

Mermaid Tail: General Use Ban

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1.0 Background Information

What are mermaid tails and fins?

Mermaid tails have become a popular aquatic toy mainly targeted to children. Both feet go into a single fin that looks like a 'mermaid' tail which allows people to swim using a dolphin like movement. There are two types:

- One that is fully enclosed from the waist down (like the photo shown)
- The other is a single fin for the feet only without the extended 'tail'.

What dangers do mermaid tails pose?

These products are considered to be aquatic toys. Like all aquatic toys, safety precautions need to be taken whilst playing in and around the water. Be aware that some tails are fully enclosed from the waist down, effectively binding the legs together.

Research has found that mermaid tails/ fins that bind a child's legs together reduce their swimming ability by up to 70%, and make it difficult for them to balance and support themselves whilst standing or swimming in a pool - this may increase their risk of drowning.

Industry Support: AUSTSWIM – Media Release February 2016

AUSTSWIM has joined the call for a ban on mermaid tails in public aquatic facilities.

CEO Jennifer Schembri-Portelli said the mermaid tails greatly restricted natural movement of the body and impacted on the ability to gain and maintain a position of safe breathing.

"Drowning does not occur due to a lack of swimming skills, but results from a lack of ability to gain and maintain an effective body position for breathing," Mrs Schembri-Portelli said.

She urged parents to consider what it might feel like to have your legs tied together, with movement restricted in the fluid and unstable environment that is water.

"Consider the very short amount of time it takes for drowning to occur and how panicked and traumatised your child would be if they could not breathe or recover to a safer standing position," she said.

2.0 Community Aquatics Policy

The use of a Mermaid Tail, Mono-Fin and/or or similar style of leg binding apparatuses are not permitted for general recreational swimming use at a Community Aquatics facility.

The use of these devices is strictly limited to persons under the direct supervision of a qualified underwater sports coach, swimming coach or instructor. These devices are not permitted for general recreational or fitness use by individuals not under direct formalised supervision of a trained person.

