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Drowning fears for Aussie kids

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 swimming lessons in the next six months, a report for Swim Australia says.

The SwimSAFER report also revealed 51 per cent of parents were not confident their child could help themselves in a "water emergency".

Swim Australia chief executive 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. "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 for six to 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."

Olympic swimming gold medallist Leisel Jones said she was very aware of the danger for children around water.

"Learning to swim is something really close to my heart, and something I am passionate about because I know first-hand the effect of drowning on a family," she said.