

Inquest into the death of a 15 month old child known as 'C'

On 1 November 2005, a 15-month-old child, known as C, died at the Royal Children's Hospital from the combined effects of complications from burns and tears to his mesenteric artery. C was scalded after being immersed in hot water in his family home but it is unknown as to what caused his internal injuries.

Coroner John Lock delivered his findings of inquest on 24 June 2011.

The Queensland Government responds to recommendations directed to government agencies at inquests by informing the community if a recommendation will be implemented or the reason why a recommendation is not supported.

Further information relating the implementation of recommendations can be obtained from the responsible agency named in the response.

Recommendation 3

The Department of Infrastructure and Planning investigate and consider retrospective mandating of the Australian standards in respect to hot water tempering valves at point of sale and lease in a manner similar to that now adopted for smoke alarms, electrical safety switches and swimming pool fences.

Response and action: the recommendation is agreed in part and implementation is complete.

Responsible agency: Department of Housing and Public Works.

On 5 August 2015, the Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation responded:

The current Australian standard in the *Plumbing Code of Australia* requires all new hot water system installations to have a tempering valve. Queensland has interpreted 'new' hot water systems to include like-for-like 'replacement' of hot water systems, thus triggering the requirement for a tempering valve at the point of a replacement installation.

To ensure the Queensland plumbing industry is clear about the requirements for the use and location of tempering devices, the Department of Housing and Public Works issued Newsflashes (456 and 478) regarding the current obligations of licensees when installing hot water systems. The Department of Housing and Public Works also provided this information to the plumbing industry through an email alert.

Unlike Queensland, some other Australian states and territories have not applied the Australian standard for new installations to like-for-like replacement installations. In this regard, Queensland successfully lobbied the Australian Building Code Board to amend the *Plumbing Code of Australia* to require mandatory installation of tempering valves when replacing hot water systems, not just for new installations. The Department of Housing and Public Works has received confirmation at a national level that effective from the 2016 edition of the *Plumbing Code of Australia*, installation of hot water tempering valves will be required for all like-for-like replacements of hot water systems in all Australian states and territories, in addition to being required for new installations of hot water systems.

The Department of Housing and Public Works has found that the typical life of an electric hot water heater is about 12 years. Legislation requiring temperature limiting devices was introduced in 1998; therefore, it is likely that hot water systems installed before the introduction of the legislation will have either been replaced, or are likely to be replaced in the near future. Given the average lifespan of water heaters, retrospectively mandating the Australian standards is not considered necessary as these older systems have been, or soon will be, phased out and replaced with systems that are required to have a tempering valve.

The 2016 edition of the *Plumbing Code of Australia* will come into effect from 1 May 2016.