2011/12

Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment Victorian State of Industry Report
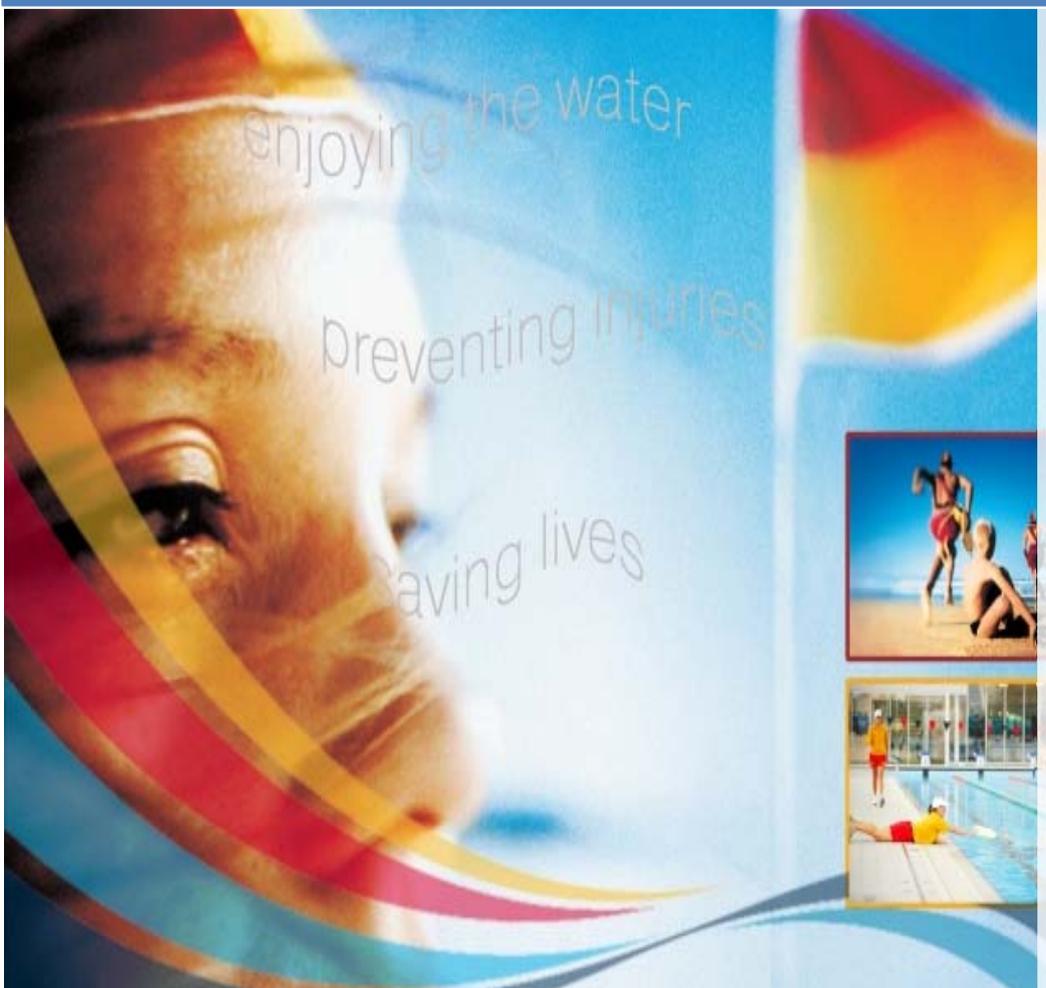
Life Saving Victoria

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

AFSA	Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment
Compliance Score	Percentage score of items identified as 'compliant'
GSPO	Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations
Item	Assessment question
LSV	Life Saving Victoria
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
Metropolitan	Located inside the Greater Melbourne Area
Qualification Items	Percentage score of the key assessment criteria
Regional	Located outside the Greater Melbourne Area
RLSSA	Royal Life Saving Society Australia
Safety Score	Overall percentage score achieved

1 Background

Introduction

Life Saving Victoria (LSV) (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.

LSV 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.

Objectives

The key objectives of this industry report are:

i)   To establish mean scores for Safety Assessments completed in the financial year 2011/12.
ii)   To provide a breakdown of key sections and key items for comparison.
iii)   To identify current areas of strength and those requiring improvement.
iv)   To compare Safety Scores achieved in2000/01, 2007/08, 2009/10 and 2011/12.
v)   To compare Safety Scores between metropolitan and regional facilities.
vi)   To compare Safety Scores between facilities on the Platinum Pool program and those not on the program.
vii)   To provide the management and staff of assessed facilities the opportunity to calculate and benchmark their performance against their peers.

History

The Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO) were first released in August 1991 following extensive discussion 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 GSPO was 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 (RLSSA) 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 facility design.

Population Information

The data used for the purpose of this report was obtained from the 70 Aquatic Facility Safety Assessments completed in Victoria in the 2011/12 financial year.

From this population:

   i)   39 facilities were classed as metropolitan and 31 were classed as regional.
   ii)   20 facilities were Platinum Pool accredited and 50 were not.

Assessment Process

The AFSA audits an aquatic facility against the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (GSPO), the best practice standards for the operation of aquatic facilities. This detailed inspection process reviews key 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

Each question – or item– in the AFSA checklist is given a score between 0 and 15. A score above half the available range (i.e. 3 out of 5 *or* 9 out of 15) is classified as compliant and a score below is classified as non-compliant. Each of these items has been developed by RLSSA, relating to particular aspects of safety which in the RLSSA's experience are relevant. Each item is related to recommendations made within the GSPO or other relevant standard or code of practice. The score ranges used in the assessment have been adjusted since the 2009/10 AFSA report. Previously all scores were given a score between 0 and 5. In this AFSA, items may be scored between 0-5, 0-10 or 0-15. These adjustments have been introduced to add weighting to the overall process and this change is therefore likely to have an impact on the report findings, making comparison with previous AFSA reports somewhat problematic.

Only the sections in the assessment that are relevant to the individual facility are audited and the assessor will detail the facility's compliance or non-compliance against the criteria. Due to the number of facilities assessed (70) and the varied size and layout of each facility, the only sections that are applicable to all facilities and therefore relevant to this report are sections 1, 3, 4 and 11, which will be analysed in more detail.

For each of the section, the scores are aggregated to determine percentage compliance scores and provide an overall safety percentage score. The percentage score provides the facility operators with an indication of how well they are performing in relation to industry best practice. The number of 'compliant' versus 'non-compliant' items is also provided for each section as well as for the overall assessment.

Key Qualification Items are highlighted throughout the report and percentage scores are provided for each section as well as the overall assessment.

2 Safety Score and Compliance Score comparison

Comparison of Safety Score range

Between 2000/01 and 2007-2012 there has been a major improvement in mean Safety Scores among facilities, with a far greater proportion of facilities achieving scores above 90% (Figure 1). In the past three years at least half of the assessed facilities achieved an overall Safety Score above 90%. However, from 2009/10 to 2011/12 there was a decrease in the proportion of facilities scoring above 90% (down from 70% to 51%). Seventy-eight percent of facilities scored above 80%, a reduction of 7% from 2009/10.

**Figure 1 Range of Safety Scores achieved per year**
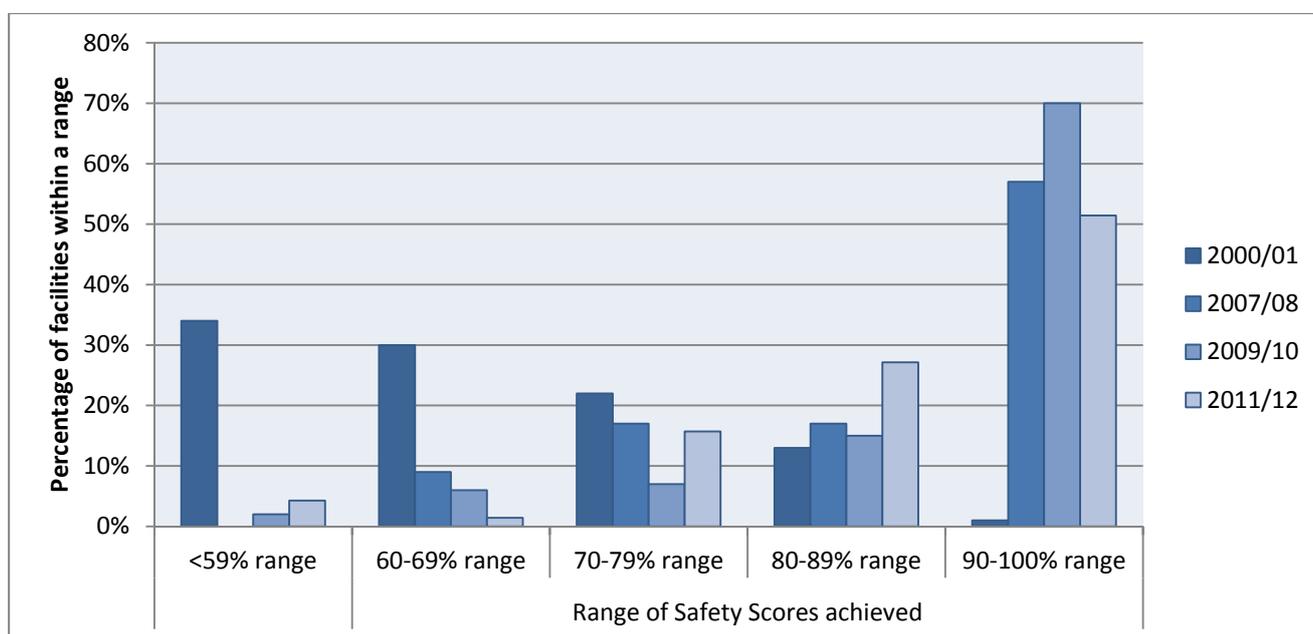
It is a concern that there has been a reduction in the number of facilities achieving the top range (above 90%) between 2009/10 and 2011/12. It is also concerning that only 50% of facilities overall are within this bracket. One factor that may have contributed towards this trend is that there was an increase in the number of facilities that were going through the process for the first time, and that historically the statistics have shown that facilities do not perform particularly well during their first assessment. This trend may continue into the future as more facilities are encouraged to undertake the process. Furthermore, the new AFSA score weightings may have impacted on scores in the 2011/12 period.

Facilities are strongly recommended to complete the AFSA process on a regular basis. This will enable them to stay informed of new or changing industry standards and practices and will ensure a continual relationship with the team at LSV.

Comparison of Compliance Score Range

Figure 2 shows the Compliance Scores achieved by the facilities. Each question – or item, as they are named in the AFSA checklist – is given a score between 0 and 15. A score above half the available range (i.e. 3 out of 5 *or* 9 out of 15) is classified as compliant and a score below is classified as non-compliant.

Figure 2 Range of Compliance Scores achieved per year
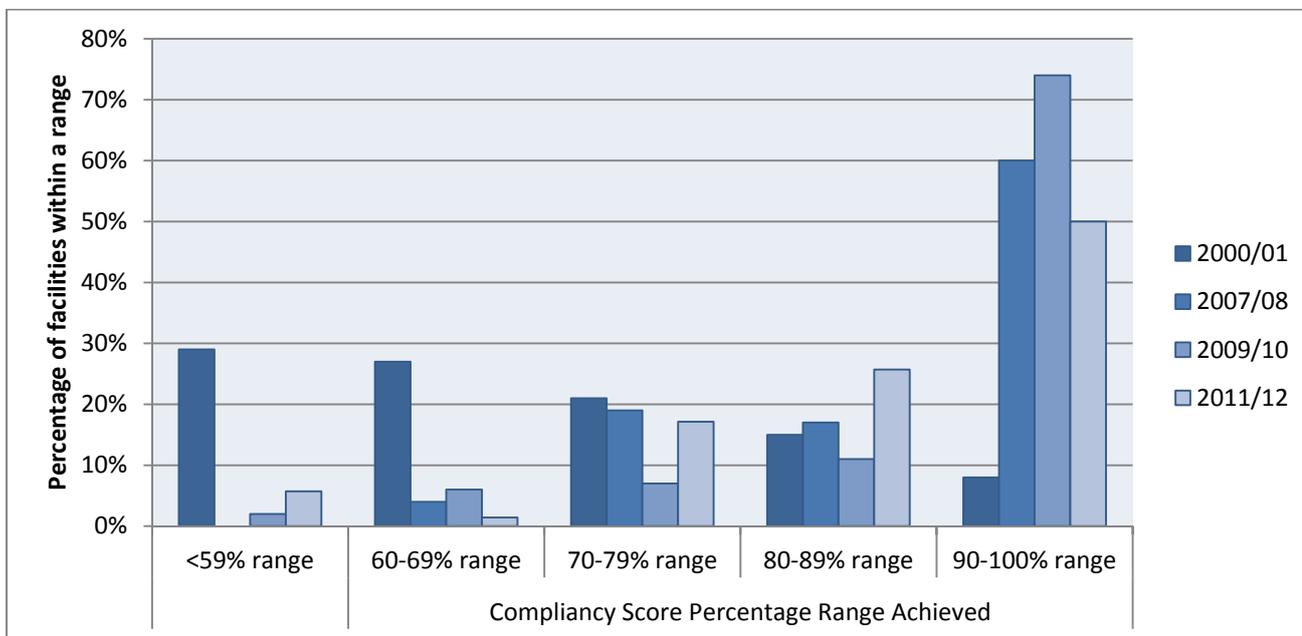
The Compliance Scores shown in Figure 2 correlate with the Safety Score data in Figure 1. This is to be expected as a result of the direct link between the information that is being analysed. Again, the proportion of facilities with Compliance Scores over 90% was well above the 2000/01 proportion of 8%. However, there has been a decline in the proportion of facilities scoring above 90% in 2011/12 compared with assessments from 2009/2010 and 2007/08. All 35 facilities that received Safety Scores above 90% also obtained Compliance Scores above 90% demonstrating the positive correlation.

As with the Safety Scores it is a concern that there is a reduction in the number of facilities achieving the top range (above 90%). It is also concerning that only 50% of facilities overall are within this bracket.

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

3 Section breakdown

Section 1 – Administration Key Items

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

Overall scores for this section varied from 25% - 100%, with a mean of 85.50% and a median of 90.89%.

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

Item 1.1 - Is there a current copy of the GSPO?

Item 1.2 - Is there an Operations Manual?

Item1.3 - *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 –*Is there a report form for every incident involving life threatening hazards, and first aid?

Item 1.20 - Are incident report kept, either at the facility or at municipal premises, for an appropriate time?

Item 1.21 - Is there a system of internal facility and plant maintenance inspections?

Item 1.22 - What is the frequency of the internal maintenance inspections?

*multiple criteria are assessed

Facilities as a whole performed well in the Administration Section with a mean score across all items of 85.50%. This is an improvement from the 83% achieved in the same section in the 2007/08 assessments, but a slight decline from the 90% achieved in 2009/10. Twenty-two of the 70 assessed facilities achieved 100% for section 1. It should be recognised that every facility is able to achieve 100% in this section without any tangible financial outlay. Good organisation, time management and document control is sufficient to achieve this.

Figure 3 Mean Compliance Scores across all facilities by Item in Section 1 – Administration
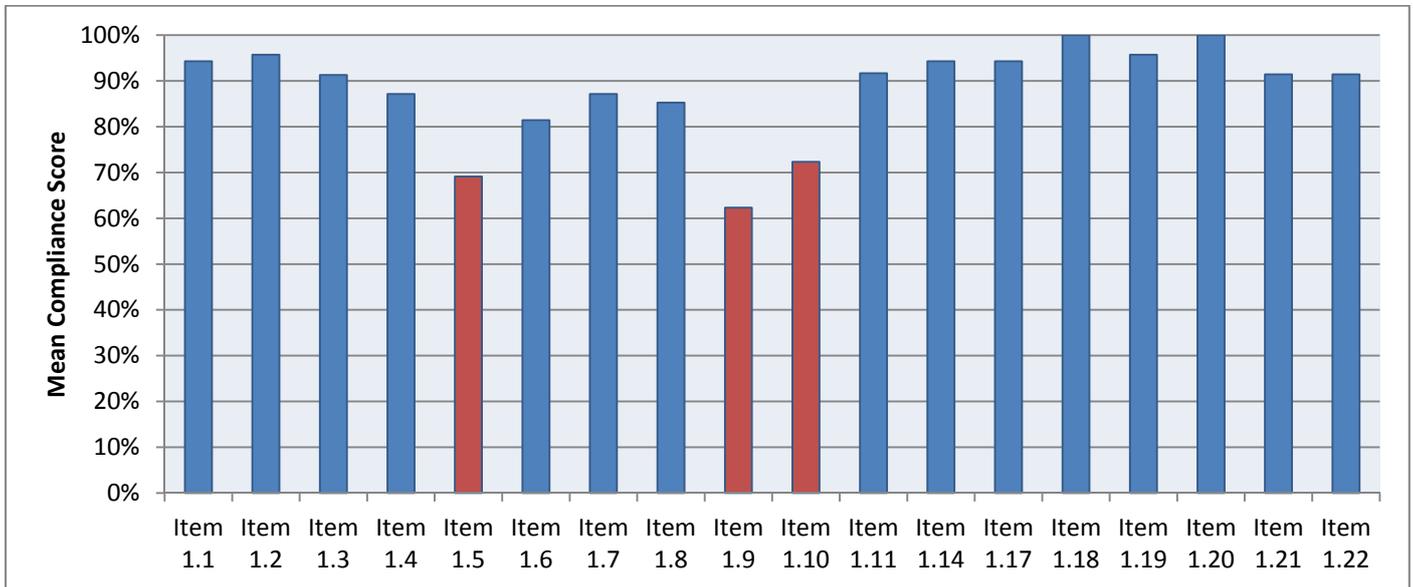
Areas of strength were items 1.18 (reporting all first aid incidents) and 1.20 (having systems in place for internal facility and plant maintenance inspections), each scoring 100% compliance (Figure 3). Other top performing items were 1.2 (holding a current copy of the GSPO) and 1.19 (keeping incident reports for an appropriate length of time).

Items highlighted in red were the poorest performing across all facilities, scoring below 80%. The poorest performer was item 1.9 (lifeguards undertaking in-service training covering all areas of lifeguard skills - *content*), followed by 1.5 (performing a full centre evacuation) and 1.10 (in-service training for lifeguards - *frequency*). This highlights a need for facilities to focus on appropriate and ongoing lifeguard professional development. In this instance however, there are situations where facilities are stating that they have completed the training session, but are not able to provide any evidence of the dates, contents or attendance at those sessions. If planned appropriately, a simple annual training plan with an associated attendance register and agenda would be sufficient to overcome this problem. It would ensure that facilities have evidence of all mock, live and in-service training sessions that take place. Staging a full annual centre evacuation during operational hours (item 1.5) is a WorkSafe requirement, which should be completed and recorded at all facilities.

Another significant area of concern is the availability (or lack thereof) of evidence of appropriate staff qualifications. Facilities should be scoring 100% in both items 1.8 and 1.11, rather than the reported scores of 85% (item 1.8) and 91% (item 1.11). If evidence of staff qualifications is not available at the facility, then the staff member/s should not be operational. It is a combined responsibility of the management and staff members to ensure that this is the case.

Section 3 – Technical Operations Key Items

The Technical Operations 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 47.65% - 100.00%, with a mean of 85.14% and a median of 89.51%.

Within this section, the following items are relevant to either most or all 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 stored 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 3.28 - *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?

*multiple criteria are assessed

Mean Compliance Scores in the Technical Operations Section declined by 5% on 2009/10 scores, down to 85%. Two items (3.1 and 3.22) scored 100%, indicating that pool (including spa) water is monitored and maintained within regulations and that emergency procedures are in place for chemical spills and leaks (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Mean Compliance Scores across all facilities by Item in Section 3 – Technical Operations
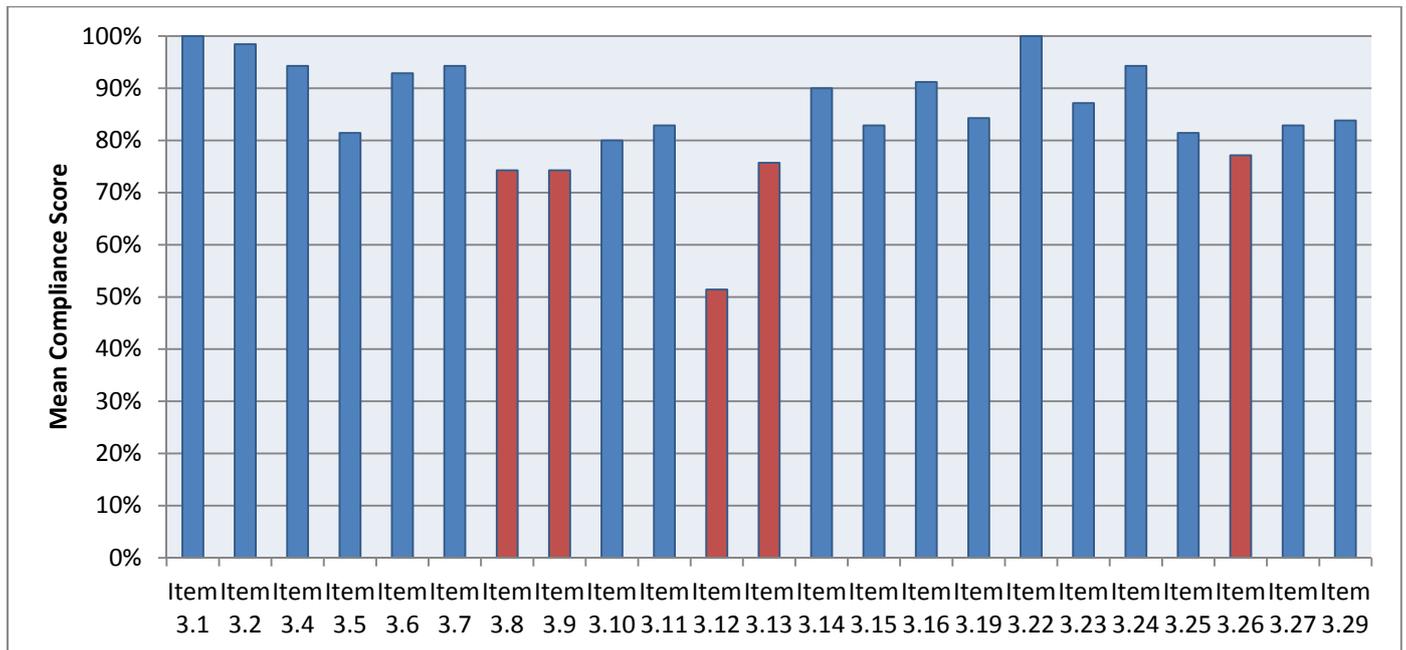
A number of items received a mean Compliance Score below 80%, mainly concerning:

i)   the physical technical areas,
ii)   the chemical identification, and
iii)   the MSDS control documentation.

More specifically, these relate to appropriate storage of chemicals and risk assessments, correct signage of chemicals, labelling of chemical feeds and the availability of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). Correct signage of individual chemicals (including Hazchem codes, chemical class and UN Numbers if applicable) was the area of most concern, with a mean Compliance Score of 51% (item 3.12). This is even more concerning as the figure is well down on the 2007/08 results (over 90%) and the 2009/10 results (over 75%).

Both staff and contractors are exposed to these risks and improvements are needed. A lack of knowledge and understanding is highlighted and it is recommended that more facility staff undergo formal training in this area to drive the necessary improvements. Facilities are scoring above 90% in item 1.4 which covers 'appropriate training' for staff dealing with chemicals. It may be necessary to adjust this requirement to 'formal training' if there is no clear evidence of improvements.

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Section 4 – Facility Design Key Items

The Facility Design 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 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 55.73% - 98.42%, with a mean of 87.71% and a median of 90.81%.

Within this section, the following items are relevant to either most or all 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 AS/NZ2416:2010 or the National Aquatic & Recreation Signage Manual?

Item 4.16 - In water under 1.8 metres in depth, is do not dive signage displayed?

Item 4.17 - Is all "Do Not Dive" signage compliant with AS/NZ2416:2010 or the National Aquatic & Recreation Signage Style Manual?

Item 4.19 - Are Toddler and Learner pools located away from 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, a minimum of 2.0 metres?

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 Celsius?

*multiple criteria are assessed

In 2011/12, the mean Compliance Score for Facility Design (87.71%) remained consistent with the 2009/10 mean (89.38%). Two items scored 100% across all facilities: that there is sufficient lighting (item 4.3) and that change room floors are of a slip-resistant nature (item 4.42) (Figure 5). These scored similarly high in 2009/10, with some other previously high scoring items showing a decline. Of most concern is item 4.34, which decreased from over 98% to 85%, because 10 of 55 eligible facility concourses were not free of trip and entrapment hazards.
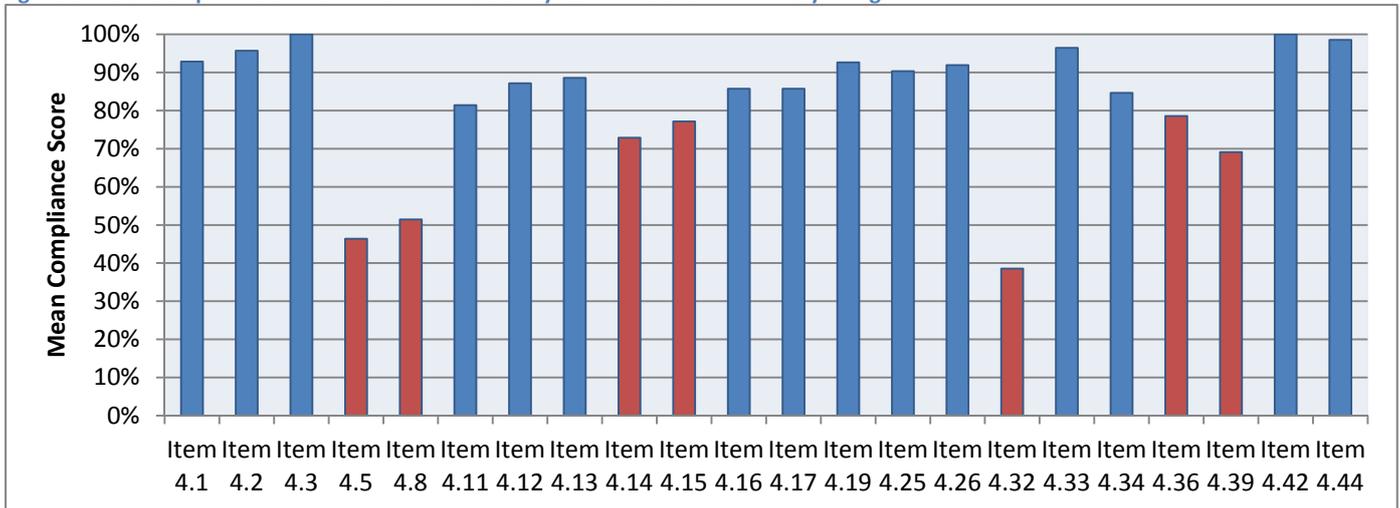
The majority of the red highlighted items are all examples of physical and structural items that have often been found to be non-compliant at various facilities. Unfortunately, the rectification of some of these non-compliance items may require large sums of capital investment and extensive man hours. This is even the case for somewhat trivial matters. For example, to increase a pool concourse from a width of 1.5m to the recommended minimum of 2.0m (this requirement has been reduced from 3.0m) there is a potential cost of tens of thousands of dollars alongside the loss of income incurred through facility closure while works are completed. It is recognised that the standards, recommendations and best practice information are in place for a reason, but it is also acknowledged that sometimes physical rectifications are neither practical nor reasonable. In these cases alternative risk management measures should be implemented

Other items of concern which are unchanged from 2009/10 are the availability of shade in wet areas (item 4.5), the correct installation of fixtures and fittings (item 4.8) and the installation of GPO's (item 4.36) and step handrails (item 4.39). These indicate that even greater focus and attention to detail is required during the building of new facilities and the redevelopment of current facilities. Whilst the rectification of some items is not physically or financially viable, areas such as safety signage should be relatively easy to remedy. Pool signage should be consistent with AS2416:2010 or the National Aquatic & Recreation Signage Manual (item 4.14 and 4.15).

The issues identified above are the probable cause of section four remaining the lowest scoring (both mean and median) within the whole Safety Assessment. This appears to be regardless of facility variables such as location, management type or assessment frequency.

Section 11 – Supervision Key Items

The Supervision 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 25.33% - 100.00%, with a mean of 92.52% and a median of 99.41%.

Within this section, the following items are relevant to either most or all 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

The mean overall Compliance Score for Supervision in 2011/12 of 92.52% was consistent with the 2009/10 score (91.58%). Thirty-two of the 70 assessed facilities (46%) received Compliance Scores of 100% in section eleven, with a further 12 facilities scoring above 90%. Two items (11.5 and 11.6) received 100% across all facilities, signifying that lifeguard uniforms are consistently appropriate for lifeguard roles and that lifeguard's positioning at pools are sufficient to observe any part of the pool(s) (Figure 6). Other well-performing items (11.3 and 11.11) indicate that overall, supervision of pools is adequate and that effective and sufficient emergency methods of communication are available.

Figure 6 Mean Compliance Scores across all facilities by Item in Section 11 –Supervision
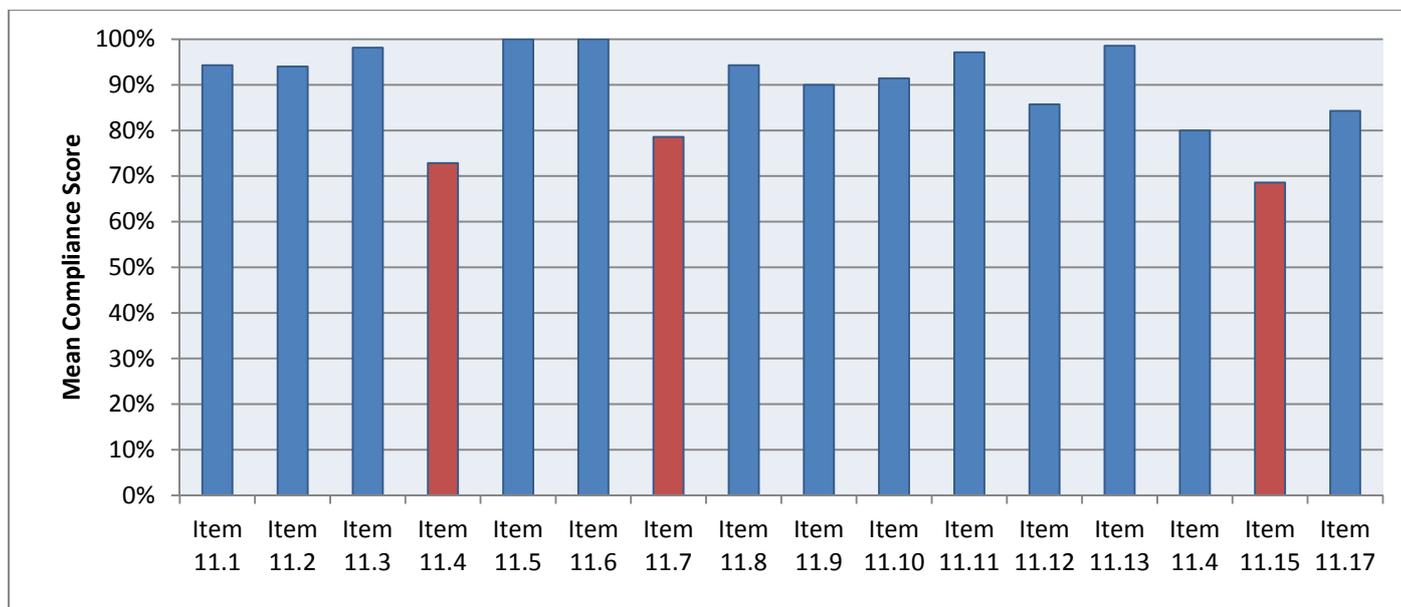
As in 2009/10, there were issues regarding the criteria facilities considered when deploying lifeguards (item 11.4). This item places an emphasis on the need for documented evidence that demonstrates a formal risk management approach has been taken when deciding on supervision levels. Although the facilities are scoring well in the practical aspects of supervision, it is again the evidence of the decision making processes that demonstrate room for improvements.

Other supervisory issues concerned the insufficient supervision of isolated areas (item 11.7) and the lack of enforcement of the rule that children under 10 must be supervised by guardians over 16 years of age (item 11.15). These two items should cause alarm bells. Item 11.7 should be highlighted because statistically, a fatal incident is more likely to happen in an isolated area (i.e. changing room, sauna or steam area) than it is in a pool. In addition item 11.15 would preferably score much higher as a result of the awareness associated with toddlers and young children and the fact that the Watch Around Water program has been rolled out across so many facilities State-wide.

Key management systems appeared to be performing well, which enable the staff teams to complete their jobs appropriately. These systems include the provision of uniform, communication methods, breaks and duty changes.

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4 Comparison by facility type

Metropolitan vs Regional facilities

Metropolitan facilities account for 39 of the 70 assessed facilities in this report, with the remaining 31 classified as regional. This categorisation has been based on the Council classification status issued by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), who is the representative and advocacy body responsible for the 79 Councils in Victoria.

Metropolitan facilities achieved higher mean scores than regional facilities in every area (Figure 7).Metropolitan facilities scored above 90% for Qualification, Compliance and Safety Score and above 89% each of the relevant sections. Regional facilities did not score above 90% in any area, with mean sores between 81% and 83% for Qualification, Compliance and Safety Score and between 78% and 89% for each relevant section.

Figure 7 Comparison of Mean Scores between Metropolitan and Regional facilities
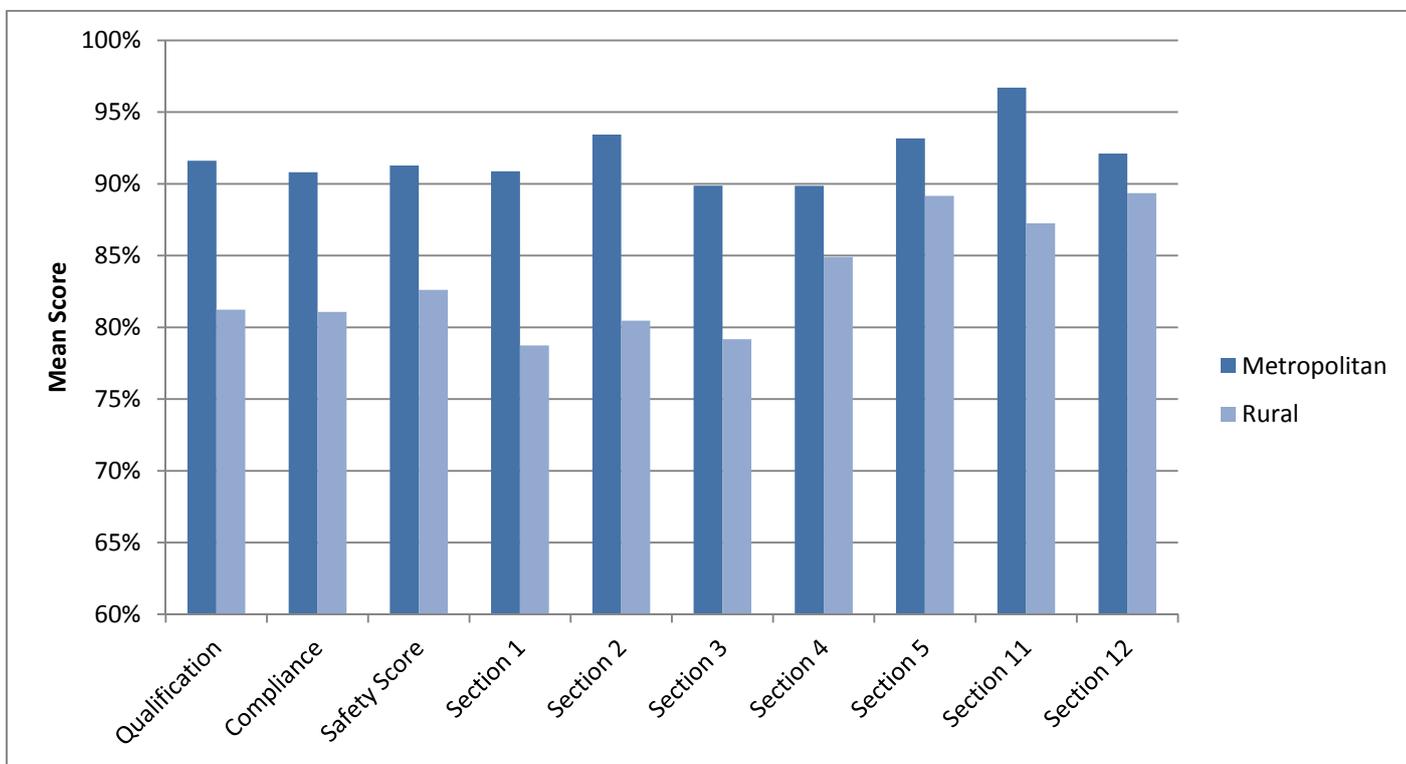
The overall Safety Score for the metropolitan facilities decreased by roughly 3% between 2009/10 and 2011/12 (to 91.28%), whilst the overall regional facilities score has remained relatively unchanged at 82.61%. Mean scores for regional facilities remain very similar to those achieved in 2009/10 across each area.

The key concern remains the overall low number of facilities that have undergone an independent external Safety Assessment process, regardless of their location. It is recommended by RLSSA, the Coroner and LSV that an independent assessment is completed at each Aquatic Facility on a regular basis. This is discussed further in the report summary.

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# Platinum Program Facilities vs Non-Platinum Program Facilities

The Platinum Pool Program was introduced by LSV to highlight aquatic facilities that have achieved the highest standards in the provision of aquatic safety and risk management. It involves the completion of the following processes every 12 months and is currently limited to 20 facilities.

i) Aquatic Facility Safety Assessment

ii) Work Health and Safety Assessment

iii) Mystery Guest Visit

iv) Internal 6 monthly Safety Assessment

v) Audit of internal systems and policies

As seen in the 2009/10 period, Platinum Pool accredited facilities again achieved higher scores compared to the non-Platinum facilities in each section of the assessment as well as in the overall mean (Figure 8). Platinum facilities scored roughly 10% higher than non-Platinum facilities across almost every area.

Figure 8 Comparison of mean scores between Platinum Pools and non-Platinum Pool facilities
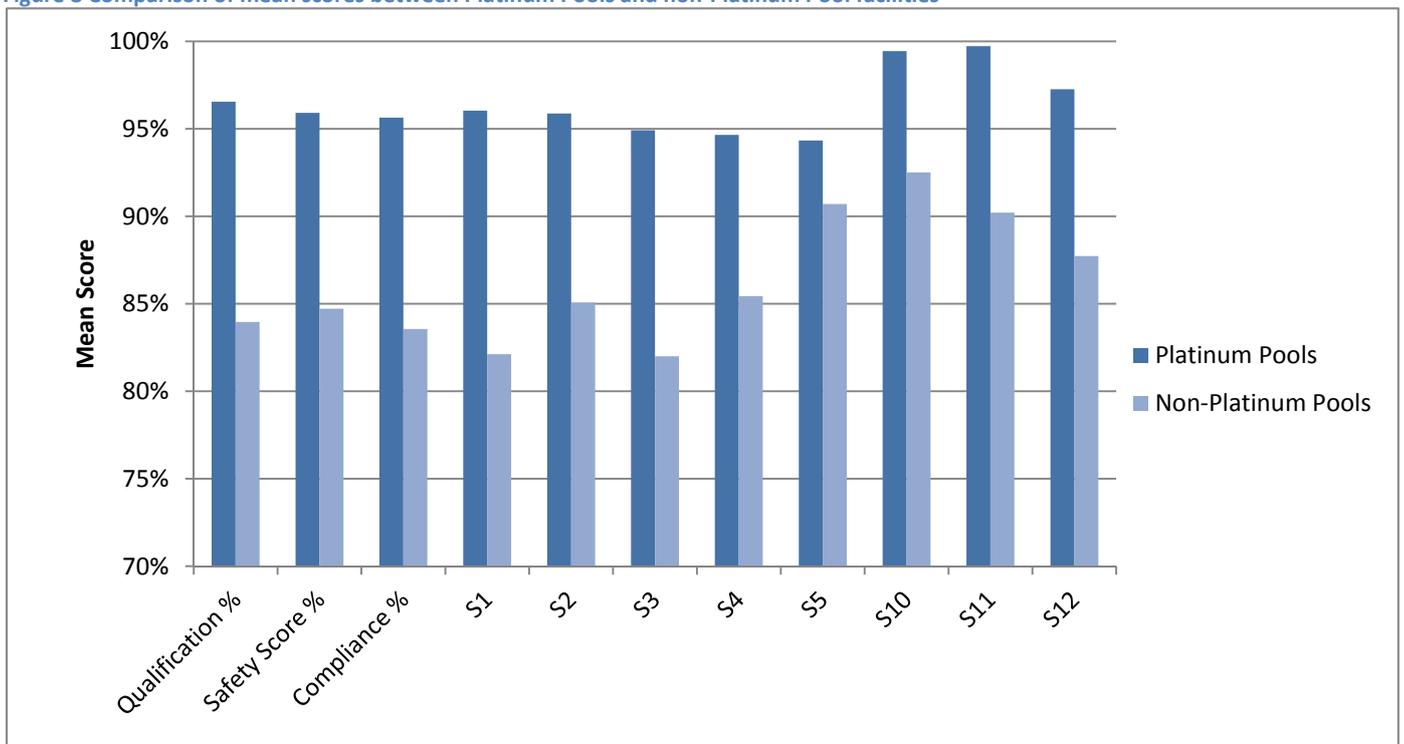

This data provides us with additional information when put into context. Typically, the Platinum facilities are no newer, more expensive or bigger than other assessed facilities. They also do not necessarily have more money or staff. What they do have, is a full facility commitment to best practise, a desire for continual improvement and a working relationship with LSV. Through this commitment, it can be said that they are provided with (and demonstrate) an improved level of understanding of the assessment criteria and best practice standards.

This 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. LSV commends these facilities for committing to this process.

5 Safety Score comparison

Mean Safety Scores overall and across all relevant sections were fairly consistent for the 2007/08, 2009/10 and 2011/12 period (Figure 9). The mean overall Safety Score for 2011/12 (86%), was slightly lower than for both 2007/08 and 2009/10, by 1.6% and 4% respectively. In the 2011/12 period, the mean scores for sections one to four were slightly below the 2009/10 scores by 5% or less. Mean scores in section eleven were consistently around 92% over the 2007/08-2011/12 period, with the highest mean score achieved in 2011/12.

Figure 9 Mean Safety Score comparison across all facilities by Section and by year
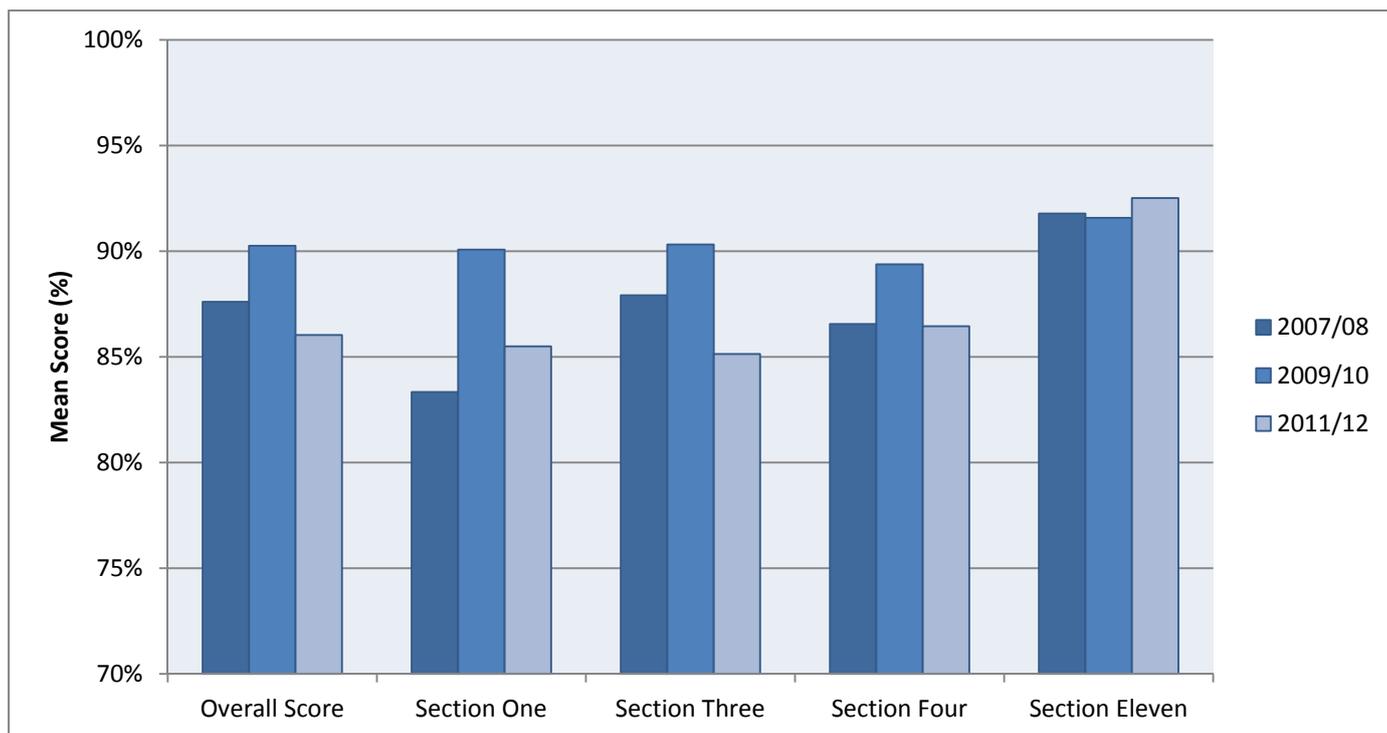
Sections one and three received the lowest mean scores in the 2011/12 period. As discussed in Section 1 – Administration Key Items, the main areas requiring improvement are in facility-wide evacuations and in-service lifeguard training, both of which can be readily addressed. As for Section 3 – Technical Operations Key Items, there are issues concerning chemical storage and labelling/signage.

6 Summary and Conclusions

The scores achieved during the 2011/12 Facility Assessments no longer demonstrate the general ongoing improvements that were evident through the previous reports in 2007/08 and 2009/10. This may be a natural plateau that could have been expected, with the scores in various areas now consistently in and around the 80-90% range. It may also be attributed to the number of recent facilities who undertook their first AFSA in this period. Whilst the lack of improvement itself may not be considered a key issue, the decreases noted within certain sections should be. Part of this decrease may be attributed to changes to the weighting of scores for some items since the 2009/10 AFSA report was released. However, it remains clear that on-going improvement is required.

The biggest single concern was noted in both of the previous reports and is still the fact that there are a large number of facilities not undergoing a Safety Assessment on a regular basis. Although the uptake is increasing marginally each year all of the figures in this report are based on just 70 assessments completed in the 2011/12 financial year. This accounts for less than a quarter of the public pools in Victoria. As such over 75% of the public aquatic facilities are not going through an independent assessment in line with the recommendations made by RLSSA, the Coroner and LSV.

It is necessary to understand and establish whether there is a need to readdress and re-evaluate the current assessment processes and continue to investigate the three points below that were first highlighted in 2010:

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?

A q u a t i c   R i s k   S e r v i c e
Life Saving Victoria

Appendix

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 37 people drowning in Victoria in 2011/12. For every person who drowns, unfortunately there are also a number of near drowning and other severe injuries sustained.

LSV's Aquatic Risk and Research Services team have been developing and delivering expert safety products and services to the aquatics industry for nearly two decades. They have become known as the industry's centre of excellence for water safety and are able to assist in all aspects of aquatic safety.

Swimming Pool - 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 (GSPO). This detailed inspection will review key aspects of operation including facility design, administration, technical operations, 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 facility's 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 LSV, the facility can be considered as a `centre of excellence` within the aquatic industry. LSV 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 developments 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 addressed 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 behaviour within an aquatic facility. Whilst visiting the facility, the assessor – acting as a normal patron – will make observations of such criteria 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 GSPO in order to provide the operator with an operational benchmark.

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

The management consultation service is for any facility or risk management process that does 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.

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