many exciting new opportunities – but it's a situation that does require action.

Now is the time to act, too, as Christmas is almost upon us. This is a double whammy for pool shops, being both the hot time of the year for swimming pools, and also the peak time for retailing in general. Let's hope the weather warms up and we have a bumper season.



Chris Maher
 Editor
chrismaher@intermedia.com.au



This issue's cover

The cover shot shows the remarkable Grace Hotel in Santorini, and the sublime view from the infinity edge pool out over the Caldera Basin and the Aegean Sea. There is more on the Grace on page 78. The inset shot shows PJ Pools & Spas' winning entry in SPASA Victoria Awards Best Natural Pool category. There is more on those awards and the National Awards from page 43.

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Non-existent Penrith outdoor show was cancelled months ago

THE EXPOSIT EVENTS TRADE SHOW PURPORTEDLY BEING ORGANISED FOR THE SWIMMING POOL AND OUTDOOR INDUSTRIES HAD BEEN CANCELLED MONTHS BEFORE THE ADVERTISED DATE. FAIR TRADING HAS WARNED INDUSTRY MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC NOT TO DEAL WITH EXPOSIT EVENTS OR OTHER BUSINESS RUN BY ITS DIRECTOR MARTIN LOMM.

FAIR TRADING Commissioner Rod Stowe is urging people not to deal with businesses owned or run by Martin Lomm, the director of Exposit Events Pty Ltd.

Since May 2011 Exposit Events Pty Ltd has advertised for stall-holders to participate in the “Splashed Outdoor Living Expo” to be held at Penrith Panthers on 19 and 20 November 2011.

However, Exposit Events never signed a contract with Penrith Panthers nor paid a deposit. When Lomm did not return Panthers’ calls, they cancelled the event. Even so, Panthers discovered Exposit was still claiming the event would be held at Panthers, and they insisted Lomm remove all mention of Panthers from their material.

The purported event had nothing to do with SPLASH!, Interpoint Events or Intermedia.

Simon Cooper, Managing Director of Interpoint Events said he was unhappy that Exposit Events used a name similar to the trusted SPLASH! brand.

“We were not very happy that Exposit Events used a name for their show that could have caused confusion with SPLASH!. I certainly hope no-one thought we had anything to do with them or their purported show.

“It does highlight the importance of dealing with trusted and respected event organisers. SPLASH! won Best Show in Australia last year, and that’s because the industry trusts us and gets behind our shows. We are also in the running for another award with SPLASH! Asia being nominated as a finalist at the latest EEAA Awards.

“The easy way to know what shows are being organised by SPLASH! is to contact Karen Jaques on 02 8586 6135 or call me

on 02 8586 6105,” he says. “Following this situation, we have taken the precaution of trademarking the SPLASH! name.”

Exposit Events encouraged swimming pool builders and outdoor living traders to exhibit at the purported expo for fees of up to \$2300 per stand with 100 stalls on offer.

Traders who signed contracts with Exposit Events Pty Ltd have then contacted Penrith Panthers for details of the show, only to find that the company had not booked the venue for the event.

Stowe said Fair Trading was alerted to this situation by Penrith Panthers.

“To date, Fair Trading has received complaints from eight trader exhibitors,” he says. “The sole director of Exposit Events Pty Ltd, Mr Martin Lomm, has disappeared. Mr Lomm should immediately come forward to Fair Trading and make arrangements to contact all stall-holders to issue full refunds.”

Mr Stowe welcomed the co-operation of the Penrith Panthers organisation who is also a victim in this situation. Peter Thiel, Group Legal Counsel at Penrith Panthers issued the following statement:

“Penrith Rugby League Club Limited wishes to confirm that Exposit Events Pty Ltd (or any other entity) do not have a booking for the ‘Splashed Outdoor Living Expo’ purportedly to be held at Penrith Panthers on 19 and 20 November 2011. The organisers of this expo have unilaterally, and without the knowledge of Penrith Panthers, advertised this event as being booked for 19 and 20 November 2011 at Penrith Panthers.

“Penrith Rugby League Club Limited have no affiliation or association with the organisers of this event, and upon becoming aware of the actions of the organisers, took the step of involving the Department of Fair Trading in the investigation of the actions of this group. It is noted that the Department of Fair Trading has now issued a warning in relation to this event. Penrith Rugby League Club Limited confirm that there was no exhibition on its grounds on 19 and 20 November, and suggest that any enquiries in relation to this matter be directed to the organiser of the event or to the Department of Fair Trading.”

NSW Fair Trading issued a public warning under section 223 of the Australian Consumer Law (NSW) and has commenced an urgent investigation into the matter.

“I encourage all affected traders to contact Fair Trading on 13 32 20 and lodge a complaint,” says Stowe.

Businesses which breach the Australian Consumer Law (NSW) face fines of up to \$1.1million.

Davey acquires European distributors

AUSTRALIAN POOL EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER DAVEY HAS PURCHASED ITS FRENCH AND ITALIAN DISTRIBUTORS TO HELP GROW ITS SHARE OF THE EUROPEAN MARKET.

DAVEY WATER PRODUCTS announced the strengthening of their European distribution by joining their French and Spanish based distributors of Monarch

salt water pool chlorinators: Monarch Pool Systems Europe (MPSE) and Monarch Pool Systems Iberia (MPSI).

Davey’s CEO Carsten Andersen and Monarch European distribution founder Alain Gazzola said in a statement that the move is a significant opportunity to expand and grow the Davey Pool and Spa Equipment range sold in Europe.

MPSE is based in Lyon France and MPSI is based in Madrid Spain. Davey says that combined, they are considered the largest independent importers and marketers of salt water chlorination equipment in southern Europe, a success that has been built up over many years.



Waterco's EnviroPro range: pool equipment that not only maximises your time in the pool, but also delivers energy efficiency and water savings



Waterco's pre-filter **MultiCyclone** technology not only allows you to save thousands of litres of water per year, it also reduces your filter maintenance. Or for the ultimate convenience and maximum water savings, the **MultiCyclone Plus** is an easy to use, highly efficient centrifugal filter and cartridge filter all in one.



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The **Micron ECO** allows you to enjoy the convenience of backwashing your pool, whilst using 30% less water. Its hydraulic efficiency facilitates the use of energy saving pumps.



The **Opal XL** cartridge filter eliminates backwashing, saving you water. Its oversized filter cartridge, minimises filter maintenance.



Admiral robotic pool cleaners, ensures your pool will be sparkling and effortlessly clean using less power than required to illuminate one halogen pool light.



The **Zane Solar Gulfpanel** and the **Electroheat** heat pump not only enable you to save on your energy bills, you can extend your swim season conveniently and cost effectively.



The **BriteStream Multicoloured LED** lights not only look great, but they operate on a mere 15% of the electrical power required for the halogen equivalents.





Da Vinci wins international award

POOLRITE'S ECOSYSTEM (UNDER THE PROTOTYPE NAME DA VINCI) HAS PICKED UP PISCINA'S INNOVATION AWARD.

POOLRITE'S all-in-one pool equipment solution, the Ecosystem, has won the Innovation Award at the Piscina BCN International Pool Show in Barcelona, Spain.

The Da Vinci is an attractive, compact device specifically designed with advanced solutions for water treatment, filtering and pumping. It incorporates the MagnaPool mineral water treatment system and integrates every device in a single waterproof appliance.

Poolrite won the award from a field of 42 international submissions.

The judging panel, made up of professionals selected by the Catalan Construction Technology Institute (ITeC), were charged to distinguish not only companies exhibiting their products at the show but also construction companies, architectural practices, developers and technicians who have been involved in building or renovating residential swimming pools, wellness centres or sports and recreational facilities.

Key aspects for the Ecosystem winning the Innovation Award include:

- A design incorporating all equipment into one weatherproof pre-plumbed

and easy-to-install appliance.

- A closed-loop water recycling backwash system which collects all filter contaminants and returns clean and clear water back to the pool. Backwashing is the cause of the majority of water wastage and dumping of pollutants into the environment.
- An energy efficient two-speed pump.
- Strong, light and recyclable filtration tanks.
- The hydraulically efficient Davinox Super Cell.
- The use of 100 per cent recycled glass Diamond Kleen filter media which can extend the period between backwashing to up to one year.
- Kemi-Lab – a probe-less control system which intuitively manages pH to suit pool specs and location; and
- The mineral blend with the flocculating effect of the magnesium and lower salt level.

Poolrite CEO, Ross Palmer says the award is a positive symbol for the local manufacturing industry.

“At this time when there are so many challenges for Australian manufacturers, this is a good sign. The message is clear: Australian manufacturing is not dead!”

Waterco wins another Green award

WATERCO has won the DesignMaster Green Award for its MultiCyclone device at India's Waves International Pool, Spa and Bath Expo. Held in New Delhi in August, Waves was the country's first face-to-face platform for the “wet wellness” market.

The Green Product Award is one of nine awards (including the SPLASH! Environmental Product Award) won by the MultiCyclone since the technology was launched in 2008.

Constructed with no moving parts and no filter media to clean or replace, Waterco says the MultiCyclone has set new benchmarks in sustainability. It has been used in projects as diverse as domestic swimming pools, koi ponds, cooling towers, car wash water recycling plants, aquaculture facilities, resort pools and wetland areas within zoos.

The annual Waves DesignMaster Awards was created for industries and professionals to set benchmarks, encourage excellence and give a boost to innovators. It aims to stimulate the design and implementation of attractive wet wellness projects while expanding industry exposure to the public in a positive manner.

Compu Pool gets international silver for semi-commercial chlorinator

QUEENSLAND-BASED AUSTRALIAN MANUFACTURER COMPUPOOL HAS BAGGED SECOND PLACE AT THE BEST NEW PRODUCT AWARDS AT THE 2011 INTERNATIONAL POOL SPA AND PATIO EXPO IN LAS VEGAS.

THESE prestigious awards are voted by industry professionals. Compu Pools won “silver” for its Compu Pool E-Series, a range of semi-commercial salt water chlorinators.

According to Christian Ruediger,

product development manager at the Nerang-based company, the E-Series fills the gap between large residential and small to mid-size commercial applications, where currently there are few options.



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Aussie pool pump innovator to help China build world's largest pumps

SUPA-STELTH MAKES LANDMARK DEAL WITH CHINESE CONSORTIUM

SUPA-STELTH Pumps, a wholly owned subsidiary of New Fluid Technology Pty Ltd (NFT), has signed a joint venture agreement with Jiangsu Hengfeng Changai Energy Conservation Technology Co in Nanjing, China.

According to NFT director Brian Bambach, the Nanjing consortium (which includes some of China's largest industrial companies) will also be sourcing funds from the Chinese Government in Beijing to build what might be the world's largest easily fabricated water pumps.

These will be different to the giant fixed site pump stations that have relatively low lift. The new pumps will begin at 1000 tonnes per hour working up to a colossal 55,000 tonnes per hour.

"These new pumps – based on 'solid body rotation of fluids' – offer a 60 per cent energy saving for China and the world, due to us borrowing two things from the swimming pool industry," says Bambach. "The D curve for pools is conveniently adapted in other industries such as pumping water in industry, for example with steel mills in China. The second thing is the pre-

fabrication and on-site fabrication techniques to build pools. This is possibly due to the unique and simple design that does not require volutes or diffusers."

The largest new pumps will be on-site pumps made from reinforced concrete, with the impellers most likely cast from concrete. The smaller pumps and impellers will be from bronze and steel/concrete.

The joint venture also plans to build what Bambach describes as the world's first axial flow centrifugal water pump. The ultimate plan (based on the success of the smaller pumps) is to use these pumps to build inline pumping stations to shift an incredibly large volume of water from southern China to Beijing.

Bambach also signed the agreement with representatives of Ma-An Steel Mill, which is China's fourth largest mill and has more than 3000 pumps working at more than 200 tonnes per hour.

The plan is to vastly reduce the energy consumption of the pumps, in line with China's 12th strategic five-year plan.

Assistance for Aussie and Kiwi companies looking at Europe

INTERPOINT, organiser of the award-winning SPLASH! Pool and Spa Trade Shows, has once again been appointed by Piscine to assist Australian and New Zealand companies looking to target the European market by exhibiting at Lyon in 2012.

Piscine will be the largest trade show for the pool and spa industry in Europe in 2012; it attracted 17,883 visitors from 90 countries in 2010. The show takes place from November 13 to 16, 2012 in Lyon, France. For more details please email Simon Cooper at scooper@intermedia.com.au.

New reporting regime seen as an unfair burden on contractors

THE Federal Government is planning to introduce a new reporting regime for contractors in the building and construction industry, commencing on July 1, 2012.

The government is expected to recoup more than half a billion dollars in additional tax revenue through these measures.

The new Report System Policy puts the onus on anyone and everyone in the building industry who hires a contractor to report all monies paid to that contractor; and those contractors must report payments to their subcontractors, and so on down the line. There is potentially a vast amount of additional paperwork associated with these changes.

SPASA NSW has sent a submission to Treasury, arguing against some of the changes and the way in which they've come about, while pointing out the apparent unfairness due to the burden of red tape to be faced by contractors and subcontractors.

"I would urge all small business – including retailers – to write to treasury in order to make a stand," says Spiros Dassakis. "You need to either make a stand, or have it thrust on you. This is a big deal. They're starting with construction because it has a reputation for non-compliance, but it will filter to the other industries, including retail."

The retail trade is among the next targets.

Dassakis suggests the Treasury provide education to help contractors comply with the complexities of the Tax Act, rather than simply increasing the amount of data they collect – and burdening contractors with the submission of that data. In fact, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) already receives considerable information on these transactions through the obligatory taxation processes.

He also says that the impost on companies and subcontractors is so great, it will make the administration of companies and independent contractors unrealistically complex.

He says the association is very much against tax evasion as this creates a sizeable disadvantage to members who legitimately try to compete against rogue traders. However, these changes are an additional labour and cost burden on those operators who are tax compliant. SPASA suggests the Government would be better off chasing those operators who are non tax compliant.

SPASA has also strongly recommended that the proposal to exclude owner/builders is reviewed – as they believe owner/builders are more likely to avoid their tax obligations as opposed to legitimate operators in the industry.

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The SPLASH! Bookshelf

Award Winning Pools, Spas, & Water Environments

THE SECOND EDITION OF THE GAVA WINNER'S SHOWCASE.



THIS new coffee table book from Three V Enterprises showcases the winners of the 2010 Global AquaTektur Visionary Awards.

This is the second in the series from the Las Vegas based corporation that hosts the annual GAVA Awards competition. The full-colour, coffee table edition is authored by Mary

Vail, Joe Vassallo and Virginia Martino.

Architects, landscapers, artists, designers, inventors and contractors from around the world masterfully incorporated fountains, fire, mosaic designs and acrylic panels, securing their place as a GAVA winner, including Cameron Leth of Polar Pools in New South Wales, Australia who captured the coveted front cover of the book.

You can experience the water jets streaming skyward, the stillness of an infinity edge and 48 other award-winning pool, spa and water environments, while meeting the visionaries who designed and built them.

The GAVA Awards celebrate AquaTektur – the discipline of designing, engineering and erecting water environments and ancillary components in a harmonious nature with consideration to function, space and aesthetics.

For further information go to www.gavaawards.com or visit www.facebook.com/gavaawards.

The 2011 GAVA awards have just been judged (see Around the Globe on page 24 for more). The third edition of the book will be published in 2012.

Win a copy of International Award Winning Pools, Spas, & Water Environments II

SPLASH! has a copy of International Award Winning Pools, Spas, & Water Environments II to giveaway. Details will be in an upcoming eNews. To be in with a chance, make sure you are subscribing to the free newsletter. Simply go to www.splashmagazine.com.au and click on the eNews Registration button.

Industry calendar

FUTURE INDUSTRY DATES TO KEEP IN MIND



2011

Dec 5-8 Canadian Pool & Spa Conference & Expo, Niagara Falls, Canada

2012

Feb 4 Spatex, Brighton, UK
 Feb 7-10 Aqua-Therm, Moscow
 Feb 18-19 Pool Spa & Outdoor Living Expo, Rosehill Gardens, Sydney
 Feb 23-25 Forum Piscine, Bologna, Italy
 Mar 7-9 National Drowning Prevention Symposium, San Diego
 Apr 22-23 Piscine Middle East, Abu Dhabi, UAE
 May 24-25 Landscape Expo, Perth
 May 9-11 Building & Design Queensland, Brisbane
 July 25-26 SPLASH! Pool and Spa Trade Show, Jupiters Gold Coast
 Sep 23-25 Middle East Pool and Spa Exhibition, Dubai, UAE
 Oct 4-6 Waves, New Delhi, India
 Oct 9-12 Interbad, Stuttgart, Germany
 Nov 6-8 International Pool Spa Patio Expo (IPSPE), New Orleans, Louisiana
 Nov 13-16 Piscine, Lyon France
 Nov 13-16 Aqualie, Lyon France

2013

May TBC SPLASH! Asia Pool and Spa Trade Show, Singapore

More details, dates and links are available at www.splashmagazine.com.au.

These dates are subject to change and should be checked with the relevant organisation. Please send calendar submissions to chrismaher@intermedia.com.au



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Development Application trends

EVERYONE IS HOPING FOR A HOT SUMMER TO STIMULATE NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTIONS, ESPECIALLY IN A SLUGGISH QUEENSLAND.

EACH issue, SPLASH! publishes Development Application (DA) numbers. These numbers tend to be on the low end of the scale of estimates, but provide a valuable indication of the way the market trended during the reported period.

The swimming pool DA numbers show an 18 per cent decline comparing year-to-October 2011 with 2010 figures, and a 27 per cent decline comparing the past two reported months (September and October 2011) with the same two months last year.

Comparisons by State show Queensland down by a whopping 65 per cent comparing the year-to-October figures. While low figures have been expected following the horrors of last season, it was hoped that DA numbers would start to pick up in the 2010/2011 season.

The only State to show an increase over the 12-month period is New South Wales, with a 21 per cent rise. Other States down were Western Australia (-4 per cent); and South Australia and Victoria both down 22 per cent. Tasmania held steady with very small numbers.

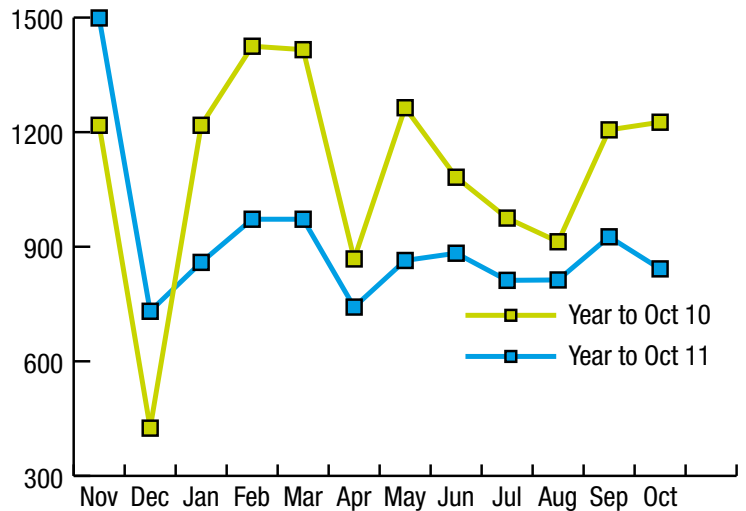
It should be taken into consideration that comparisons of DA numbers against other data indicate that some figures could be considerably higher – though they would not necessarily affect the comparison percentages.

Additionally, these figures would exclude most renovations, pool projects that are included as part of a new home, or smaller projects under the cost threshold – these projects are estimated to be an additional 30 per cent, meaning total numbers could be considerably higher than the quoted DA figures – by some estimates, they could be double.

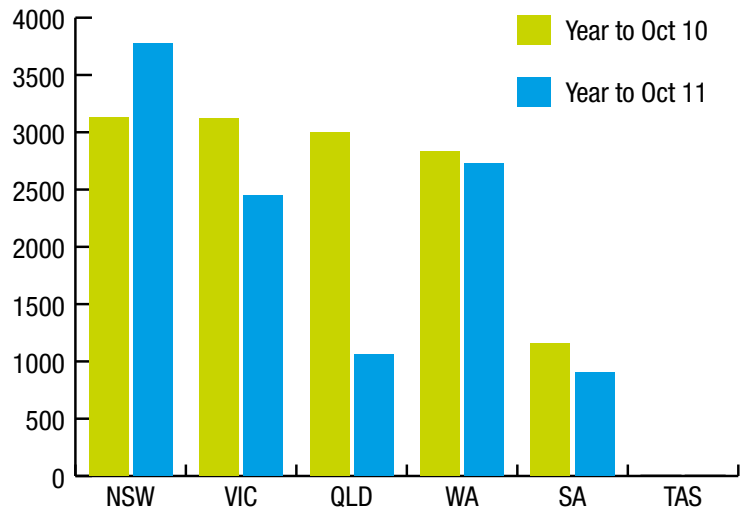
However, while these quoted figures may miss some swimming pools, spas and renovations, they do give an indication of how the market is trending.

For further information and more complete reports, call Cordell Information on 1800 80 60 60.

Comparison of Australian pool approvals Year-to-October 2011 with Year-to-October 2010



Pool Approvals by State Green: Year-to-October 2010 Blue: Year-to-October 2011



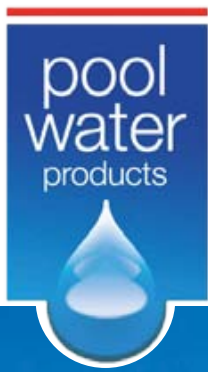
State of the Cities Report

The Federal Government has released the State of Australian Cities 2011 Report. Some key developments are that:

- Australia's population has grown by three million in the past decade.
- The central local government areas of Perth, Melbourne and Sydney all experienced rapid growth – most pronounced was the City of Sydney which added 52,530 residents from 2001 to 2010.
- Water restrictions were eased in south-eastern Australia after increased rainfall in late 2010 and early 2011. Significant investment in new infrastructure means urban

water supply is now less dependent on rainfall. The main use of water in Australian cities continues to be in the residential sector.

- About 85 per cent of Australians live within 50 kilometres of the coast, and more than 700,000 dwellings are within three kilometres of the coast.
- Australia has had one of the largest increases in real house prices among OECD countries, particularly since 2000. Price growth rates have been similar between capital cities and the rest of Australia.
- Household size continues to decrease as couple families with children continue to decline as a proportion of household mix.



AUSTRALIA'S LEADING POOL BUILDERS CHOOSE

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Image courtesy of Coastal Pools & Spas



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RAINTANK MAINTENANCE BONANZA

In October, Sydney Water released the results of its rainwater tank study – and the results may be good news for the pool industry.



In 2007, 21 per cent of all households had a rainwater tank. This number is expected to be much higher now – and to become increasingly higher because of state and local government requirements to install rainwater tanks for new buildings and additions, especially when those additions include swimming pools.

The recent study into rainwater tanks came up with one very interesting piece of information. While the tanks and associated

systems are largely efficient in terms of water saved and energy used, that efficiency – especially energy efficiency – declines dramatically over time. The reason for this is poor or non-existent maintenance of filtration and pump systems associated with the tanks.

As pool technicians already have experience in both pump and filter maintenance (they are mainly cartridge filter systems), this represents a new green field prospect for pool techs, especially as the number of rainwater tanks will continue to grow into the future.

The survey results were presented at the National Water Week Stakeholder Forum at the Australian Technology Park. The 2011 Smart Approved WaterMark Product of the Year Awards were also presented at the forum.

The Consumer Product of the Year Award went to Ecoskim, an innovative system which attaches to existing pool skimmer boxes to allow a much longer operational time before top-up is required, saving thousands of litres of water each year for the average pool. Developed by Paul deGroot and Mark Davies who have expertise in pool installation and engineering, the Ecoskim allows for pool skimming to continue even though water is evaporating – a situation that might otherwise see the pool level fall below the skimmer box level.

Photo voltaic versus equipment efficiency

Bruce Everett of Australian Energy Systems says consumers are spending more money than ever before on back-to-grid systems. However, he says there are other more economical ways for pool owners to reduce electricity costs. "In some installations we have been able to remove six pumps and install one three-horsepower variable speed pump with valves, and drastically slash the power bill without reducing the pool's functionality."

Everett says this can save customers anywhere from 8kWh to 24kWh per day. Everett says back-to-grid solar electric system can cost anywhere from \$3500 up to \$25,000, requiring between eight and 12 years to achieve return on investment (ROI). However, variable speed pool pumps, for example, only cost between \$1500 and \$3000, yet provide substantial savings in electricity costs. The ROI on these systems might only be between 18 months and three years.



MORE QUEENSLANDERS TO GET REBATES

Energex is helping pool owners buy efficient pumps and connect to off-peak.

Last issue, SPLASH! had information about how Ergon Energy customers can save money by buying variable speed pumps or connecting to Tariff 33.

Now it's Energex's turn through their South East Queensland Pool Campaign.

As part of Energex's efforts to reduce peak demand in South East Queensland, they are offering pool owners a \$250 EFTPOS gift card for connecting their pool pump to an off-peak tariff or installing a minimum 5-Star energy efficient pool pump.

Pool pumps are amongst the most energy-

hungry appliances and may cost more than \$550 per year in running costs. Minimum 5-Star energy efficient pool pumps are up to 80 per cent more energy efficient and connecting a pool pump to off-peak Tariff 33 could save up to 40 per cent in running costs.

Pool owners can select one or both options, but can only claim one \$250 EFTPOS gift card. However, if they also connect their hot water system to an off-peak tariff, they'll receive another \$100 gift card.

The offer is available until May 18, 2012. Forms are available via energex.com.au.

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Remco is Australia's best-known quality manufacturer of automated, and multifunctional pool cover systems and enclosures. Our stylish products keep Australian pools safe, clean and beautifully warm all year round. Environmentally friendly, they're designed to stop evaporation and save our precious water while minimising chemical usage. Pool owners Australia wide are appreciating these Remco benefits.



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What's new with swimming pool safety standards

Cal Stanley updates us on developments with AS 1926.

In 2010 I agreed to be the draftsman for the revisions of AS 1926.3 Water Recirculation Systems. Thus, when it became evident later that year that AS 1926.1 was desperately in need of a revision, I decided to take on the task of draftsman for that as well. Before long AS 1926.2 and AS 2820 were added to the list for review and amendment. I didn't appreciate just what I had got myself into!

Suffice to say that at the completion of the process, I've lost count of the hours involved (but more than 500), I sent and received almost 500 emails and made more than 150 interstate phone calls and used up about five reams of copying paper. It became an exhausting process during the final stages but in the end it is an achievement I take some pride in.

Unfortunately I cannot say the same for all members of the CS-34 Committee, many of whom showed little commitment to the review process. Some failed to attend the recent three-day meeting, taking part intermittently by tele-conferencing. Nearly half failed to attend at all on the third day and others for only part of it. (I want to clarify, however, that the pool industry people were committed and stayed for the three days.)

This lack of commitment by some members didn't stop them voting to put the screws further into the pool and fencing industry and more particularly our customers. I have been on this committee for some 23 years and every time a review has taken place the non-industry members just can't help but make things tighter and stricter whether there is any evidence for their stance or otherwise.

AS 1926.1 Safety Barriers for Swimming Pools

Until the 2007 version, which I agree was not our finest edition by far, there was no mention of boundary fences or boundary barriers as we now have to call everything. They had to comply with the same provisions as those applicable to internal barriers. This was during a period when many studies were carried out on toddler drownings and there was never ever a finding of the boundary fence (oops, barrier) being breached by a toddler and ending in a fatality.

Most studies indicate that about 90 per cent of fatalities occurred where the child



Image courtesy deFence

gained access through the barrier gate with the other 10 per cent either breaching the internal fence or being in the pool area with the knowledge of an adult whose attention – and in some cases, presence – was diverted.

Similarly there was no evidence of a child ever drowning after climbing out the window of a house.

My position on boundary fences was to allow them to be less than 1800mm in height on either side and where less than 1800mm, be required to have non-climbable zones (NCZ) on either side. Either side was critical as an owner cannot control what his neighbour may do. It was also critical because where the integrity of the barrier on the neighbour's side could be proved it would give the pool owner more flexibility on his side.

I was asked to present evidence for my position. I did so by quoting many of the studies by eminent researchers and coroners' reports. Yet typically those non-industry members ignored the evidence because it didn't say what they wanted it to say. In the end, the only relaxation was the removal of the NCZ and it appears that most governments may, by local regulation or BCA variation, still not accept it.

We also know from the same studies that no child has climbed out of a window and drowned yet the committee couldn't help tightening the window restrictions – without providing any evidence for it.

The main purpose of this revision was to provide clarity and still basically reflect the provisions of the 2007 version, and with the exception of windows and boundary fences most of the changes were about this.

However we did decide to merge AS 2820 (Pool gates) into AS 1926.1.

AS 1926.2 Location of Safety Barriers

This standard now has clear script and illustrations that allow for and show the barriers necessary for Indoor/Outdoor pools. i.e. those pools that are partly indoors and partly outdoors.

AS 1926.3 Swimming Pool Safety – Water Recirculation Systems

This standard was amended as follows:

1. Allowing for the option of testing of outlet covers to be carried out by an "independent laboratory".
2. Now includes a requirement that a skimmer box lid dress ring be installed in a manner such that it can sustain a force of 130N without loosening.
3. Allowing more flexibility in the venting of skimmer boxes without a removable lid.
4. Removing any doubt on the use of push-in covers.
5. Changing the requirement that multiple outlet systems have covers with a total rated flow equal to 200 per cent of the actual flow, to a requirement for only one extra cover over that number required to carry the system flow.
6. Covers approved under the US standard ASME A112.19.8 (and its successor – ANSI/APSP-16) are deemed to comply and not subject to the Appendix A tests nor the permanent markings required on other covers.
7. Provisions to cater for large purpose-built suction covers in commercial pools.

The Committee appreciates that some Australian manufacturers of outlet covers may be upset at Item 6. However it must be appreciated that our testing regime remains based firmly on the US testing system although not a copy thereof. Also, due to their international affiliations, Standards Australia must recognise US standards and no standard may have provisions in it that could be seen as a "restraint of trade".

AS 2610.1 & 2 Public & Private Spas

All the "hydraulics" provisions of these standards have been removed leaving only references to AS 1926.3

Hunter drowning sparks inflatable warnings

The sale of cheap inflatable pools through toy shops and retail chains is a safety hazard, according to child safety experts.

The Samuel Morris Foundation says that inflatable pools are very cheap to buy and the point of sale information about the need for them to be fenced is completely inadequate.

A 16-month-old Hunter child died in November after falling into a small inflatable pool.

Hunter child safety campaigner Leonie Forsyth says the accident is a tragic reminder of the dangers to children of water, no matter how shallow. People needed to be just as vigilant with inflatable pools and check regulations with their local council.

"Blow-up pools have got to be fenced," she says. "People don't think so because they're so mobile, but people need to know, when they purchase blow-up pools deeper than 30 centimetres they must be fenced."

Pool safety campaigner Andrew Plint

of Hannah's Foundation concurs that the warning notification provided with inflatable pools is woefully inadequate.

The Children Hospital at Westmead has launched a safety campaign specifically around inflatable pools, as they see the sad results of child drownings and near-drownings.

They quote US research that says inflatable pools could be more dangerous for children than proper swimming pools. This is because most of these pools do not have fences and some are not able to be emptied after use due to their size. Without fences children have easy access to the water in the pool, making them at high risk of drowning.

No Australian data on drowning in inflatable pools is currently available. However, drowning in inflatable or portable pools increased in the US from nine in 2004 to 21 in 2006.

Even though pool fencing is not currently supplied with inflatable or portable pools, owners must still, by law, have a four-sided



Image shows part of a media campaign from The Children's Hospital at Westmead, highlighting the fact that inflatable pools pose a safety risk.

fence around any pool that can be filled with 300mm of water or more.

If they cannot afford to purchase a fence around an inflatable pool, The Children's Hospital at Westmead recommends consumers purchase smaller inflatable pools that can be filled with less than 300mm of water.

Foundation warns about inflatables

THE Samuel Morris Foundation says that inflatable pools are very cheap to buy and the point of sale information about the need for them to be fenced is completely inadequate.

Unless people read the fine print they are extremely unlikely to be made aware at the point of sale that ANY pool that is capable of being filled with 30cm or more of water is required to be fenced in the same manner as a full scale in-ground pool.

Safety tips for inflatable pools:

- If the pool is capable of being filled with more than 30cm of water then it MUST be fenced, and the fencing should comply with Australian Standards and State laws.

- If the pool is only able to hold less than 30cm of water you still need:
 - Direct, continuous adult supervision – whenever the pool is inflated and filled with water keep children within arm's reach and in direct line of sight.
 - Empty the pool after use – as soon as activity involving the pool is over the pool should be immediately emptied. Children have drowned after slipping out of sight and returning to the water – it only takes 5cm of water for a child to drown.
 - Deflate or store the pool in a garden shed. This will prevent the pool collecting rain water or children refilling the pool.

Unlicensed spa repairer prosecuted after potentially fatal work

In May this year an unlicensed electrical worker was prosecuted and fined more than \$2000 as a result of a shock report received by South Australia's Office of the Technical Regulator (OTR). The owner of a spa tub received a shock when touching the water in the spa. This occurred after the spa had been repaired by a person who didn't hold an electrical workers licence. No testing was done by the unlicensed worker on the spa before it was re-energised, and it was left in a state that was potentially fatal to the homeowners. The water in the spa

was found to be at 144 V AC with reference to ground.

The unlicensed worker, who was recommended by the local spa shop, had been engaged by the home owner to repair a faulty spa tub. The fault was found to be in the spa control circuit board so the worker disconnected the installation wiring at the spa control board terminals and took the board off to be repaired by others. When the board was repaired, the worker reinstated the spa control circuit board in the spa and reconnected the installation wiring at the

terminals on the board. No testing was done by the unlicensed worker prior to re-energising. The disconnection and reconnection in this case was electrical work as defined by the Plumbers, Gas Fitters and Electricians Act 1995 and work of this kind can only be carried out by a registered (licensed) electrical worker. Under the Electricity Act 1996 all electrical work must be tested to confirm it is safe to operate.

If mandatory testing had been done in this case the worker would have identified that the spa had been wired up incorrectly, and

that the protective earth conductor was not connected. This meant that all of the conductive parts of the spa including the water could become live under fault condition. There was a fault present in the spa wiring and all conductive parts of the spa were left live when ener-

gised. A potentially fatal situation as the spa circuit was not protected by an RCD (safety switch), due to the age of the installation.

When the owner went to use the spa he tested the water for temperature by touching the water and received a shock.

Fortunately there were no significant injuries received in this case, but it certainly highlights the need to have all electrical repairs on spas and pool equipment done by competent and appropriately licensed trade staff.

In Brief

Queensland pools must now be registered

As of November 2011, all pools and spas in Queensland need to be registered. Fines of up to \$2000 may apply if the pool or spa is not registered. You can check if a pool or spa is registered by conducting a property search on the pool register tool at <http://dlgp.qld.gov.au/pool-safety>.

Enter your property details. The register will validate the address entered and will advise if the pool or spa is registered and if there is a valid pool safety certificate attached to the property.

Nimbin pool repairs cause injury

A pregnant 19-year old woman fell and broke her leg when she slipped on recently repaired tiling in the Nimbin Pool. The Northern Star reports that Selena Whittaker slipped on a section of the pool which had recently been repaired with a filler product which made the surface very slippery. She landed on her side, dislocating and breaking her right leg in three places.

The report states that Lismore City Council manager of assets Scott Turner said there had been a misunderstanding between the manufacturer of the filler product and the contractor who

carried out the repair work. Council has since been advised the product is only for use on small cracks and not large areas, as it was used at Nimbin. At the time of writing, the pool had closed while the repair was being made safe.

Former AFL coach fronts drowning inquest

Former Fremantle AFL coach Mark Harvey has fronted the Victorian Coroners Court as part of an inquest into the drowning death of a girl in 2008. Lauren Harris drowned in the backyard pool of a rented Melbourne property that at the time was owned by Harvey. He offered his condolences to the Harris family as he gave evidence.

At question was the issue of a safety order detailing rectifications to be carried out around the pool which did not comply with safety regulations. Harvey says he never saw the order and was not contacted about it.

It is believed the girl gained entrance to the pool over the safety fence by climbing on the barbecue. The first policeman on scene the day Lauren drowned said he noticed a gas tap at the front left of the barbecue and that the way the barbecue was built it would be easily climbable.

At the time of writing, the inquest was still underway.

Tragic lack of supervision in NZ drownings

Poor supervision has played a part in two recent drownings in New Zealand. A coronial report into the drowning of a two-year-old girl at Waiwera Thermal Hot Pools in February highlighted the importance of parents actively supervising young children at swimming pools.

Coroner Peter Ryan found that the death of Nylah Masae Fa'amanu Vau, while accidental, was partly caused by the lack of active supervision of the toddler. The little girl drowned after she left the babies pool and fell into the deeper tower pool. The report says her father went to unload the car and left the child in the care of his mother. But as he did this, his wife told him she needed to go and breastfeed another child, leaving the children without active supervision.

The coroner said that if there is a handover from one parent to the other, then it is imperative that each parent clearly

understands who has active supervision responsibility at any given time. He added that parents cannot and should not rely upon staff at a commercial pool complex to supervise their young children, as this is not usually the staff's responsibility.

In November, a four-year-old boy drowned at a home swimming pool in Auckland, taking the 2011 New Zealand toll for pre-school age group to 12. Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) is concerned at the high toll and has made an impassioned plea to parents and caregivers to supervise small children vigilantly.

The dramatic rise in preschool drownings in 2011 prompted WSNZ to conduct a review to consider the circumstances surrounding all preschool drowning deaths in the past five years.

"The time it takes for young children to get into trouble is remarkably short, a mat-

ter of seconds," says Matt Claridge, WSNZ Chief Executive.

"Evidence suggests that around 71 per cent of infant drowning deaths occur because of a breakdown in supervision. Supervision incorporates three variables: attention, proximity and continuity. Therefore the importance of the 'active supervision' message and the understanding of what this means is absolutely critical for parents and caregivers of young children."

Active supervision is described by WSNZ as being in the line of sight with the ability to provide immediate assistance.

"It's a straightforward message," says Claridge. "If your child has access to the water, then you as the parent, or a designated responsible adult, must make safety the first priority – always be within sight and reach and ready to intervene if required."

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Around the globe

PISCINA FOCUSES ON RENOVATION

THE 10th edition of Piscina BCN was held in Barcelona during October, drawing in 19,000 visitors from 22 countries. The President of Piscina BCN, Eloi Planes, analysed the current challenges of the sector and said that the Spanish business is now more focused on renovation and maintenance of the existing 1.1m swimming pools than on new builds. Spain accounts for 7 per cent of the sector's global market and is ranked fourth in the number of pools in the world. The next International Swimming Pool Show, Piscina BCN, will be held in October 2013 in Fira de Barcelona.

AQUANALE, FSB AND IAKS

THE dual trade fairs of Aquanale and FSB brought in 24,000 visitors for the fourth Cologne Swimming Pool and Wellness Forum. The number of exhibiting companies increased by 10 per cent to 299 suppliers from 27 countries; overseas visitors made up 33 per cent of attendees. The visitor survey showed 77 per cent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with Aquanale overall. The next Aquanale will be held from October 23 to 26, 2013. The IAKS Congress, also held in Cologne in October, garnered 600 guests from all over the world to find out about the latest trends during the world's leading congress on sports and leisure facilities.

SOUTH AFRICA'S TENTATIVE FOOT IN THE POOL WATER

THE South African Pool, Spa & Outdoor Living (SAPSOL) trade and consumer pool-and-spa show was cautiously called a success by the organisers, despite lower than expected attendance figures. They reported positive responses and feedback from the event, but may change the focus of the event to be more broadly based on outdoor living, and may also look at a different venue. The event held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg had 60 exhibitors and was organised by New Events Ltd and SCS Exhibitions in conjunction with the South African National Spa & Pool Institute (SANSPI).



IPSPPE MOVING TO THE BIG EASY

NOVEMBER'S reportedly subdued but still successful international Pool Spa Patio Expo will not be held in Las Vegas next year, but will be moving to New Orleans. The 2012 Expo will take place from November 6 to 8 at the Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana USA. Attendees and exhibitors had an overwhelming positive response to moving the event to New Orleans, with Expo director Lindsay Roberts saying that while Las Vegas is one of the top destinations for trade shows and is still the top ranked city among for a West Coast location, it is critical to rotate the event geographically and New Orleans was the top choice for the Southern region. The Morial Convention Center is built on some of the highest ground in New Orleans and experienced minimal damage when Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast region in 2005.

AUSSIE AMONGST GAVA WINNERS

THE Global AquaTecture Visionary Awards (GAVA) winners were announced recently in Las Vegas, USA and several accolades went to Australian companies. Aloha Pools picked up five awards, winning Gold in the Infinity Edge category, Geometric, Traditional, Miscellaneous and Spas.

Other Aussie winners were Stuart Bevan Pools and Liquid Blue Pools in the Traditional category, Fluid Design in the Geometric category and 4Blue for the Structure Studios Pool Studio 3-D category.

CALIFORNIA GOES CAP AND TRADE

THE California Air Resources Board (CARB) has given its final approval to the state's cap-and-trade system, which sets limits on carbon emissions starting in 2012. The San Francisco Chronicle reports that CARB unanimously approved details of the regulations over the objections of industry groups, with the board's major actions focusing on the allocation of carbon allowances. Under the plan, the state will limit carbon emissions from its 350 or so biggest emitters starting in 2012, with enforcement starting in 2013.

WOULD-BE POOL OWNER UNEARTHS 13 COFFINS

THIS story is a reprise to SPLASH's October article about uncovering strange and eerie things while digging swimming pools. A New Orleans man began excavating a hole for his backyard swimming pool, when he found 13 coffins from an old cemetery. It turns out his home was built on a historic French Quarter cemetery dating back to the 18th century. The caskets were stacked

on top of each other, a common past practice in New Orleans when cemeteries became crowded.

POOL CLEANER INVENTOR DIES

ANDREW Pansini, the man credited with inventing the first automatic swimming pool cleaner back in 1957, passed away in November, aged 93. He famously made the first prototype using a garden hose and pipe. Although Pansini had survived polio, he had trouble with his mobility and found it difficult to clean his pool. One day he accidentally dropped the garden hose in the pool; watching it move back and forth, he had an idea. He went on to establish the highly successful Jandy brand (named from his name Andy and his wife Jane's first initial). Jandy now comes under the Zodiac umbrella, owned by the Carlyle Group.

ECOTECH PUMPS RECALLED IN US

THE US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Nidec Motor Corporation announced a voluntary recall of approximately 2000 Ecotech EZ Variable Speed pool pump motors. The CPSC says the Mexican-made motors are hazardous, as the pump cover is not properly grounded posing an electrical shock hazard. No injuries have been reported. The recalled motors are variable speed swimming pool pump motors with a 6.5 inch diameter steel frame painted black with a square or C-flange mounting. They were sold nationwide in the US from September 2010 through August 2011 for about \$US1000.

TOYS'R'US CULPABLE FOR SELLING UNSAFE POOL SLIDE IN US

A Massachusetts jury has awarded a man more than \$US20m after his wife died from injuries resulting from the use of an inflatable pool slide. \$US18m of the damages was punitive. 29 year old Robin Aleo fell onto the pool deck and hit her head when the Banzai Falls water slide deflated during use. The jury found retailer Toys 'R' Us culpable for the importation and sale of the slide, which was deemed unsafe.

AUDIT FOR JAKARTA WATER PARK

FOLLOWING the collapse of the 14m Octopus water slide at the Atlantis Water Adventure Park in Ancol, North Jakarta, the city had ordered an audit on the entire park. Five people were injured when a corroded pillar supporting the eight-year-old slide collapsed. All of the victims were reported to have returned home from hospital. According to the Jakarta Globe, the Ancol company said it will bear all the medical costs incurred by the victims as well as provide special deals for entrance to their parks.

LATHAM BUYS ANOTHER FIBREGLASS MANUFACTURER

LATHAM International subsidiary Viking Pools has bought fibreglass manufacturer Trilogy Pools. Latham and its subsidiaries have been acquiring considerable assets in the market, and last year Viking bought pool manufacturer Blue Hawaiian. Trilogy Pools covers 20 Midwest, Southeastern and East Coast states, with a stable of more than 100 builders. Trilogy's plant is located in Fayetteville, Tennessee, and Viking will reportedly keep staff on. Latham's other brands include Pacific Pools, Kafko Pool Products and Coverstar.



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Industry moves

WATERCO MOVES INTO LYON

WATERCO'S European division has opened a new facility in Lyon, France. Waterco says the new office will allow the company to service neighbouring countries, predominantly those located in Southern Europe. The office is headed by Jose Angel-Gonzalez, an industry professional with more than 20 years' experience in the European swimming pool market.

POOL INDUSTRY ICON PASSES AWAY

PIONEERING pool industry figure Ben Smith passed away in November. Ben was a founding partner of Mutual Constructions (AKA Mutual Pools), one of the most influential construction companies in the fledgling Australian industry of the

mid-60s. At one stage, Mutual was one of the biggest and most successful pool builders in the world, selling more than a thousand concrete in-ground pools per year. The success was partly on the back of pioneering new technology, in particular pebble interiors.

He also contributed to the industry through long-term involvement in associations including being a director of the Council of Australasian Pool & Spa Associations (CASPA) and was a director and life member of SPASA NSW. During his tenure at SPASA he instigated the annual pool and spa awards, was pivotal in creating several new chapters (Northern Rivers, ACT, Central West and Newcastle) and was a driving force behind the introduction of the sales accreditation courses.

He was heavily involved in the media. At SPASA he obtained the services of

Minister Deirdre Grusovin to front a TV campaign promoting SPASA members; compiled the successful Sunday Telegraph SPASA supplement; and was the face of the SPASA NSW on TV infomercials with Ian Turpie.

In his latter years, he was probably best known as the editor of the Choosing Your Pool & Spa magazine and Pool & Spa Review. He started the precursor to Pool & Spa Review in 1973, then called the CASPA Trade Journal.

Ben was a passionate advocate for the pool and spa industry who was always generous with his time and was happy to share his experience and knowledge to help promote the industry.

He will be sorely missed but his love for the industry will be remembered for years to come.

SPLASH! and staff extend our sincere condolences to Ben's family and friends.

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ECD TO DISTRIBUTE ECOSUN DOWN UNDER

AQUATHERM Industries, the largest US-based manufacturer of solar pool heaters, has named Energy Conscious Design Limited (ECD) in Auckland, New Zealand its newest international distributor of the company's flagship solar pool heater product, Ecosun. Ian Sumner, engineering director at ECD, has more than 20 years experience in solar water heating. ECD was established in 2003 and has offices in New Zealand and Australia.

WATERPLAY'S NEW GLOBAL SALES DIRECTOR

WATERPLAY Solutions Corp announced the appointment of Randy Flint to the position of Director of Global Sales. In this newly formed position, Flint will be responsible for domestic and international sales of the Company's entire product suite.

SPASA'S NEW WEBSITE

SPASA NSW has launched a more dynamic website – a key part of the association's strategy to make it more accessible, both for members and consumers. The website is now cleaner with a more visual design. In addition, the navigation and content distribution are now more streamlined, which enables consumers to more easily find information and access members' details. Industry information is also segmented into user-friendly sections. Go to www.spasa.org.au to have a look.

PLUNGING INTO WA

AUSTRALIAN Plunge Pool (APP) has spread its wings to Western Australia through a deal with Trinity Plunge Pools WA (TPPWA). APP already boasts distributors from Cairns through to Melbourne on the East Coast along with the ACT, Country NSW and SA. TPPWA is looking for distributors for

Perth, Mandurah, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and further up the coast. **FOR** more information contact Jackie on 0422 898975 or email trinityppwa@westnet.com.au

WATER, CAMERA, ACTION!

BIOGUARD has launched a new Summer campaign which gives its customers a chance to win a Full HD underwater movie camera.

Every BioGuard Approved Retailer has been given a prize for their store to give away as part of the competition, in a major expansion of their Summer Campaign promotion. When a pool or spa owner purchases a BioGuard product, they will receive a free sticker asking them to take and upload a fun, creative photo of their family enjoying their pool or spa to the BioGuard website.

A winner from each store will be selected by BioGuard. The Summer Campaign runs until 31 March 2012.



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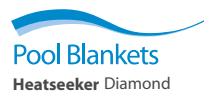
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Classic Pools picks up Indian distributor

CLASSIC Pools Pty Ltd Australia has appointed Aquanomics Systems Ltd as their sole Indian distributor to launch their award winning range of ready-made/modular aboveground pools to the local Indian market.

Aquanomics Systems, previously supplied by Zodiac, has a well-established sales and service network throughout India with 180 outlets to cater to the needs and demands of the growing market.

Michael Chapman, Director of Classic Pools, says that Aquanomics' state-of-the-art infrastructure and three strategically located warehouse facilities make them the ideal appointees.

"Aquanomics Systems was the first choice for Classic Pools to drive growth and form the strategic partnerships that will keep both businesses on the forefront of the swimming pool industry," he says.

The two companies met at the Waves expo.

Freedom passes the mark

Environmental management system achieves ISO14001

FREEDOM Pools & Spas has announced the certification of their environmental management system to AS/NZS ISO14001.

"We have always set high standards for our business operation, creating products that exceed the expectations of our clients as well as developing manufacturing systems that are efficient and environmentally sound," says Freedom Pools MD Bob Biernat.

After a thorough examination of the system by Sydney-based certification company Certification Solutions International, Freedom Pools & Spas was awarded the coveted PASMarks for Environmental Management Systems.

"Being the first fibreglass swimming pool company in Australia to receive this certification is a huge honour, but more importantly a clear sign to customers that our manufacturing process is environmentally sustainable," says Biernat.



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Elena Gosse gets more recognition

AUSTRALIAN business owner Elena Gosse has again gained recognition for her contribution to community and business.

Gosse, owner of the Brisbane-based company Australian Innovative Systems (AIS) has recently received the 2011 Lord Mayor's Multicultural Entrepreneur Award. The Award recognises her contribution to the community, overcoming social and financial

obstacles, as well as demonstrating her ingenuity and creative approach as executive director and owner in building a marketplace for AIS products across local and international markets.

In the 1980s Gosse was a Russian television star and entertainer. After arriving in Australia in 1994, she mastered English, learned technical terminology and completed a university degree before leading her own business.

Gosse built AIS into an international force in water disinfection, successfully exporting to 59 countries including the US and Middle East.

The company's latest development is the unique Ecoline system that produces chlorine from minerals and salts already present in fresh water.

Gosse has also been nominated in four categories of the international Stevie Awards for Women in Business.

BioGuard now a ClevaQuip Hayward distributor

BIOGUARD has been appointed an Australian and New Zealand sales agent of multi-national Hayward Pumps & Filters and PureSilk automatic chlorinators after signing an agreement with local importers, ClevaQuip.

Under the agreement, BioGuard will offer the ClevaQuip and Hayward

ranges to its retail network across Australia and New Zealand.

Hayward has long held a reputation as a quality manufacturer of pool and spa equipment for residential and commercial, in-ground and above-ground pools.

BioGuard Approved Retailers will now have the opportunity to become a

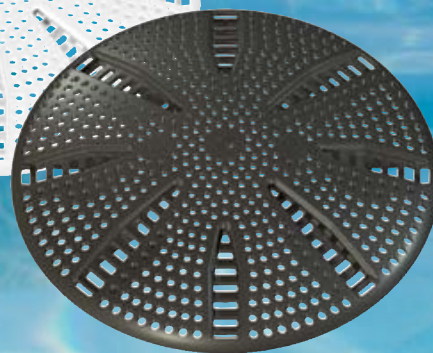
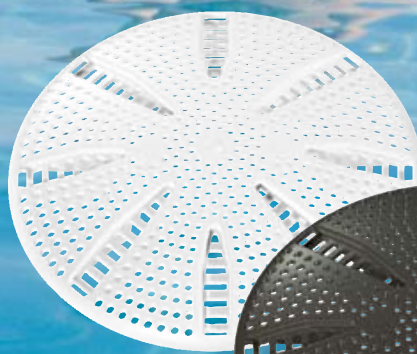
Totally Hayward Retailer, offering the combined benefits of two global leaders due to this partnership.

BioGuard says the agreement is part of an ongoing strategy to provide BioGuard retailers with a competitive advantage by giving them access to superior quality products that complement the BioGuard range.

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The convenience of buying from home makes sure that online retail is here to stay. Traditional retailers have to find a solution that meets consumer needs across a number of platforms



ONLINE RETAILING

friend or foe?

Some bricks-and-mortar retailers wish the internet had never been invented. But as we all know, it's here to stay.

It's a classic understatement to say the internet has revolutionised retail. It has revolutionised everything. People commuting on a train, for example, can suddenly decide they want a certain item, and with a few touches of their smartphone it can be delivered to their home – it might even be waiting when the commuter gets home.

All sorts of bricks-and-mortar outlets have suffered from the shift towards online shopping. Notable examples include bookshops, music stores and travel agents – but there are many others as well, and over time every industry will be affected in one way or another.

The pool and spa industry is far from immune.

Many pool shops look nostalgically to those days before the internet invaded their secure turf – but those golden days are not returning. And if you take off your retailer hat for a moment and put on your consumer hat – it's easy to understand why you wouldn't want it to disappear either.

As well as all the purchases we make ourselves on the internet, it also clearly makes life much easier to do business, manage logistics and communicate with staff and customers.

But there's no doubt that pool shop owners (amongst many other retailers) are feeling nervous. They've invested in shopfronts, have spent a long time developing relationships with their local clientele and have spent money and time developing their own expertise in order to provide value to their customers.

Now they fear that hard work will disappear, as low-cost, low-overhead and sometimes foreign online retailers take their valuable equipment and chemical sales based simply on lower price. Sometimes these online people offer little or no expertise, the maintenance is questionable or non-existent and sometimes the products are inferior.

Yet how many consumers can turn down a massive discount? Cheaper products are

obviously popular, and with that rationale leading the online channel, it is clear internet commerce is here to stay.

So the question is – if we can't live without it, how do we live with it?

We've asked several experts – both in online retail and pool and spa retail – and have collected some information about how you can turn the bogey man of online retailing to your own advantage.

You've got to be in it to win it

Jason Titman, director of 4SME, is a popular speaker on the topic of online retail. He travels the country and region helping make businesses more profitable.

"I agree with the sentiments and concerns of many pool shop owners," says Titman. "The unfortunate reality for everyone operating a traditional business model is that online is here and it is here to stay. Having said that, I do not subscribe to the view that there is no future for traditional

pool shop owners. However, they must embrace online or perish.”

Titman says that basically, you’ve got to be in it to win it.

“Anyone who wishes to be running a successful business in five years to 10 years time needs to embrace online because it is here to stay and it is changing the way business is done. You don’t have to be a genius to work out that it is much cheaper to sell products through an online store than to buy or lease a building and pay all of the costs associated with running a bricks-and-mortar store.”

But he believes multi-channelling is the new way forward in retailing.

“It is my suggestion that pool shop owners should look to get into online now – it is still not too late. They need to start understanding the online environment, understand how businesses are successfully marketing themselves in online and what sort of business models are making money online. Just remember – not every online business is a license to print money.”

One of the big questions is how, after years of gaining specific industry knowledge, can pool shops leverage that expertise in an online environment?

“Successful online retailing is very much about becoming an expert in your space,” says Titman. “I suggest pool operators race to become an expert – at present no one seems to really occupy this space. Who would have thought you could make as much money out of personal training as Michelle Bridges has through her online model. The success has really been through creating online communities. I think it is really about understanding your customer and what they are looking for. The research keeps showing that consumers are making decisions based on more important factors than price.”

The other key thing with pool shops is the power of being local. Being able to pop down to the local pool shop is much more convenient in some instances than purchasing online.

“It is quite unlikely that people are going to buy pool salt online, and when something breaks in my pool I want it fixed right away. The other thing is, most people with pools are very time poor and if a ‘local’ pool shop

develops its mobile service then I believe this is likely to place them in a unique position to compete against online-only stores – but the most successful model has certainly got to be a combination – using a multi-channel approach.”

Research shows that 64 per cent of people who ‘browse’ online actually end up buying in store.

“Most people still come to pool shops to have their water tested and then buy the chemicals there and then. However, most pool shops look quite tired and run down. The modern day consumer is expecting much more, and successful retailing is so much about presentation and the overall offering. I would urge pool shop operators to run some in-store competitions using quick response



(QR) codes, engage with Facebook around photos of Best Pools Shots, or run an online blog about problems with pools and the sorts of solutions there are out there.

“When you get into this space the list of potential opportunities just keeps expanding. I think the worst thing an operator can do is to try and ignore the online space.”

Titman says there are now more than 500,000 smart phone apps and Facebook expects that ‘social commerce’ will be at \$30 billion by 2015. Currently it is \$5 billion.

Ten years ago 75 per cent of the traffic to a website was direct traffic – i.e. people typed in the actual website address. Now it is less than 10 per cent. People are finding websites through search engines, online

shopping malls and social media channels.

“How many pool shop owners are using QR codes?” he asks. “What about augmented reality or marketing automation? The online space is racing ahead and as your existing customer base ages (and ultimately buys less product) your new customers are not reading newspapers, watching TV or listening to the radio, so how are you going to interact with them?”

Titman says there is most definitely a future for bricks and mortar. But probably not in the existing way that many pool operators present their retail shops.

“They have got to move with the times. Create an online newsletter, blog, YouTube videos of things to do with the pool industry – maybe how to do a backwash for example.

“If an existing bricks and mortar operator just tries to survive based on selling a homogenous product, then an online operator will beat them every time.”

Pool builders also have to embrace the internet in their search for clients. Obviously builders can’t be “virtual” – they have to dig the holes and do the construction in the client’s backyard. But they still face a threat from the internet – in particular, from other pool builders who have embraced its marketing power.

“Did you know that a guy who put up a YouTube video of how to fold a bandanna has had over 179,000 hits in 12 months,” says Titman.

[It’s also worth looking at the video about kids making a Belagio type fountain in their pool. HTH Pool Care put it together, and already it’s had more than 647,000 views. Go to www.splashmagazine.com.au to see it.]

“What about putting up a YouTube video of the process (i.e. the stages of building a pool). For some people I am sure this would be quite interesting,” he says.

“Pool builders could run a blog on problems people experience with their pool builder and suggestions for doing it better next time. They could turn their site and themselves into an expert in this space where people come for reference material. Perhaps they could create printable versions of CPR safety sheets or something similar, and this would keep people coming back to the site.

“And once they are on your site, you can market to them.”

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Fifteen ways to compete against online retailers

Glenn Dobson from Kona Group is another online retail expert who travels the country educating businesses on how to take advantage of the online environment. He recently spoke to a room full of pool builders and retailers at a SPASA meeting in Sydney.

Here he offers some specific advice for the pool industry. Most importantly, Dobson says there is no time to waste.

"Pool shop owners are facing increased and tough competition from online retailers and must respond to this new competitor immediately, or run the risk of going out of business," he says.

"In a recent poll of about 20 SPASA members approximately 80 per cent of the group didn't have a website and were relying on traditional methods for customers and prospects to find them.

"The reality is, shoppers are now doing their research online and then ordering or going into their nearest store to either buy, get educated, or pick up a purchase. With online many customers are buying without even meeting the company or person they are buying from!"

Dobson says that online retailers have several advantages over bricks-and-mortar outlets, including being available to make purchases 24/7 and having lower real estate costs and lower staff costs. They might also carry a larger range than a shopfront can afford.

"However they do not have your expertise," he says. "Or the relationship that you have – or at least, should have – with your customers when they come into your store."

Dobson says that for more than a decade, the Kona Group has been coaching retailers to hit back against online retailers with practical tips.

"The first thing to do," he says. "Is build a website. Immediately. If customers are buying online then you need to join them. Burying your head in the sand and hoping online will go away will drive you out of business."

Websites can be developed from as little as \$500, up to several thousand dollars.

"Make the website easy to use, and provide information and products your customers are looking for. The reality is, if you don't have a website how can you be found?"

He says it's easy to observe the changing way people find suppliers by simply looking at the Yellow Pages. It has gone from a number of giant paper books to being mostly an online directory.

If money is an impediment, the easiest and cheapest start is to at least set up a Facebook page – making sure it is for your business, rather than yourself.

"If you can't afford a website, ask a teenager or friend to set up a Facebook site for your store. Then you can add photos of pools, products, information, etc, and create links and 'likes' with your customers to drive awareness."

Also, after 25 "likes" you get your own Facebook URL – i.e. www.Facebook.com/yourstore.

Dobson says it is important to combine online with your in-store expertise.

"Customers are typically time poor and looking for convenience – not just low prices. So offer them a choice of how to buy from you, and how to get their goods. That is, shop online (from your website) and receive \$25 off your next purchase in-store, etc. Offer free deliveries or water testing when you buy \$100 or more (online and/or in store)."

An important tool in the online war is an email database of customers. Dobson suggests emailing them every month in winter and every fortnight/week in summer with an offer of the month.

"Customers typically buy when they need something, so you need to be 'top of mind' when they are in a buying mood (i.e. when their pool has gone green!)."

While you are using the internet to improve your business, you also need to make a case to the customers who come into your store.

"Promote in store," says Dobson. "Create signs for inside your store demonstrating the value of shopping with you versus shopping online. Consider creative which warns against making the mistake of using online-only outlets.

"Educate your shoppers. Create a sheet with negative online shopping stories about online-only retailers (don't name names though). Give one out to every customer for a few months. This needs to be a truthful and consistent message, something which you repeat over and over again. Then add a sheet of all of the additional benefits your customer will receive from you."

It's also important to educate your sales people.

"Teach them how to engage and build a relationship with customers rather than just smothering them in technical jargon. Coach them on how to make the customer feel important. Make sure that they weave into their customer interactions information

about the risks and high hidden cost of shopping online. The more they understand about the difference between shopping in your store and buying the same items online, the better."

The Price Burger

One of the problems with a traditional retailer versus online is talking about the Price, whereas that is up front and centre on every online product. One way around this is to use the Price Burger technique. That is, mentioning the price in the middle of several features and advantages.

"Train everyone in your retail store how to talk about value adding, rather than just price and discounts," says Dobson. "Teach them to create a package price using the Price Burger technique, where the actual price is wrapped up in your total offer. Free delivery plus a low cost gift, plus water test, the Price is W, plus you get X, Y and Z."

Dobson suggests you call Kona if you're unsure how to create a Price Burger.

He suggests another useful device is coupons. "You can create coupons to entice browsers back into your store," he says. "Encourage them with a purchase decision within a certain period of time. Have the sales person sign the coupon to authenticate the offer as this adds credibility."

It is also important to make your retail store a destination. (See the section on Store Sense below for more on this trend.)

"What type of experience do your customers receive when they walk through your door? Is it interesting, enjoyable and like meeting a friend for coffee? Or are customers left hanging around while you serve someone else? Look at brand leaders like Apple and the launch of their unique Apple stores around the world – every product is plugged in and ready to try. Fun, friendly staff that are there to inform, not to sell. You can also create 'lifestyle showrooms' where the product experience comes to life with interactive displays, videos, coffee and relaxing music."

Another suggestion from Dobson is the use of loss leaders.

"Get on the front foot and choose a product that you can use to get people through the door. Look at what shoppers are paying online for items you sell. Compare prices for exactly the same brand. Use this information to help develop your competitive pitch. If items are cheaper online, explain the reason for this in comparative information you have in store."



Friendly faces – one of the things online doesn't have. Image courtesy Poolside Frankston, winner of SPASA Victoria's Pool Shop of the Year.

Although he recommends loss leaders, Dobson insists that you shouldn't discount across the board.

"Discounting a price merely reduces its perceived value and makes it difficult to ever sell that item again at its full original price. To compete, pick a loss leader to get people in the door, then try adding value instead by 'packaging up' a product with another item or a bonus gift."

Service, service, service

Service is the real difference between a retail store and an online store.

"If you provide excellent personal service that gets your shoppers talking about you – and you're able to blend into your pitch the value of this over online – then you can expect to win business back. Offer a personalised service – from informative staff to home deliveries, in-store promotions to customer loyalty cards."

Of course, you must promote the benefits of being local.

"The better your connection with the local community and the value your business delivers to the local community, then the greater is the perceived value of your business in the minds of local shoppers. Unashamedly promote your local connection and credentials.

"Online businesses rarely have a local connection. Your investment in education evenings (Bunnings do it every week), local clubs and other groups should translate into good local business.

"The bottom line is you can compete against online retailers as long as you include online in your business."

How much to tell, and how to tell it

There was a recent online retail meeting at the SPASA office in Ashfield (mentioned above) where Glenn Dobson spoke, as did Martino Santi from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). (There is also more information about the ACCC and internet retailing below.)

After the presentations, there was a general discussion with questions and answers from the floor.

One question has been put to SPLASH! on a number of occasions: Why can't manufacturers and distributors protect their retail outlets from internet-only businesses, by specifying a minimum retail price?

This question was also posed at the meeting, and Santi was able to provide a very simple answer. It cannot be done, because it is against the law. That practice is known as price maintenance and is in contravention of the Competition and Consumer Act. In some countries it is acceptable, but not in Australia.

Another question raised was the one of "offline researching/online purchasing." This involves consumers coming into a bricks-and-mortar outlet, asking lots of questions and choosing a product. Once they have tapped the sales staff's expertise to find the most suitable product for them, the consumer goes home and buys it on the internet for a cheaper price.

The answer to this question is to ensure the customers are aware of the advantages of buying from your store – warranties, local maintenance, after sales service, free delivery, installation, dependability etc.

These advantages need to be built into

the Price Burger mentioned above by Glenn Dobson. Never simply tell a price and let the customer assume all prices are equal.

A related question came from the floor regarding quotes for pool equipment. A customer might get a quote for a new pump and filter for example. Then, armed with the full specifications, go online to buy the product.

One option suggested from the floor was to charge a "quotation fee", refundable on purchase. Another was to keep the specifications for the equipment on file for eventual sale and installation, but on the quotation document simply state: Equipment Fit For Purpose and the price.

Combating the competitive threat

The Swimming Pool Retailers Association of Australia (SPRAA) President, Peter Barr, says that retailers – including pool stores – have always faced competitive pressures.

"Online retailing is one source of competition and this sector focuses largely on price rather than value or expertise," says Barr. "It's likely online customers will mirror those who currently use big box retailers like Bunnings.

"However, independent and franchise pool retailers need to use their unique services and knowledge to their advantage to build customer loyalty. For example, online retailers will never be able to offer water testing, tackle complex water problems or respond quickly to changing local environmental conditions like a sudden storm."

Barr also says that a retailer's best asset is their database, and it's worth remembering the adage that it's always easier to keep a current customer than attract a new one. Therefore, retailers need to work on customer loyalty strategies and reward their customers for repeat purchase.

"Online retailing is as much about convenience as it is about price and therefore retailers need to look at strategies to make using their store and the products they sell more convenient," says Barr.

"Also, pool stores need to make themselves part of the local community. Their aim should be to be viewed in the same way as the local bakery or newsagent. Pool store owners and managers need to explore ways to get involved with the local community, and demonstrate their support.

"Finally, retailers need to look at their own online presence and use it to support the store's operations. An online strategy needs



The evolution of retail. Jason Titman.

to be considered carefully so that it integrates and aligns with your bricks-and-mortar operation and doesn't allow people just to window shop or use as a reference point to try and find a better deal elsewhere."

Expertise is the retailer's biggest advantage. But the question is how do retailers use this expertise to attract and retain business, rather than just giving away their intellectual property and empowering the customer to look elsewhere.

"Retailers' expertise should be used to build a relationship with the customer," says Barr. "To make life convenient for them, and ensure it's made available when the customer most needs help. Retailers

have a role to play in educating their customers on the value of specialist advice, and using high quality products. This can be achieved through regular communication via newsletters, customer events, and of course in-store.

Being local

Being involved with and engaging in the local community is vital. Barr says retailers need to take advantage of their involvement in local schools, community groups, business networking and events. If not already involved, they need to look at ways to become involved.

"Each region in Australia has its own local climatic conditions, and an online retailer is unable to understand or respond to local conditions," he says. "Providing timely information to customers when and where they need it is a big advantage for local retailers.

"Retailers should also look at opportunities to raise their profile in the local community through the media. For

example, retailers who place advertising in local papers can often leverage some editorial which gives them the perfect opportunity to promote their expertise and the 'local message'."

Retailers should also look at opportunities to submit advice or news stories which relate to their field of expertise.

Barr says one example of that might be if local pool owners are facing a common problem like the locust infestation which happened earlier this year, then they're well placed to provide comment and advice to pool owners as part of a news story.

A future for bricks and mortar

Barr says that moving from bricks-and-mortar retailing into online sales need to be considered carefully.

"In some cases, it may not help grow the business but actually have the opposite effect," he says. "Online retailing can open up new markets for retailers but this needs to be part of a business plan."

Barr definitely believes there is a future for bricks and mortar. He says that retail stores

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provide more than goods and services, and people will always want to connect directly with people when considering a purchase. However, bricks-and-mortar retailers will have to become more innovative, and invest in the store experience.

"People will never, and have never, wanted to visit a store that looks old and tired, and isn't easy to navigate. Retailers also need to invest in training to make sure they're providing exemplary customer service and advice."

Franchise businesses

Franchise businesses Swimart and PoolWerx have also offered their opinions and advice on the issue.

Chris Fitzmaurice, Swimart's national manager, says it's important to recognise that there will always be competition in the market – and the internet is just another form of competition.

"There are advantages and disadvantages to buying from the internet, with the main drawbacks being a lack of warranties and no or limited technical support. We have the

advantage of knowing our customers' pools – their location, size, type of filtration system they use and the overall history of the pool. We keep detailed records and tailor our advice specifically to their particular pool."

He also says that people like to buy products and services from physical stores because they know there is a point of recourse.

"We are not just some faceless entity on the internet. We are very focussed on



giving our customers high levels of service and we know they trust and appreciate us in return. Swimart continues to focus on our advantages and unique selling points – providing good customer service is a major one. We feel the internet doesn't really affect our trading."

Increasing convenience

PoolWerx CEO John O'Brien says that online shopping is here to stay and one of the best ways to combat it is to get involved and find a solution that works for your business to meet consumer needs across a number of platforms.

"One of the main reasons customers make purchases online is due to the convenience," he says. "They are able to make purchases from home. We tap into this desire for convenience by providing customers with online purchasing options fully supported by a delivery and installation service, seamlessly blending the physical and virtual business solutions.

"Also, there are several advantages associated with being a 'local' business,"





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