

# VBA POOL AND SPA SAFETY BARRIER SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST I

## FOR POOLS AND SPAS INSTALLED BEFORE 8 APRIL 1991

### RELEVANT STANDARD: PART 9A BUILDING REGULATIONS 2018 AND AS 1926.1-1993

Swimming pools and spas on residential properties in Victoria that are capable of holding more than 300 mm (30 cm) of water are required to have a pool safety barrier to restrict access to a pool area by young children (under the age of 5). This also includes relocatable pools, above ground pools, indoor pools, hot tubs, and bathing or wading pools. In addition, all gates, fences or walls that form part of the barrier around the pool must be kept in good working condition.

## THE SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST



This self-assessment checklist is intended to help pool and spa owners maintain the safety of pools and spas installed before 8 April 1991. The checklist applies to swimming pools and spas associated with residential homes, apartments, boarding houses, motels, hotels or similar dwellings.

**The checklist is not exhaustive and the use of the checklist will not amount to legal compliance.**

The checklist is designed to provide guidance to assist homeowners with maintaining safety around pool and spa areas, including guidance to determine if pool or spa barriers are in good working condition and adequately restrict access by young children to the pool or spa area.

## HOW TO COMPLETE ASSESSMENT



Answer each question (where applicable). If you answer **'NO'** to any question it is recommended that you make any repairs as soon as possible, or if you are unsure about the compliance of your barrier speak to a building surveyor.

If you answer **'YES'** to any question and would like further reassurance about compliance of your barrier also speak to a building surveyor.

## DEFINITIONS



### BARRIER

Components such as fences, posts, panels, walls, gates, doors and windows on buildings and other fittings restricting access to a pool or spa area.



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# QUESTIONS

YES

NO

# DIAGRAM

## STEP 1 – BARRIER

**OBJECTIVE:** SWIMMING POOLS AND SPAS MUST BE SURROUNDED BY A BARRIER RESTRICTING UNSUPERVISED ACCESS BY YOUNG CHILDREN.

<p>One or more of the following types of barrier must be in place and operating effectively to restrict access to a pool area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a wall of a building;</li><li>• a paling or other fence without openings;</li><li>• a fence and gate complying with AS 1926.1-1993.</li></ul>			
<p>a) If the barrier incorporates a wall of a building that has a door or a gate or an openable part of a window in it, complete <b>Steps 2 and 3</b>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>b) If the barrier incorporates a paling or other fence without openings at least 1500 mm high measured above the ground level on the approach side, complete <b>Step 2</b>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>c) If the barrier incorporates any other type of fence or gate, complete <b>Steps 4 to 8</b>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

# QUESTIONS

YES

NO

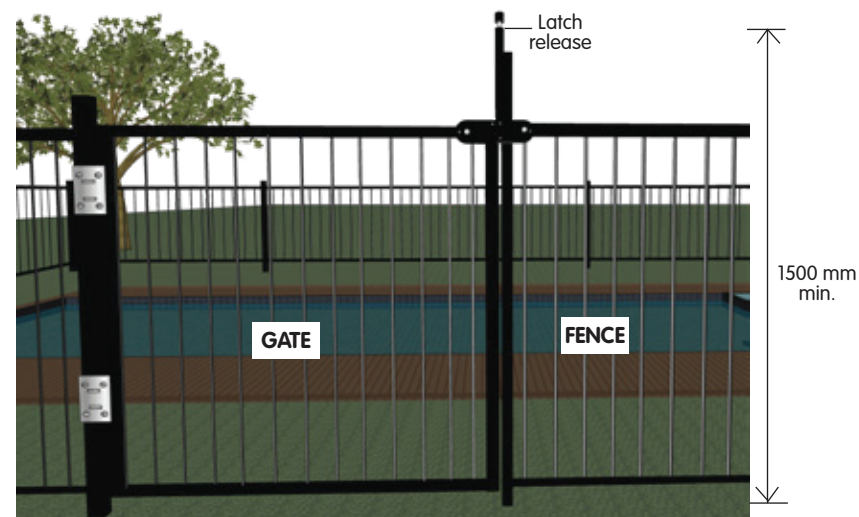
# DIAGRAM

## STEP 2 – DOORS OR GATES

**OBJECTIVE:** ALL DOORS OR GATES MUST NOT BE ABLE TO BE OPENED BY YOUNG CHILDREN AND IF OPEN, DOORS AND GATES MUST RETURN TO THE CLOSED POSITION WHEN RELEASED.

Do all doors and gates have a self-locking or self-latching device with an opening mechanism located at least 1500 mm above the ground or internal floor?  
(Refer to diagram)

Do all doors and gates have a self-closing device that returns the door or gate to the closed position without using manual force?

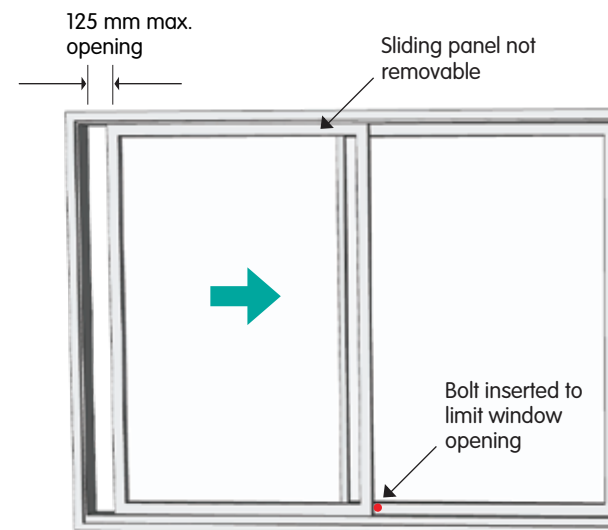


## STEP 3 – WINDOWS

**OBJECTIVE:** WINDOWS THAT FORM PART OF A BARRIER MUST NOT PROVIDE A PATHWAY INTO THE POOL AREA.

Are all openable parts of a window that is in a wall used as a barrier one of the following:

- at least 2400 mm above the external paving or ground level; or
- at least 1500 mm above the floor of the room containing the window; or
- fitted with a catch, bolt, lock or other stop located 1500 mm above the floor of the room containing the window so that the openable part of the window cannot be opened more than 125 mm (Refer to diagram); or
- provided with a securely fitted fly screen?



# QUESTIONS

YES

NO

# DIAGRAM

## STEP 4 – FENCING (INCLUDING ASSOCIATED GATES)

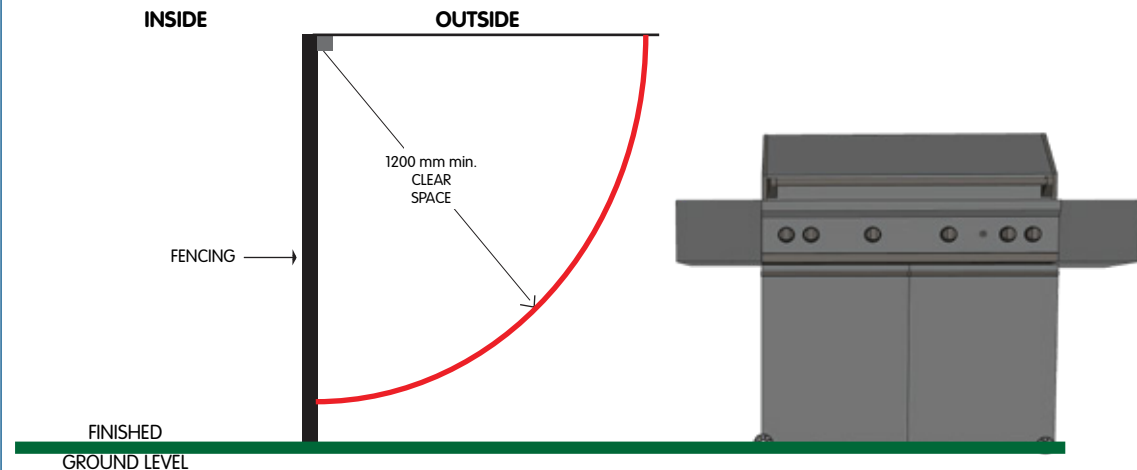
**OBJECTIVE:** FENCING MUST BE CONSTRUCTED AND MAINTAINED TO ENSURE THAT:

- it cannot be used as a climbing device for young children to access the pool area; and
- no surfaces close to the fence can be used as a climbing platform; and
- young children cannot climb under the fence to access the pool area.

Is the pool fencing at least 1200 mm high?

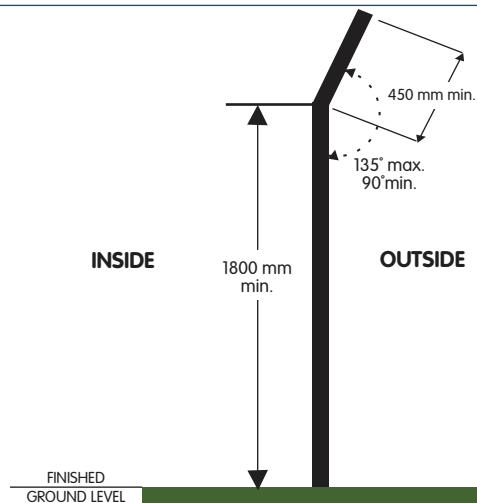


Is the area around the outside of the fencing clear of climbable objects (e.g. furniture, toys, pot plants, BBQs) within a 1200 mm clear space measured from the top of the fence?  
(Refer to diagram)

If the fencing is constructed using perforated material or mesh with holes greater than 13 mm but less than 100 mm:

- is it at least 2400 mm high; or
- does it have a vertical section of at least 1800 mm with a 450 mm cranked top above  
(Refer to diagram); and
- does the fence have strainer wires or rails at the top and bottom?

# QUESTIONS

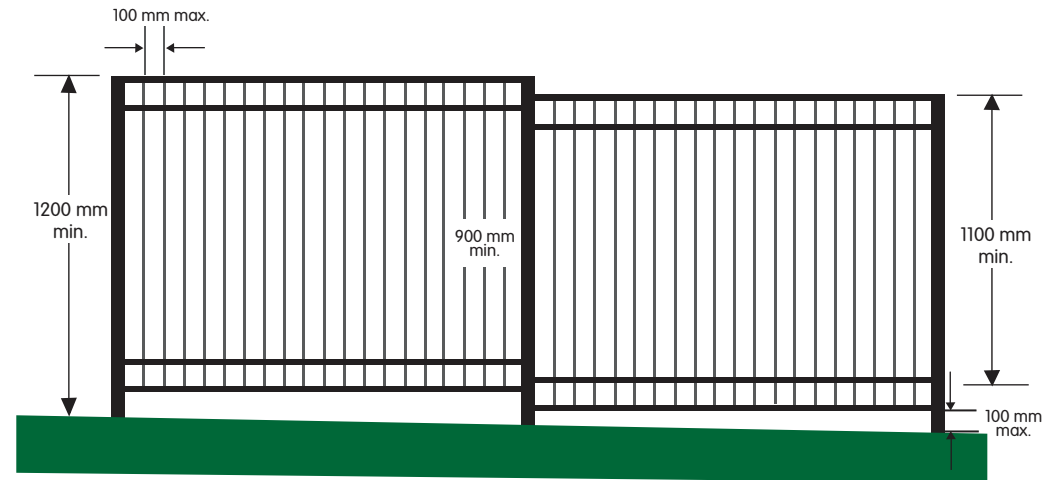
YES

NO

# DIAGRAM

Are horizontal elements, such as rails, rods, wires or bracing:

- on the outside of the fencing, or where the spacing of the vertical elements is between 10 mm and 100 mm, at least 900 mm apart (Refer to diagram); or
- on the outside of the fencing with:
  - the spacing of the vertical elements not more than 10 mm apart; and
  - the upper surface of the projection or indentation sloping away from the pool by at least 60 degrees to the horizontal?

Are adjacent vertical elements such as rods, palings, wires or bracing no further apart than 100 mm? (Refer to diagram)



Are openings between the bottom of the fencing and the finished ground level 100 mm or less? (Refer to diagram)

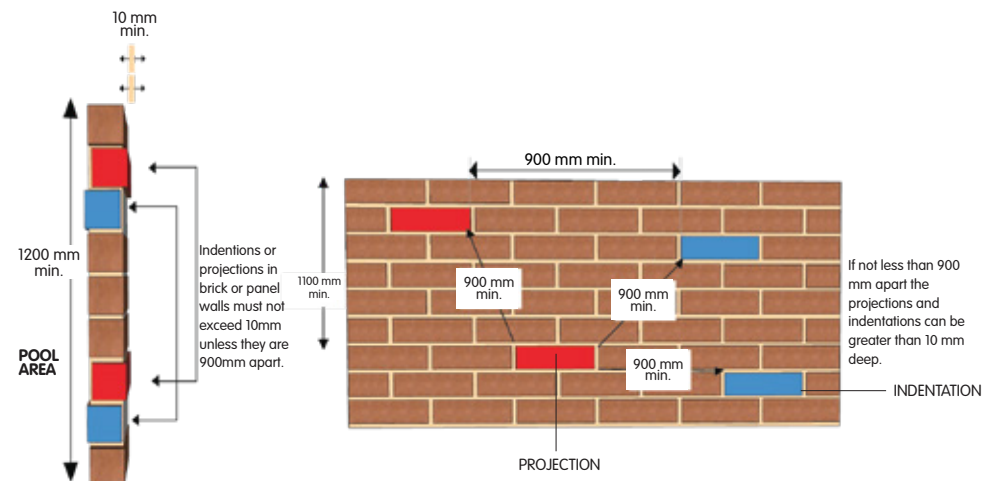


If the spacing of the vertical elements is greater than 10 mm, are horizontal surfaces (such as BBQs or fixed seating) inside the fencing located at least 300 mm away from the fencing?



Are all projections and indentations (potential footholds or hand holds for children) with a depth of 10 mm or more:

- spaced at least 900 mm apart, and at least 1100 mm below the top of the barrier; or
- sloping away from the pool by at least 60 degrees to the horizontal?

# QUESTIONS

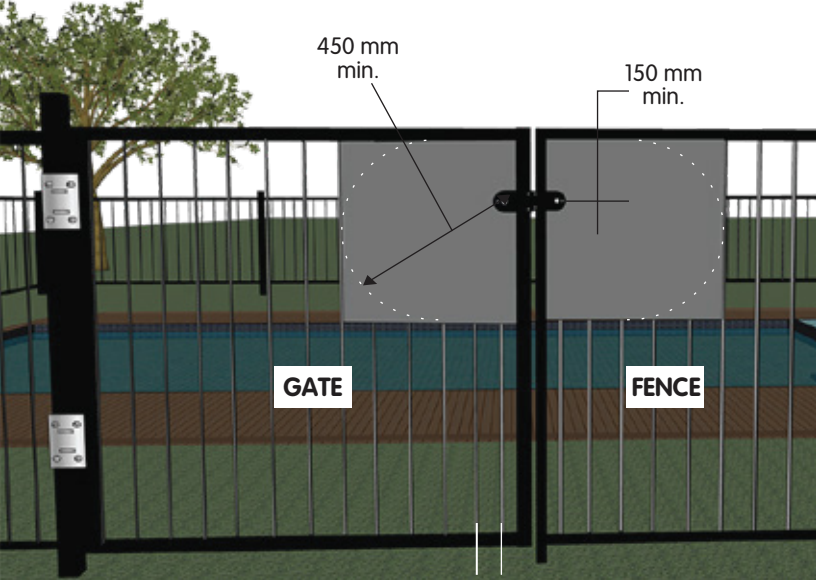
YES

NO

# DIAGRAM

## STEP 5 – GATES AND FITTINGS

**OBJECTIVE:** ALL GATES MUST NOT BE ABLE TO BE OPENED BY YOUNG CHILDREN AND IF OPEN, DOORS AND GATES MUST RETURN TO THE CLOSED POSITION WHEN RELEASED.

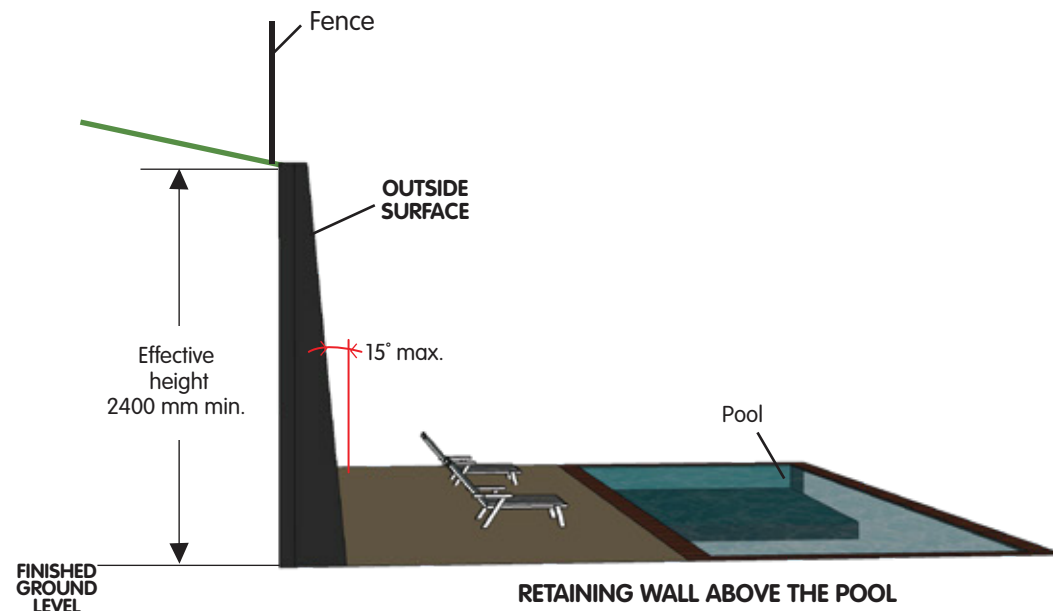
Do gates providing access to the pool area swing outwards, away from the pool area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are gates fitted with a self-closing device that will return them to the closed position and engage the latching device from any position with a stationary start without using manual force?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are gates fitted with a self-latching device that will automatically operate on closing of the gate and prevent the gate from being reopened without being manually released?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the gate self-latching devices incapable of being adjusted in operation or adjusted without the use of tools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Are gate latching and release devices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• located at least 1500 mm above the finished ground level; or</li><li>• located at least 1400 mm above the highest of the lower horizontal rail, rod, wire or bracing; or</li><li>• shielded to prevent inadvertent opening from outside the barrier? (Refer to diagram)</li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	 <p>450 mm min.</p> <p>150 mm min.</p> <p>GATE</p> <p>FENCE</p> <p>100 mm max. between verticals</p>

## STEP 6 – RETAINING WALLS

**OBJECTIVE:** RETAINING WALLS MUST BE CONSTRUCTED SO THEY RESTRICT ACCESS BY YOUNG CHILDREN TO THE POOL AREA.

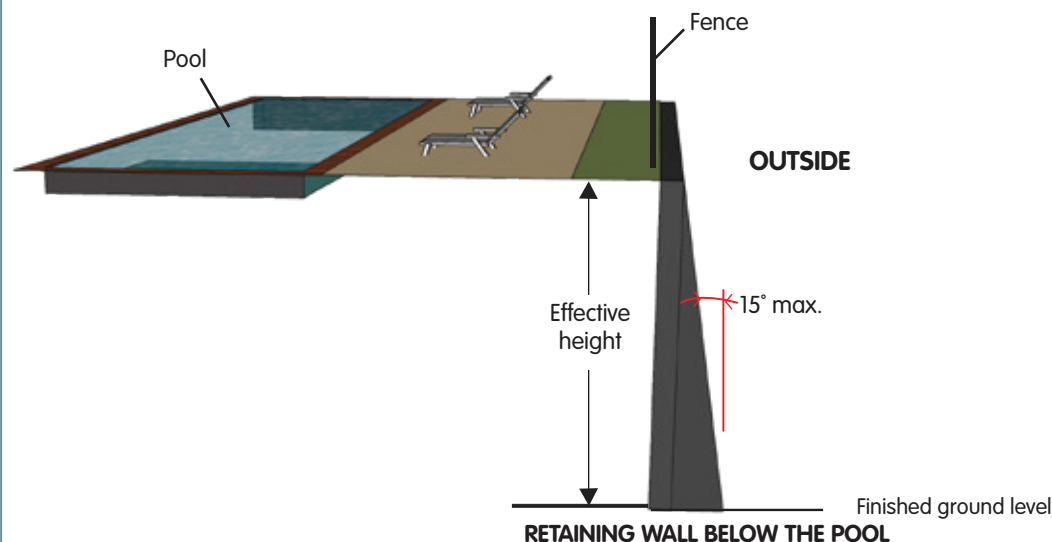
If a retaining wall or similar structure forms part of the pool barrier on the high side of the pool, does:

- it have an effective height of at least 2400 mm; and
- the outside surface have all projections and indentations with a depth of 10 mm or more:
  - spaced at least 900 mm apart and at least 1100 mm below the top of the barrier;
  - or the upper surface of the projection or indentation sloping towards the pool by at least 60 degrees to the horizontal; and
- slope away from the pool by not more than 15 degrees to the vertical? (Refer to diagram)

If a retaining wall or similar structure forms part of the pool barrier on the low side of the pool, does it slope towards the pool by not more than 15 degrees to the vertical, and:

- have an effective height of at least 1200 mm, and an outside surface with all projections and indentations having a depth of 10 mm or more:
  - spaced at least 900 mm apart and at least 1100 mm below the top of the barrier; or
  - the upper surface of the projection or indentation sloping away from the pool by at least 60 degrees to the horizontal; or
- have an effective height of at least 2400 mm? (Refer to diagram)

# QUESTIONS

YES

NO

# DIAGRAM

## STEP 7 – ABOVE GROUND POOLS

**OBJECTIVE:** OBJECTS SUCH AS LADDERS, PUMPS AND FILTERS MUST NOT BE ABLE TO BE USED AS A CLIMBING SURFACE TO ACCESS THE ABOVE GROUND POOL.

Where the walls of the pool are used as a barrier are they at least 1200 mm high above ground level and do they restrict climbing within a 1200 mm clear zone?

## STEP 8 – STRENGTH AND RIGIDITY OF FENCING COMPONENTS

**OBJECTIVE:** BARRIERS SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO BE EASILY PUSHED OVER OR PHYSICALLY DAMAGED, REDUCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BARRIER.

Is the strength and rigidity of the barrier sufficient to resist the forces applied that could reasonably be expected during normal usage? This can be assessed by an average sized adult pushing against the barrier at critical points (e.g. half way between vertical posts and the highest point of the barrier).



# HELPFUL TIPS

If you answered 'NO' to any of the questions, here are some pointers to help you improve the safety of your pool or spa barrier. However, you should seek professional advice if you are unsure how to make your barrier safe and whether a building permit or other approvals are required.

## STEP 1 – BARRIER

SWIMMING POOLS AND SPAS MUST BE SURROUNDED BY A BARRIER RESTRICTING UNSUPERVISED ACCESS BY YOUNG CHILDREN.

- If you do not have one of the barrier types listed, obtain a building permit to install a barrier that meets the current requirements. Contact your local council or an appropriately registered building practitioner: you may search for one at [www.vba.vic.gov.au](http://www.vba.vic.gov.au)

## STEP 2 – DOORS OR GATES

ALL DOORS OR GATES MUST NOT BE ABLE TO BE OPENED BY YOUNG CHILDREN AND IF OPEN, DOORS AND GATES MUST RETURN TO THE CLOSED POSITION WHEN RELEASED.

- Install self-locking or self-latching devices on any doors or gates that form part of the barrier.
- Repair, replace or adjust any self-closing devices on doors or gates so the gate or door returns to the closed position.
- Repair or replace any doors or gates that are faulty.
- Raise the height or replace opening mechanisms for any self-locking or self-latching devices on doors or gates that are not at least 1500 mm above the ground or internal floor.

## STEP 3 – WINDOWS

WINDOWS THAT FORM PART OF A BARRIER MUST NOT PROVIDE A PATHWAY INTO THE POOL AREA.

- Repair, replace or adjust any catch, bolt or other window stops to ensure that the window cannot open more than 125 mm.
- Replace any fly screens that are not securely fitted.

## STEP 4 – FENCING (INCLUDING ASSOCIATED GATES)

FENCING MUST BE CONSTRUCTED AND MAINTAINED TO ENSURE THAT:

- **It cannot be used as a climbing device for young children to access the pool area; and**
- **No surfaces close to the fence can be used as a climbing platform; and**
- **Young children cannot climb under the fence to access the pool area.**
- Install fencing to at least 1200 mm high.
- Remove all climbable objects (e.g. furniture, toys, pot plants, BBQs) from the clear space around the pool.
- Replace or install mesh with holes not greater than 13 mm or, if greater than 13 mm but less than 100 mm:
  - Install mesh at least 2400 mm high; or
  - Install a fence at least 1800 mm high with a cranked top that meets the angle dimensions.
  - Install or repair strainer wires or rails at the top and bottom of the fence.
- Replace or fix fencing so that the vertical and horizontal rails, rods, wires or bracing meet the spacing dimension requirements.
- Reduce openings at the bottom of the fence to no bigger than 100 mm.
- Remove or fix any potential footholds or handholds to meet the spacing dimension or slope requirements.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

# HELPFUL TIPS

## STEP 5 – GATES AND FITTINGS

ALL GATES MUST NOT BE ABLE TO BE OPENED BY YOUNG CHILDREN, AND IF OPEN, DOORS AND GATES MUST RETURN TO THE CLOSED POSITION WHEN RELEASED.

- Install, fix or replace any gates that do not swing outwards, away from the pool.
- Repair, replace or adjust any self-locking or self-latching devices on gates that do not return the gate to the closed position.
- Replace any self-latching devices that can be adjusted without the use of tools.
- Raise the height or replace any self-locking or self-latching devices on gates that are not at least 1500 mm above the ground level.
- Raise the height or replace any gate latching and release devices so they meet the height requirements.
- Install a shield to prevent inadvertent opening from the outside of the barrier.

## STEP 6 – RETAINING WALLS

RETAINING WALLS MUST BE CONSTRUCTED SO THEY RESTRICT ACCESS BY YOUNG CHILDREN TO THE POOL AREA.

- Replace or re-build retaining walls so they meet the height, projections and indentations and slope dimensions, and restrict access to the pool area.

## STEP 7 – ABOVE GROUND POOLS

OBJECTS SUCH AS LADDERS, PUMPS AND FILTERS MUST NOT BE ABLE TO BE USED AS A CLIMBING SURFACE TO ACCESS THE ABOVE GROUND POOL.

- Remove all climbable objects (e.g. ladders, pumps, filters) from the clear space around the above ground pool.
- Install a barrier that meets the current regulations if the walls of your above ground pool are less than 1200 mm high above the ground level or if they allow climbing.

## STEP 8 – STRENGTH AND RIGIDITY OF FENCING COMPONENTS

BARRIERS SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO BE EASILY PUSHED OVER OR PHYSICALLY DAMAGED, REDUCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BARRIER.

- Replace or repair any part of the barrier that does not have sufficient strength or rigidity.