

# Media Release

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## Child death highlights danger of button batteries

South Australian parents are being reminded about the severe dangers of swallowing button batteries after it was confirmed the first known Australian child has died due to accidental ingestion.

Acting Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, George Kamencak, said while button batteries are small and appear harmless, they contain dangerous chemicals and can cause serious injury and even death.

“The Queensland Coroner recently handed down his findings into the death of four-year-old Summer Steer,” Mr Kamencak said.

“The inquest determined the cause of death was due to a haemorrhage from the ingestion of a button battery that became lodged in her oesophagus.

“This is a huge wake-up call to parents, and Australian consumer affairs agencies are taking the opportunity to remind parents of the dangers.

“Button batteries are shiny and the size of a coin or smaller, making them appealing to small children.

“They can be found in many everyday products around the home such as children’s toys, calculators, remote controls, small electronics, and hearing aids.

“We need all parents to be aware of the risks - it only takes a split second for one to be swallowed.”

In the past year, 16 calls were made to the South Australian Poisons Information Centre from worried parents of children under five who had swallowed a button battery.

“Parents are urged to ensure these batteries are kept out of reach and out of sight,” Mr Kamencak said.

“The death of Summer Steer is tragic and it is vital to get the message across that children and button batteries don’t mix.

“Where the device requires a battery, always ensure the battery compartment is firmly secured.

“It is also important to know that flat batteries are also hazardous so parents are advised to dispose of them straight away.”

If parents suspect a child has swallowed a button battery, immediately take them to the nearest hospital emergency department. Do not let them eat or drink and do not induce vomiting.

For more information about button battery safety, including safety tips and precautions please visit <http://www.productsafety.gov.au> and a video on the dangers can be seen here: <http://www.productsafety.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/1016397>.