

# Sticking it to pack mentality

OLIVIA WATSON

HEAVY school bags are "outdated", cause serious back problems and should be replaced with computer memory sticks, a leading chiropractic body says.

The Chiropractors Association of Australia SA (CAASA) has called on schools and parents to rethink the load they place on students' backs.

"Lugging an overloaded school bag to and from school is an outdated concept that must be discouraged," CAASA president Zoe Love said.

"Why treat our kids as pack horses when most of the information they need at school or for homework could be contained on a tiny memory stick?"

Dr Love said there was mounting evidence that heavy school bags placed "unnecessary stress on growing spines" and could cause "acute and long-term back problems".

Dr Love said the problem was compounded by badly loaded bags, poor posture and the "fashion factor", which often involved children carrying either satchels or backpacks on one shoulder.

According to Dr Love, a growing child should limit the weight they carry in a school backpack to no more than 10 per cent of their body weight.

Although the use of computer memory sticks could reduce the amount of heavy books students carry, Dr Love said children would still need to carry a bag to school.

"So it's still important that children are taught to pack them correctly and carry them correctly," she said.

Glen Osmond mother Margot Austerberry said regular chiropractic treatment for her two children was "necessary for their general health and wellbeing".

Her children Lachlan, 5, and Jessica, 8, have been seeing a chiropractor for about eight months, after Jessica had complained of a slight "niggle" of back pain.

"When children are so physical, just maintaining that alignment (in the spine) is essential," Ms Austerberry said.

"It's about that preventive kind



SCHOOL MULE: Jessica Austerberry, 8, brother Lachlan, 5

of treatment." Ms Austerberry said her children carried backpacks to school each day, but they were appropriately sized and she was conscious to "never pack it too heavily".

And would memory sticks and computers one day replace heavy school bags?

"Absolutely," she said. "That's just moving with the times of technology."

CAASA recommends students make use of lockers at school and plan so as to minimise their take-home load.

They should wear a fitted backpack over both shoulders with the waistband done up, and not worn any lower than the hollow of the lower back.

## SAVE OUR SPINES

Avoid back-to-school backache:

- Backpacks should be no heavier than 10 per cent of a student's weight when packed
- Ensure backpack is no wider than the student's chest
- Put comfort and fit at the top of the priority list, rather than good looks
- Choose a backpack with broad, padded shoulder straps
- Use both straps - never sling over one shoulder - and fasten the waist straps
- Don't overload the pack - use lockers and plan ahead

## \$90k to educate kids to Year 12

PARENTS of children starting kindergarten this year will pay more than \$90,000 to educate them to Year 12 in the public system, according to new estimates.

At a private school, they can add another \$250,000 per child.

Catholic schools are not cheap either, with the average bill for a dozen years of education topping \$175,000.

The estimates, compiled by the Australian Scholarships Group, a non-profit organisation that helps parents plan for the costs of education, take into account

tuition fees and the cost of uniforms, textbooks, computers and internet access.

Ten years ago, the group estimated the cost of an education in the public sector at \$30,000 a child. It now says educating youngsters from potty-training age to drinking age in the government school system will cost as much as \$90,000, with \$33,738 in school fees, \$7774 for stationery and textbooks, \$8658 for uniforms, \$17,551 for camps and music lessons and \$22,328 in computer and internet costs over the next 13 years.

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