



News

Momentum for button battery scheme

MIKE.WHEELER
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The recent ABC *Australian Story* about Summer Shoesmith and Bella Rees, two toddlers who died after ingesting button batteries, highlighted just how easily button batteries can cause serious harm. The Battery Stewardship Council recognises the severity of the problem and is working to get a formal battery recycling scheme underway. As a response to this problem and to complement the existing work of the ACCC, the BSC has established a Button Battery Advisory Group with the primary objective of reducing the risk of ingestion and insertion by children and vulnerable adults.

According to research by Envisage Works on behalf of the Battery Stewardship Council, more than 100 million button batteries were sold in Australia in 2017/18. CEO of the Council, Libby Chaplin, said that a stewardship scheme covering all batteries is planned for launch by the end of the year. The scheme is being developed with the full support of battery brands, key retailers, governments, recyclers, and consumer organisations.

The scheme was authorised by the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission in September," said Chaplin. "We are very pleased with the level of engagement of the large retailers and importers such as Powercell, Duracell, Energizer and Panasonic who have all joined the scheme.

"Over the coming months we are finalising details and safety protocols to ensure we have a safe and comprehensive program ready for launch later in the year. There are no quick solutions here, it is critical that we have the appropriate infrastructure in place to ensure the safety of the community and to make sure that tragedy's like those associated with button batteries become a thing of the past.

"Education will be key" said Chaplin. "We are building on international best practice to create an education strategy to ensure consumers are aware of risks and understand how to safely store and remove batteries from the home."

A key focal point for the BSC's work is addressing the safe disposal of button cell batteries.

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