

HEAVY LOADS and BACKPACK MANAGEMENT

Recently, the P&C Association has been looking at the health issue of students carrying heavy loads in their backpacks.

The main problems have been identified as:

- Heavy textbooks
- Full drink bottles
- PE & Sports Uniform
- Music instruments
- Backpack management (i.e. bringing unnecessary books)

Some recommendations have included:

- 4-period day (*this system commenced in 2003*)
- Lockers, inc. in the Music Room for instruments (*currently under discussion*)
- Extra copies of textbooks for home use
- Water bubblers throughout the school (*under review with Building Committee*)
- Timetabling (*to avoid too many heavy textbooks on any one day*)
- Education on backpack management

Many of the above recommendations are longer-term projects, however a fairly immediate solution is better backpack management by students.

Our investigations, from a survey of 70 schools, showed that a very common problem was students carrying unnecessary items in their backpacks, particularly Year 7 students.

Therefore it is strongly recommended that parents/caregivers assist students in managing their backpacks, and students re-pack their backpacks every day, according to the timetable.

Keep informed on this, and other topics currently under discussion, by coming along to the Chatswood High School P&C Association meetings, which are held in the school library on the 2nd Tuesday of the month in term time.

BACKPACK INFORMATION

Whilst the choice of backpack, and the way it is carried, rests largely with individual students, the following information, taken from various internet sites, may be of interest

- The backpack should have wide, padded straps. A waist belt is a good idea also, especially if it's going to carry a lot of weight (it takes pressure off the neck and shoulders).
- Both shoulder straps should be worn to better distribute the weight.
- The backpack should have good padding on the area that rests against the back.
- A backpack with several compartments can also distribute the load better. Pack the heavier items closer to the back. Pointy and bulky items should not rest against the back (even with padding).
- The backpack should be positioned so that it hangs just below the shoulders and rests on the hips and pelvis. If it hangs below this, it will more likely cause strain.
- If possible, separate copies of heavy textbooks should be kept at home, so that they don't have to travel between home and school every day.
- Avoid very large backpacks with many compartments. These will only encourage the user to store more items in them - otherwise, they may look "empty."
- Look into current innovations of backpacks: Saddlebags, backpacks with curved or moulded backs and bottoms, inflatable air bags, handles, wheels, and interior rack frames.

Remember...

Only take what you need to school each day