Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Heading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Front Cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contents Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Population Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Safety Score Range Comparison 00/01 Vs 07/08 Vs 09/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance Score Range Comparison 00/01 Vs 07/08 Vs 09/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>09/10 Section One Safety Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>09/10 Section Three Safety Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>09/10 Section Four Safety Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>09/10 Section Eleven Safety Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>09/10 Metro Vs Urban Pool Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>09/10 Platinum Vs All Pool Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Average Safety Score Comparison 07/08 Vs 09/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusions and Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Life Saving Victoria – Aquatic Risk Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Products and Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Glossary of Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principle Contacts Information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled by Andy Dennis
Aquatic Risk Services
Life Saving Victoria

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Introduction

Life Saving Victoria (est. 2002) is an initiative of the Royal Life Saving Society Australia Victoria Branch (est. 1904) and Surf Life Saving Victoria (est. 1947). It has the mission to prevent aquatic related death and injury in all Victorian communities and the vision that all Victorians will learn water safety, swimming and resuscitation, and be provided with safe beaches, water environments and aquatic venues.

Life Saving Victoria will achieve this by working with its Members, Communities, Educational Institutions, Governments, and other Organisations in the provision of best practice education, surveillance and rescue, training, and risk management services.

Scope

There are multiple aims of this industry report and these include:

i) To establish average scores for Safety Assessments completed in the financial year 09 / 10.
ii) To provide a break down of key sections and key items for comparison.
iii) To identify current areas of strength and those that require improvement.
iv) To compare safety scores achieved in 00/01 to 07/08 to 09/10.
v) To compare safety scores between urban and regional facilities.
vi) To compare safety scores between facilities on the Platinum program to those not on the Platinum Program.
vii) To provide the management and staff of assessed facilities, the opportunity to calculate and compare their performed against their peers.
History

The Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO) were initially released in August 1991 following extensive discussions and consultation. In January 1994 a reprint, which contained a number of minor amendments, was issued to the broader Australian aquatics market. In 1996, the 2nd Edition of the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation were released and since then, there have been a number of new or revised Guidelines released.

These Guidelines were developed through a series of working party groups, full working party discussions, consultation with facility operators, visits to aquatic facilities and through reference to national and international standards, resources and practices.

The formulation and introduction of risk management and emergency procedures are essential to normal operations and can provide any aquatic or leisure facility with the foundation for a successful and continued operation. To assist aquatic operators achieve this, the Royal Life Saving Society Australia introduced the Swimming Pool Safety Assessment in 1998, which in 2005 broadened into the current Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment (AFSA). This current Assessment encompasses not only the Water Safety aspects of safe facility operation, but also important issues such as OHS, Chemical Handling and Storage and Facility Design.

Since its introduction in 1998, Life Saving Victoria has led the way in terms of delivering professional advice to Aquatic operators. The Aquatic Risk Service department played a vital role in the provision of this advice, through consultation and the creation and continual development of additional assessment tools including the Platinum Pool Program, Facility Design Assessment, Supervision Assessment, Mystery Guest Assessments and Signage Assessments.

Population Information

The data compiled and used for the purpose of this report was obtained from the 54 completed Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments in the financial year 2009/10.

From this population:

i) 34 facilities are classed as Metropolitan and 19 are classed as Rural.

ii) 12 facilities are Platinum Pool accredited and 42 are not.


**Assessment Process**

The Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment audits an aquatic facility against the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (GSPO), the best practice standards for the operation of aquatic facilities, developed and published by the RLSSA. This detailed inspection process reviews all aspects of the operation of an aquatic facility in the following sections:

Section One – Administration  
Section Two – First Aid  
Section Three – Technical Operations  
Section Four – Facility Design  
Section Five – Spa Pools  
Section Six – Dive Pools  
Section Seven – Water Slides  
Section Eight – Wave Pools  
Section Nine – Rivers  
Section Ten – Water Features  
Section Eleven – Supervision  
Section Twelve – Learn to Swim

A percentage score provides the facility operators an indication of how well they are performing in relation to industry best practice. A detailed Safety Improvement Plan is then provided, to ensure practical and safe solutions are implemented for any potential risk that was identified.

Each question – or ‘Item’ as they are called in the AFSA checklist is given a score out of 5. A score of 3 or greater is classified as compliant and a score below 3 is classified as non-compliant. Each of these Items have been developed by the RLSSA, relating to particular aspects of safety which in the RLSSA’s experience are relevant, and are each related to recommendations made within the GSPO or other relevant standard or code of practice.

Only the sections in the assessment that are relevant to the individual facility are audited and the assessor will detail the facilities compliance or non-compliance against the criteria. Due to the number of facilities assessed (54) and the varied size and layout of each facility, the only sections that will bear any real relevance to this report are sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 and 12, with key sections broken down and analysed in detail.

The scores are then added together to provide percentage scores for each section and an overall safety percentage score for the assessment. The number of ‘compliant’ versus ‘non-compliant’ items is also provided for each section and for the overall assessment. Furthermore, key qualification items are highlighted throughout the report and percentage scores are provide for each section and the overall assessment.

Definition of Terms:  
Overall Safety Score – overall percentage score achieved  
Compliance Score – percentage score of items identified as ‘compliant’  
Qualification Items – percentage score of the key assessment criteria
The above graph shows a clear and significant improvement between the results achieved in the assessments completed in both 2007/08 and 2009/10 to those completed in 2000/01. The overall improvements shown come as a result of numerous factors, but ultimately come down to the fact that the expectations and requirements of Aquatic facility owners and managers have been formalised and documented and that the information has been made available to those people that are affected.

Other factors that have played a role in the overall improvement may include:
- an increase in public expectation and knowledge
- improved IT systems and communication
- improved training opportunities
- a better understanding of risk management practices
- increased understanding of the legal implications of non-compliance
- a more proactive role played by Insurance Authorities
- a more proactive role played by Council Authorities
- a more professional approach to and within the Industry
- an improved Industry specific support system

The trend towards improved scores and better standards of safety is required to remain at the forefront of any policy, activities or agendas that affect the operation and management of public facilities. This is the only way that the data will continue to move in a positive direction in the future. High expectations from the public and continual improvements within the Industry should continue to drive forward standards. Councils and individual facilities should aim and focus themselves towards their individual facility/s safety scores, with 90% as a minimum benchmark.
Compliance Score Range Comparison: 00/01 Vs 07/08 Vs 09/10

Whereas the first graph details the overall Safety Score ranges achieved by the Facilities, the graph above shows the number of facilities that have achieved scores that are considered to be ‘compliant’. On each item that is assessed, scores are given between 1 and 5. A compliant score on an individual item is a score of 3 or above out of 5.

The specific details shown in the graph above, as well as the general trends are supportive of the information that was provided in the initial graph on the previous page as there are clear correlations between the two graphs. This is to be expected as a result of the direct link between the information that is being analysed.

As expected the information shows a clear trend towards improved scores, with over 70% of facilities achieving score ranges of 90-100% compliancy. This is compared to under 60% of facilities in 07/08 and under 10% of facilities in 00/01. If facilities continue to improve at the current rate we will see more facilities moving into this upper bracket.

However, we must not forget that attention is required for those facilities that are scoring outside of the higher ranges. Unfortunately 09/10 shows an increase (on 07/08) in facilities that have achieved compliancy scores in the lowest ranges of <59% and 60-69%.

To help understand the implications of these scores in the future it may be necessary to provide formal industry standard benchmarks. These would be given at the time of the Final Assessment report being issued. These could be broken down in the overall score summaries and also provided for each section of the report and would help identify where the facilities have either performed or require improvement/s.

This way, along with the expectations detailed in the relevant Standards, Guidelines and Regulations there would be a formal recognition of the facilities achievements alongside the current percentages results that are provided. This information could assist in providing facility owners and managers with the opportunity to begin working on the areas of weakness whilst the assessment and feedback is fresh in their minds.
Administration

Section 1 Key Items

The Administration section of the Assessment audits the existence and content of facility documentation, such as Operations Manuals, Emergency Action Plans, Hire Agreements along with the existence of records including staff qualifications, incident reports and facility maintenance.

Overall scores for this section varied from 44.00% - 100.00%, with an average of 90.08% and a median of 98.55%.

Within this section the following items are relevant to either most or all of the facilities and therefore provide a sufficient quantity of data to allow for comparison.

Item 1.1 - Is there an Operations Manual?
Item 1.2 - Is there a current copy of the GSPO?
Item 1.3 - *Is the Operations Manual(s) facility-specific?
Item 1.4 - *Has an Emergency Action Plan (EAP), which includes sections for different scenarios and locations, been developed?
Item 1.5 - Has there been a full centre evacuation during operational hours within the last 12 months?
Item 1.6 - Are the Operations Manual and EAP regularly reviewed (within the last 12 months)?
Item 1.7 - Are all facility staff trained in the EAP?
Items 1.8 - Do all lifeguards hold a current recognised lifeguarding qualification?
Item 1.9 - *Do lifeguards undertake in-service training covering all areas of lifeguard skills?
Item 1.10 - How often do lifeguards undertake in-service training?
Item 1.11 - Do all first aiders hold a current recognised first aid qualification?
Item 1.14 - Do all staff who deal with chemicals have appropriate training?
Item 1.17 - Is the oxygen regulator serviced according to the manufacturers recommendation, or at least annually?
Item 1.18 - Are reports made for every incident involving life threatening hazards, and first aid?
Item 1.19 - Are incident report kept, either at the facility or at municipal premises, for an appropriate time?
Item 1.20 - Is there a system of internal facility and plant maintenance inspections?

*multiple criteria are assessed
Section 1: Percentage of Compliant Facilities

Facilities as a whole performed well in the Administration Section with an average score of over 90%. This is a significant improvement from the 83% achieved in the same section in the 07/08 assessments. However, it should be recognised that each facility is able to achieve 100% in this area without any tangible financial outlay. Good organisation, time management and document control is sufficient to achieve this 100% score, which 26 of the 54 assessed facilities (48%) managed this year.

Areas of strength include the formation of Operations Manuals and Emergency Action Plans (EAP), along with the maintenance inspections and the incident / first aid reporting. However, the implementation of the EAP remains an area of concern. This is because although the staff appear to have been trained in the EAP, less than 75% of facilities have evidence that staff have completed a live practise run through in the previous 12 months. This item is the lowest scoring in the section and is consistent with the findings from 07/08.

A second area of concern is the availability of staff qualifications. Items 1.8, 1.11 and 1.14 represent the evidence of qualifications being available (and current) for Lifeguarding, First Aid and Chemical training respectively. Although these items all achieved scores of approximately 90% and are not the lowest in the section, they are of vital importance and it is expected that the facilities should be achieving scores of 100% in each. If evidence of staff qualifications is not available at the facility, then the staff member/s should not be operational. It is the responsibility of the management to ensure that this is the case and this is clearly detailed in the GSPO.

Alongside the concern regarding the staff qualifications is the concern regarding the frequency and contents of the in-service training. This training is vital in ensuring that staff remain informed / educated and are able to perform their roles to the best of their ability, in line with the facilities procedures. In this instance however, the concern is based around the planning and reporting of the training as it appears that facilities are completing the training sessions in line with the Guidelines but that they are not able to provide any evidence of the dates, contents or attendance of those sessions. If recorded appropriately, simple annual training plans, registers and minutes are sufficient to overcome this problem and ensure that facilities have paper trails for all mock, live and in-service training sessions.
**Technical Operations**  
**Section 3 Key Items**

This section assesses the facilities policies and procedures regarding the handling and storage of dangerous goods and hazardous substances, the design and operation of the plant room and chemical stores, the recommended signage requirements for these areas and also the required personal protective equipment (PPE) for the chemicals stored on-site.

Overall scores for this section varied from 32.38% - 100.00%, with an average of 90.32% and a median of 96.43%.

Within this section the following items are relevant to either most or all of the facilities and therefore provide a sufficient quantity of data to allow for comparison.

Item 3.1 - Is pool water (including spa) monitored and maintained within regulations set by local statutory authorities?

Item 3.2 - Is there a plant operations room logbook or diary and are adjustments and treatments recorded?

Item 3.4 - Is the chemical storage area clean and tidy?

Item 3.5 - Are dry chemicals stored off the floor?

Item 3.6 - Are dry chemicals stored to prevent mixing?

Item 3.7 - Can liquids spill onto dry chemicals?

Item 3.8 - Are chemicals separated by the appropriate distances?

Item 3.9 - Has a risk assessment been done on the storage and use of dangerous goods and hazardous substances?

Item 3.10 - Are all chemical storage areas clearly labelled?

Item 3.11 - Are ‘Hazchem’ signs posted immediately outside plant rooms and at all entries to the facility?

Item 3.12 - Is correct signage specifying, for each chemical, the Hazchem code, class, and subsidiary risk, prominently displayed immediately outside storage areas and on storage containers?

Item 3.13 - Are Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) available for each chemical, including those used for cleaning?

Item 3.19 - Has a Hazardous Substances register been prepared?

Item 3.22 - Is an emergency procedure in place for chemical spills and leaks?

Item 3.23 - Is appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided in plant rooms and chemical handling areas?

Item 3.25 - Is signage displayed in plant rooms and chemical handling areas promoting the use of the required PPE?

Item 3.26 - Are all pipes, valves and pumps, controlling water and chemical feeds, clearly labelled?

Item 3.27 - Do pipe markers have the correct colour?

Item 3.29 - Is there signage prohibiting smoking and indicating restricted access (e.g. "Staff Only") at entrances to, and inside, the plant room and chemical storage areas?
Section 3: Percentage of Compliant Facilities

There has been a slight overall improvement of 3% in the Safety Score since the 07/08 assessments, with the facilities now averaging just over 90% in the Technical Operations section. This performance can be seen as positive overall, with some of the key issues identified in 07/08 having seen a general improvement.

Despite the positive overall scores, areas of concern do remain. These primarily include the i) physical technical areas, the ii) chemical identification and the iii) control documentation. Items 3.5-3.8 show there is incorrect storage of chemicals at 10% of facilities with item 3.8 being of particular concern. It indicates that over 20% of facilities are not complying with the required chemical separation distances for dangerous and hazardous goods. With the exception of a small number of facilities that do not have the physical space required to achieve these separation distances, all others should be aiming to achieve 100% in this items as well as on items 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7.

A 100% score should also be the expectation of the two vital safety items depicted in 3.22 and 3.23. These items cover the creation of an emergency procedure for spills and leaks and the suitable provision of PPE in plant rooms and chemical areas. These scores have improved since 07/08, but further improvement is required.

Safety Signage in this area has seen general improvements overall, although 25% of facilities were not compliant when it came to providing the correct signage for each individual chemical in storage (Item 3.12). This is a concern as the figure is significantly reduced from the 07/08 results where it was over 90%.

Also down from the 07/08 results and the biggest concern, is the fact that 20% of facilities were unable to provide evidence that the pool and spa water was being monitored and maintained within regulations. As with the in-service training problem identified in Section One, it again appears as though it’s not necessarily that the practical measures are not in place (i.e. the pool water is actually outside of the parameters), but that suitable documents are not in place to record and report the evidence and information that is required.

Other paperwork related items worth noting are the concerns that over 13% of facilities did not have suitable Material Safety Data Sheets available and the fact that over 25% of facilities did not have a formal Risk Assessment on the storage and use of dangerous goods and hazardous substances.
Facility Design
Section 4 Key Items

This section assesses the many aesthetic and functionality issues pertaining to the physical facility. This includes facility design and layout, safety signage, equipment, materials and changing rooms. Many of these items are an integral part of the facility structure. As such, risk management is an important in ensuring that existing hazards are controlled as much as possible until such a time that modifications / renovations can be made.

Overall scores for this section varied from 61.29% - 98.70%, with an average of 89.38% and a median of 91.03%.

Within this section the following items are relevant to either most or all of the facilities and therefore provide a sufficient quantity of data to allow for comparison.

Item 4.1 - Are exits from the facility clearly marked in any lighting conditions?

Item 4.3 - Are the pool and its surrounds sufficiently lit?

Item 4.5 - Is shading (sun protection) available in wet areas?

Item 4.8 - Are fittings and fixtures flush with pool walls and floor?

Item 4.11 - Are there sufficient depth markers?

Item 4.12 - Are depth markers clearly visible from within the pool?

Item 4.13 - Are depth markers clearly visible from the concourse?

Item 4.14 - Is there sufficient signage identifying deep water, shallow water, particularly at pool entry points?

Item 4.15 - Is deep water / shallow water signage compliant with the National Aquatic & Recreation Signage Manual?

Item 4.16 - Is all "Do Not Dive" signage compliant with the National Aquatic & Recreation Signage Style Manual?

Item 4.17 - In water under 1.8 metres in depth, is do not dive signage displayed?

Item 4.19 - Are there barriers, appropriate signage or other management measures to control traffic on the concourse adjacent to deep water?

Item 4.25 - Are backstroke flags present when lap swimming is being conducted?

Item 4.26 - Do backstroke flags contrast against background?

Item 4.32 - Is the concourse width, without obstructions or fittings, 3.0 metres or greater?

Item 4.33 - Does any equipment stored on the concourse, obstruct lifeguards sight lines?

Item 4.34 - Is the concourse free of any trip and entrapment hazards?

Item 4.36 - Are General Power Outlets (GPO's) located at least 3.0m from the pool(s)?

Item 4.39 - Do steps provided for entry and exit to pool(s) or its surrounds have handrails that conform to the access standards?

Item 4.42 - Are change room floors, including those in the showers and shower walls, of a slip-resistant nature?

Item 4.44 - Is the water temperature in hand basins and showers no more than 43 degrees Celcius?
Section Four differs slightly from the other sections, in that the rectification of certain existing non-compliance items into compliance item may well require large sums of capitol investment and large amounts of man hours. This is even the case for somewhat trivial matters. For example, to increase a pool concourse from a width of 2.5m to the recommended minimum of 3.0m has the potential to cost tens of thousands of dollars alongside the loss of income incurred through the facility closure required to complete the works. It is recognised that the standards, recommendations and best practise information are in place for a reason, but it is also recognised that sometimes physical rectifications are neither practical nor possible. In these cases alternative risk management measures should be implemented.

The five (red) highlighted items are all examples of physical and structural items that have often been found to be non-compliant at various facilities. Along with the aforementioned concourse widths, are the availability of shade in wet areas, the correct installation of fixtures and fittings and the installation of GPO’s and step handrails. These indicate that a renewed focus and attention to detail is required during the building of new facility and the redevelopment of current facilities.

The issues identified above are the real reason why this section in the report scores the lowest mean and median figures for any section. It is also the lowest scoring section regardless of whether you are a Platinum Pool facility or not and regardless of whether your facility is metropolitan or rural facility.

The items that tend to be relatively easy to manage and maintain have performed well. This is partially as a result of the internal maintenance management items that were highlighted in Section One. These issues include lighting, emergency exits, equipment storage and changing rooms. Signage issues that are covered from item 4.11 through to item 4.17 have also seen a considerable improvement since the 07/08 report although these do still require further attention and can be considered one of the items that facilities should be scoring very highly on.
**Supervision**  
**Section 11 Key Items**

This section assesses issues such as the lifeguard deployment criteria, supervision positions, lines of sight, patrol details and rescue equipment. Overall scores for this section varied from 47.14% - 100.00%, with an average of 91.58% and a median of 98.82%.

Within this section the following items are relevant to either most or all of the facilities and therefore provide a sufficient quantity of data to allow for comparison.

- **Item 11.1** - Are at least two staff members on duty at any one time?
- **Item 11.2** - Are there sufficient lifeguards supervising the pool area?
- **Item 11.3** - Are all pools adequately supervised at the time of the assessment?
- **Item 11.4** - *What criteria are considered when deploying lifeguards?*
- **Item 11.5** - Are guarding positions sufficient to observe any part of the pool(s) without excessive reflection from the water’s surface?
- **Item 11.6** - Is the lifeguard uniform suited to the performance of lifeguard duties, including aquatic rescue, easily recognized by customers and staff, and distinguishable from uniforms worn by other staff?
- **Item 11.7** - Are isolated areas sufficiently supervised?
- **Item 11.8** - Do lifeguards maintain supervision of program participants?
- **Item 11.9** - Do lifeguards have sufficient lines of sight to the pools it is their responsibility to supervise?
- **Item 11.10** - Do lifeguards vary duties and take sufficient breaks to maintain vigilant supervision?
- **Item 11.11** - Are effective and sufficient emergency methods of communication available?
- **Item 11.12** - Is there signage at the facility entrance which specifies the conditions of use of the facility?
- **Item 11.13** - Is there signage that encourages responsible behaviour?
- **Item 11.14** - Is there signage that encourages active parental supervision in appropriate areas?
- **Item 11.15** - Is the rule that children under a certain age (under 10) be supervised by guardians over a specified age (16 or older) enforced?
- **Item 11.17** - Is there rescue equipment located on the concourse in reasonable reach of lifeguards (i.e. less than 10 seconds)?

*multiple criteria are assessed*
Section 11: Percentage of Compliant Facilities

The safety implications of the supervision of any Aquatic Facility are amongst the most serious that facility owners and managers will make. As such it is not a surprise that this section achieved the highest scores overall and that this mirrors the results found in 08/09.

This is particularly the case with the practical elements found within this section. These Items include the supervision of all pool areas, the supervision of program participants and the positioning of the guards to avoid glare and were all items that scored over 95%. Closely behind these were other practical elements, which include at least two staff on duty at any time and the correct positioning to maintain a clear line of sight which both scored over 90%.

Management systems also appear to be performing well which enable the staff teams to complete their jobs appropriately. These system include the provision of uniform, breaks and duty changes and the supervision of isolated areas. Furthermore facility signage, rescue equipment and staff communication methods all scored highly.

The key concern for this area is the low score on item 11.4. This item refers to the evidence of the relevant criteria being included during the decision making process that establishes the lifeguard numbers and supervision protocols. Only by undertaking this risk management process can a facility use the information it produces to ensure and document that sufficient levels of supervision are in place at all times across all areas of water. This figure was highlighted in the findings of the 07/08 report and is highlighted again here.

Four drowning deaths have occurred in Victoria since the Millennium. Furthermore this drowning is now the most common cause of avoidable death for toddlers. It is the view of Life Saving Victoria that all drowning deaths are preventable and that this deployment document and the risk management approach it is based on are vital to ensuring the best understanding possible of a facility and its supervision needs.
Average Facility Score Comparisons: Metro Facilities Vs Rural Facilities

Of the population included in this report, Metropolitan facilities account for 35 of the 54 assessed. The additional 19 pools are classified as rural. This grouping/labelling has been based on the Council classification status issued by the Municipal Association of Victoria. They are the representative and advocacy body responsible for the 79 Councils in Victoria.

When comparing the 07/09 to the 09/10 data (above) on Metropolitan and Rural facilities it is interesting to note that the overall safety score for the metro facilities has increased by just over 4%, whilst the overall rural facilities score has remained relatively unchanged with only a small reduction of just under 1%. The current safety scores (Metropolitan 94.84% and Rural 81.80%) are now further apart from one another than they were two years ago as well as from ten years ago.

This shows positive signs for the metro facilities with higher scores overall as well as in each individual section (except Section 12) compared to the rural facilities. The reduction in scores for the rural facilities is the most obvious concern along with the fact that they are even further behind the metropolitan facilities then they were in 07/08. The metropolitan facilities have achieved average scores of over 90% in each section including facility design. As mentioned in the Section Four of this report, the achievement of 90% in some areas may not be possible for all facilities as it is based on the physical design and structure of the facilities and the large amounts of capital funding that would be required to rectify some of the associated non-compliances.

The second key concern is that in the space of one year only 19 rural facilities have undergone the external Life Saving Victoria safety assessment process. It is recommended by the RLSSA, the Coroner and Life Saving Victoria that an independent assessment is complete at each Aquatic Facility at least every other year. This will be discussed further in the conclusions and summary section of this report.
It is not a surprise that the 12 Platinum Pool accredited facilities achieved higher scores compared to the Non Platinum facilities in each Section of the assessment as well as in the three overall averages. This is because these pools are required to achieve specific minimum standards throughout the assessment process in order to achieve the accreditation and the endorsement of Life Saving Victoria.

However, the data above provides us with additional information when put into context. This is because on average the Platinum pools are no newer, more expensive or bigger than any of the other facilities that were assessed. They also do not necessarily have more money to invest or more staff to operate the facilities. This information explains that these aforementioned factors are not the most important ones when it comes to safe facility management and that they do not necessarily lead to either success or improved scores.

What these facilities do have, is a full facility commitment to obtaining best practise, a desire for continual improvement and an ongoing and open relationship with Life Saving Victoria. Alongside their annual AFSA inspections these Platinum Pool facilities are also subject to Internal auditing, Supervision Assessments and Mystery Guest Visits. Through this chosen commitment and ongoing relationship, it can be said that they are provided with (and obtain) the highest level of understanding of the assessment criteria and best practise standards. There is also the tendency for them to have a better overall understanding of the underlying requirements and expectations therein.

This information enables them to make the best and most informed decisions possible with regards to the safety of their facility, staff and patrons. It affects each area of operation that is assessed and enables the highest possible scores to be achieved on an ongoing basis. Life Saving Victoria commend these facilities for undergoing this continual process and the scores detailed above are a credit to their work and the programs success.

Note: Additional information on the requirements of the Platinum Pool award can be found at the end of the document. Alternatively it is available on the Life Saving Victoria Website at www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au
The data above is evidence of a clear and consistent trend towards improved facility scores in 09/10. It shows an overall score increase of just over 2.5% as well as improvements in Sections One, Three and Four and relative consistency in Section Eleven.

Section Four is now the section which achieves the lowest score. This should be expected as some of the items it covers are the hardest to rectify once they have been identified as non-compliant. It is positive to see the facilities achieving mean average scores of over 90% in four of the areas above and these scores are a good benchmark for all facilities as we move into 10/11.

The improvements seen in Section One are the most pleasing as they represent a better appreciation of the safety needs of facilities and an improved overall mindset of facility owners, management and staff. These changes have occurred in a relatively short space of time and can only be beneficial to staff, patrons and management as they show evidence of a more proactive approach to safety and the implementation of more preventative measures.

These measures are vital if we are to reduce the number of incidents and injuries that currently occur within leisure facilities and the associated levels of litigation that accompany them. The responsibility remains with all those involved in leisure facilities to continue to develop and improve. This should assist in the assurance that all real and potential risks are considered and understood enabling the appropriate courses of action to be completed in line with the International Risk Management Standard AS/NZ/ISO:31000 (2009) in order to make all aquatic facilities as safe as is possible for staff and patrons alike.
Conclusions and Summary

The overall scores achieved during the 09/10 facility assessments are positive and reinforce the good work being undertaken throughout the Industry. They represent an improved level of understanding of aquatic safety measures and an increased awareness of the importance of best practise standards and increased expectations.

Along with the areas of strong performance, various items of improvement have been identified throughout the process. In addition, other key items have been highlighted and commented on, where it is recommended that facilities aim for and achieve the highest compliancy scores available and the possibility of these items being supported by minimum Industry Benchmarks.

The key concern that remains is the large number of facilities that are not undergoing a safety assessment on an annual or biannual basis. As highlighted in the Population Information Section the 09/10 figures in this report are based on all 54 Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments that were completed in the financial year.

This figure accounts for only 15% of the approximate 350 public pools in Victoria. When you add this to the figures from last year we are able to establish that around 30% of facilities were assessed across a two year period. However, we must also take into consideration the fact that a large percentage of these facilities (such as the Platinum Pools) were assessed in both of these years. Once this has been done we are able to identify that only approximately 20% of all Victorian facilities were independently assessed in line with the recommendations made by the RLSSA, the Coroner and Life Saving Victoria. This leaves around 80% of the States facilities that have not completed this recommended process.

So whilst we are able to say that the facilities that have undergone the process have shown positive scores and general improvements on previous years, we must also acknowledge that this is only representative of a small percentage of the overall facilities in the State. We need to understand and establish whether there is the need to readdress and re-evaluate the assessment processes that we offer and how we offer them as well as obtain a better understanding of the three points below:

a) Why are the facilities not undergoing this key process?

b) What can we do to further encourage the facilities to undertake this process?

c) Is there the need to enforce these standards and the associated assessment process?
Life Saving Victoria – Aquatic Risk Services
Victorians have a great affinity with the water, be it at the beach, a Council or backyard swimming pool, a lake or a river. These aquatic environments provide Victorians with a lot of fun, exercise and sport. However they can also be dangerous with 35 people drowning in Victoria in 2008-09. For every person who drowns, unfortunately there are also a number of near drowning and other severe injuries sustained.

Life Saving Victoria’s Aquatic Risk Services team have been providing expert advice to both commercial and private pool owners and operators for nearly two decades. They have become known as the Industry’s Centre of excellence for Water Safety who are able to assist in all aspects of Aquatic Safety from facility design to ongoing consultancy and safety assessments.

Products and Services

- **Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments**
The Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment (AFSA) audits an aquatic facility against the best practice standards set out in the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation. This detailed inspection will review key aspects of operation including facility design, administration, technical operation, first aid, programming and supervision. Following the Assessment a Safety Improvement Plan is provided to ensure that safe and practical solutions can be implemented to manage and understand any risks that have been identified. A follow up consultation visit is also completed to discuss the findings of the assessment and the implementation of the Improvement Plan. Finally, a performance score is provided as an indication of the facilities operational standards against best practice.

- **Platinum Pool Program**
The Platinum Pool Program is an award designed to recognise aquatic facilities that take a proactive approach to risk management alongside a commitment to the continual improvement of the highest levels of aquatic safety and service provision. Through the successful achievement of an AFSA audit, a supervision audit, a mystery guest visit and consultation with Life Saving Victoria, the facility can be considered as a ‘centre of excellence’ within the aquatic industry. Lifesaving Victoria will endorse and support the successful facilities with ongoing consultation and will provide the facilities with Platinum Pool Program marketing and promotional material for display.

- **Pool Design Desktop Assessments**
Desk top assessments can be conducted on proposed developments, such as new real-estate and urban development’s which will incorporate aquatic environments. Taking a strategic Risk Management approach, the assessment includes providing expert water safety and facility design information to councils, landscape architects, developers and builders. The service is available before or during the design process, ensuring that any potential risks are address prior to implementation and that the facility design is compliant to the current standards and regulations.

- **Mystery Guest Visits**
The Mystery Guest Visit is an ideal independent analysis of operational practices and staff behavior within an aquatic facility. While visiting the facility, the assessor - while acting as a normal patron - will make observations on such things as lifeguard patrol methods, communication efficiencies, team work and customer communications. This visit will provide the operator with an accurate insight of the standards of
facility management from a customer perspective. The assessment feedback will compare the standards in place against those detailed in the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation in order to provide the operator with an operational benchmark.

- **Supervision Assessments**
  The Supervision Assessment is a formal in depth assessment of the policies and procedures that govern the supervision of the facilities patrons. It places an emphasis on the measures taken by staff at all levels to ensure that a proactive approach is being taken to ensure that everything possible is being done to create a safe environment for aquatic activities.

- **Signage Assessments**
  The Signage Assessment is a service that provides detailed advice on signage design, content, installation and location specific to an individual facility. This essential aspect of risk management will ensure that signage provision within the facility is in line and compliant with current industry standards.

- **Management Consultation**
  This service is for any facility or risk management processes that do not clearly fit into one of the predetermined header groups. It can cover any aquatic risk related item/s that clients and pool management teams require additional support or consultation services with. This could include the review of facility operational paperwork to the completion of a risk management study.
Glossary of Terms / Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSV</td>
<td>Life Saving Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLSSA</td>
<td>Royal Life Saving Society Australia</td>
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<td>GSPO</td>
<td>Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFSA</td>
<td>Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Assessment Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Score</td>
<td>Overall percentage score achieved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compliance Score</td>
<td>Percentage score of items identified as ‘compliant’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualification Items</td>
<td>Percentage score of the key assessment criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>Located inside the greater Melbourne Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Located outside the greater Melbourne Area</td>
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