




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Swimming Lessons

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (2.37 pm): Currently the state government does not provide funding towards swimming lessons for children who are not yet at school, from the age of six months. Recently, swimming great Dawn Fraser launched an attack on the state's lack of funding towards private swimming lessons and the imperfect program delivered through the state school system. The swimming legend summed it up perfectly by saying that if a child is learning to read and write before going into school then why not teach them to swim?

Other states in Australia invest heavily in swim safety programs with Victoria contributing \$72 million over four years while our state invests only \$16 million for school-based programs. However, statewide only 200 of the 1,200 public schools have their own pool and the gap is far greater in regional centres. When it comes to children who drown in Australia each year, those aged under five are at the highest risk as they are yet to enter school where swimming lessons are taught.

An article in the *Courier-Mail*, which I will table, states that there are also problems with the school-based learn-to-swim programs, with parents claiming that the program rollout in schools is inconsistent because it has been left up to individual schools and principals to implement. The article further states that some students are reportedly only getting lessons in certain year levels and some parents are being asked to pay extra for lessons. In addition, it is becoming increasingly tougher for those who live in rural and regional areas, particularly where they have to travel to a pool.

Tabled paper: Media article, dated 16 January 2023, titled 'Olympic legend Dawn Fraser rips into government, school principals over state's water safety program' [410](#).

In Queensland we do not have one dedicated learn-to-swim program outside the school-based programs. Currently Western Australia leads the nation by providing funding towards holiday and targeted swimming programs. Swim Australia chief executive Brendan Ward told the *Australian* recently that private lessons were the best way to ensure children were confident in the water, stating—

We would love to see some more incentive from government to help people get into those lessons.

There is massive cost-of-living pressure on low- and middle-income families. These families are forced to make a choice between putting food on the table and spending money on private lessons. Every life is valuable. Even one child's death from drowning is one too many, especially if this could be avoided. I call on the state government to deliver funding to families to cover or subsidise private swimming lessons for children between the ages of six months and five years and to make the delivery of school-based swimming lessons mandatory.