



press clip

# Learning to swim safe

BY LUKE MILLER

A 1964 swimming Olympic bronze-medalist was tasked with launching Launceston's participation in this year's Swim Safer week in the hope of tackling a potentially deadly trend.

Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association president Peter Tonkin emphasised the importance of swimming lessons.

He said considering Australia had experienced a 20 per cent spike in drownings since last year's first COVID-19 lockdown, it was essential that more people were properly educated in swim safety.

"Swimming lessons should be compulsory in schools because a survey conducted by the [ASCTA] showed that 51 per cent of parents aren't confident that their child would be safe if they encountered any difficulties in the water, which is a pretty scary statistic to hear," he said.

A recent report commissioned by Swim Australia showed 23 per cent of Tasmanian parents could not afford swimming lessons.

Swim Australia's Swim It Forward program was created to solve this issue by generating funds to help these families.

However, cost was not the only issue highlighted within the report, as it stated that 30 per cent of Tasmanian

parents couldn't enrol their children into lessons due to class unavailability.

Mr Tonkin said the latter issue was especially prevalent in Northern Tasmania and that a solution could be achieved by encouraging more Tasmanians to join the 24 per cent who the report showed would consider becoming a swim teacher.

"Launceston's swim schools are all booked out and have waiting lists, so it's fairly difficult to get your child into a lesson, especially in the short term," he said.

Swim Australia chief executive Brendon Ward said the difficulty parents had faced in enrolling their children into swimming lessons nationwide was caused by COVID-19 lockdowns.

"Lessons being halted for long periods and swimming teachers leaving the industry ... has resulted in swim schools being unable to meet demand," he said.

Visit [swimsafer.org.au](http://swimsafer.org.au).



# Launceston Examiner

Tuesday 16/11/2021

Page: 2  
Section: General News  
Region: Launceston, AU  
Circulation: 12547  
Type: Regional  
Size: 441.00 sq.cms.



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**SAFETY:** Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association president and Olympic bronze-medalist Peter Tonkin. **Picture:** Luke Miller