

# Horror injury to boy, 4, sparks swimming pool skimmer box warning

Linda Cann, PerthNow  
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A FUN afternoon in the backyard swimming pool turned to disaster when a four-year-old boy was partially disembowelled after sitting on a skimmer box.

Luke Lyson was rushed to Princess Margaret Hospital at 6.45pm last Saturday after he sat on the pool's skimmer box, with the lid off, and his bowel was partially sucked out.

Luke's father Matthew said he saw a look of shock on his son's face and realised with horror what had happened, quickly turning off the pump and running to his injured son.

"I lifted him up and his bottom was all bruised. His bowels had come out," Mr Lyson said.

"He's lucky to be alive. He could've been completely disembowelled."

Pool-owners are being warned to check pools installed before 1988 and convert old-style skimmer boxes, which can cause life-threatening injuries.

WA *Consumer Protection* Commissioner *Anne Driscoll* said many people with unsafe older pool filters were unaware of the dangers.

"People sometimes don't realise how old their pools are," Ms Driscoll said.

"Matthew thought his pool was 10-15 years old but it was actually 29 years old."

The lids of old skimmer boxes are easily removed, forming a basket-like indent, which if sat in, can create a seal and cause disembowelment.

"There were a lot of incidents in the 1980s but then new standards were brought in to make filters and over time, most people have forgotten about the danger," she said.

"We've heard from pool maintenance workers who might go out fix a pool filter and they find about 3-4 pools a week which have the old skimmer boxes.

"Lots of pools are unsafe and these unfortunate injuries that Luke has sustained have reminded us of the dangers."

Luke will wear a colostomy bag for the next 3-4 months, but there shouldn't be any serious long-term damage, his father said.

Mr Lyson said he hoped to bring attention to the little known danger of old skimmer boxes and encourage people to convert them to make them safe.

Ms Driscoll said there had also been problems with spa filters, including one incident where a girl's hair was ripped off after being caught in a filter and another who was pinned to the bottom of a spa.

There were two incidents involving children, which resulted in injuries being received from domestic swimming pool skimmer boxes in Perth in January 2000:

- The first incident occurred on 5 January 2000 and involved a swimming pool installed prior to 1988. Ownership of the property had changed hands several times since the installation. In this case it appears that the incident was the result of a lack of knowledge and poor maintenance by the current owners.

- The second incident occurred on 9 January 2000 and involved a swimming pool that was installed just prior to Christmas 1999. Investigations indicated negligence on the part of the pool installer. Aquatechnics pleaded guilty to the charge of supplying a swimming pool incorporating an unsafe skimmer box on 9 August 2000.

Consumers who require more information on pool safety can contact Consumer Protection on 1300 30 40 54 or [consumer@commerce.wa.gov.au](mailto:consumer@commerce.wa.gov.au)

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