Sand pits

What are sand pits?
Sand pits are outdoor areas filled with sand. Sand pits allow children to have fun playing, building and modeling objects out of sand. Sand pits are either purchased or built in backyards and outdoor spaces such as parks and play areas.

How may a child be injured?

Choking
- Sand or objects buried in sand may be placed in the mouth causing children to choke on them.

Cuts and bruises
- Sharp objects may be present in the sand which may cause harm when they are dug up during play.

Bites and stings
- Insects can live in damp sand and may bite or sting when they are disturbed.

Burns
- Children may become sunburnt if playing outdoors in a sand pit without shade.

Infection
- Sandpits can become a source of infection when animals, especially cats, and even children use them as toilets. Toxoplasmosis is such an infection that can spread from cats to humans through unclean sand pits. This infection usually occurs as a mild illness in children and adults but can harm an unborn child.

How common are these injuries?
While it is known that injuries and infections have occurred as a result of sand pits, there are no published statistics available.

Is there a Law or an Australian Standard for sand pits?
There are no laws or Australian Standards relating to sand pits. Please keep in mind the safety reminders below when choosing/using a sandpit.
Remember:

- Ensure the sand pit is well drained, keeping it as dry as possible.
- Sand pits should be covered when not in use, to prevent animals using it as a toilet. Shade cloth can be used to cover the sand pit. Plastic covers keep the sand damp and, therefore, are not recommended.
- Rake over the sand regularly to lift and remove dirt and rubbish. This also helps to air the sand and is a good way of disinfecting it.
- If the rain does not regularly wash the sand, hose the sand with plain tap water.
- If the sand needs disinfecting, as in the event of an animal using it as a toilet, fill a watering can with mild detergent or household disinfectant diluted in water and pour over the sand to kill the germs. Make sure you follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Make sure there is plenty of shade available over the sand pit and that children wear appropriate clothing including hat and sunscreen.
- Always supervise your children when playing outdoors.
- Check for products that may have been recalled (www.recalls.gov.au) prior to buying or borrowing a sand pit for use by your child.