

Mum tries to turns tragic tide after drowning: “It’s never too late to learn”

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/mum-tries-to-turns-tragic-tide-after-drowning-its-never-too-late-to-learn/news-story/6b0af689cc0dd5943749978295d8b43d>

Fifteen years after watching her 30-year-old brother in law lose his life in a rip, Emaine El-Safadi has decided to conquer her fear of the water for her and her family’s safety.

Matthew Benns

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After the horror of watching her 30-year-old brother-in-law drown in a rip during a family trip to the beach, Emaine El-Safadi has been terrified of the water.

“We watched him being brought out of the surf,” the 46-year-old mother of five from Yagoona said yesterday.

“It was a really (big) commotion.”

At the start of SwimSafer week, a new survey has found one-third of Australian families have experienced a water-related emergency, including at the extreme end, a drowning such as that suffered by the El-Safadi family.



Hamza El-Safadi (7) with his mother Emaine El-Safadi at MySwim Swimming School in Bass Hill. Picture: Brett Costello



Hamza learns his safety skills at MySwim Swimming School. Picture: Brett Costello

The SwimSafer Report, commissioned by Swim Australia, found that over half of Aussie kids did not attend swimming lessons and four out of 10 parents had no intention of sending them.

Frighteningly, one in three parents like Ms El-Safadi were not confident their child could get themselves out of trouble in a water safety emergency, and more than half did not think they would be able to help either.

The memory of her brother-in-law's drowning on a family trip to Wollongong, leaving a wife and two young children behind, has haunted Ms El-Safadi for 15 years.

“Every time we go on holiday I sit in the shallow end and am terrified for my youngest son,” she said.



Hamza during his swimming lessons with instructor Grace Myers. Picture: Brett Costello

“So I booked us both in for swimming lessons.”

Hamza, 7, goes on Monday afternoon to the Myswim centre at George Bass School at Bass Hill and his mother goes on Monday evening.

“It has given me so much confidence,” she said.

“I thought of my brother-in-law and how he passed away in that instance just 30 minutes after us all arriving at the beach.

“I thought if I could learn to swim it might save my life or I might save someone else’s life ... It is never too late to learn.”

Swim Australia chief executive Brendon Ward was alarmed at the findings in the report.

“So much of our Australian culture involves the water, from the classic poolside BBQ, to a day at the beach with the family,” he said. “Despite this, more than half of Aussie children do not attend swimming lessons because their parents don’t have time or cannot afford it.

“Yet one in two children still attend another activity or sport like football or dancing.”

A “Swim it Forward” campaign has been started to raise money for swimming lessons.