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Post-pandemic swim safety fears

ED BOURKE

WATER safety experts are warning of a tragic summer ahead, amid fears more than half of Aussie kids are not learning to swim.

Only 37 per cent of parents plan to enrol their child in official swimming lessons in the next six months, a report commissioned by Swim Australia has found.

The SwimSAFER report also revealed 51 per cent of parents are not confident their child could

help themselves in a “water emergency”.

Swim Australia CEO Brendan Ward said the pandemic would have a long-term effect on the swimming ability of children in Australia.

“We shudder to think what might happen this summer, given so many children have not been learning to swim,” he said.

“Covid has impacted the swimming industry immensely with lessons halted for long periods and

swimming teachers leaving the industry because of shutdowns, resulting in swim schools unable to meet demand. “Our study shows 16 per cent of children have not attended swimming lessons for over a year and another 25 per cent have been out of the pool between 6-12 months.

“This is a very dangerous scenario as it means children’s abilities in the water will have regressed. There will be children who may never learn how to swim properly.”