

THE Greenhouse News

A program for growing and nurturing green minds



PRIMARY SCHOOLS ENVIRONMENTAL NEWSLETTER

TERM 3 2008

SNACK PACK FOOD

COULD THESE BE AFFECTING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR

Expensive, unhealthy and environmentally damaging, a closer look at this common lunch box addition.

Your Health

Have you ever wondered why student concentration levels drop while misbehaviour often rises following lunch and recess? Could the popular and highly packaged snack foods be partially responsible? These foods are generally high in artificial colours, flavours and preservatives, many of which have known detrimental effects on human health. Critical to schools is the negative effect on concentration and behaviour that intolerances to these food chemicals often cause.

WHAT IS A FOOD INTOLERANCE? We all have a tolerance level to food chemicals. For most of us and for most food substances this level is set at a point that we rarely reach. However for some people, this tolerance level is set low, resulting in it often being exceeded and intolerance reactions, such as misbehaviour or a drop in concentration, occurring. For others the tolerance level may be reached only after the food chemical has been ingested repeatedly, over a time period insufficient for the body to clear it. This individual nature of food intolerances is why they are difficult to understand and determine.

Food additives which are commonly found in packaged snack foods and which have a known connection to concentration and behaviour include MSG (621), Tartrazine (102), other food colours (104, 107, 110) and preservatives (280 - 283). Many of these chemicals are banned in overseas countries. For further information and a more comprehensive list of additives to avoid go to: www.fedupwithfoodadditives.info

The Environment

Overly packaged snack foods are detrimental to the environment on many levels. They consume raw materials in their production, contribute to our solid waste problem, require energy for production, thereby adding to greenhouse gases and often end up lying as rubbish in the school playground. By encouraging your students and parents to not include these foods in lunch boxes, you will be taking another step in reducing the ecological footprint of your school and increasing the environmental awareness of your students. You will also once again be highlighting the fact that, the best way to reduce waste is to not generate it in the first place.

The Cost

The price of groceries is now a constant in the media, there would be few who have not noticed an increase in the weekly grocery bill. There are many forces impacting on food prices that we can do little about, however there is one that we can influence - packaging. Like everything, packaging comes at a cost. If we do not buy it, we do not pay for it.



To illustrate the cost of packaging consider snack pack chips which come in a large packet containing fifteen 20 gram packets at an approximate cost of \$5.19. A single 300-gram packet will cost you just \$2.99 and can be spread over 15 serves with the use of a reusable container. Likewise the popular snack pack of cream cheese and crackers if bought in a bulk form can result in savings of approximately sixty percent. If you cannot convince parents to remove these foods from the lunch box for health or environmental reasons, perhaps this financial incentive will work.



RAD'S UPDATE.

We are rapidly approaching judging time for the 2008 program. Hopefully by now students are well under way with individual projects and school performances are coming along. Getting out to see what schools have achieved throughout the year is always a highlight and the creativity of some teachers never fails to impress us.

I recently sent to all participating schools information on running waste free lunch days and some reusable lunch wraps (Rad Wrap), that could be given as prizes. I hope that schools have successfully run this activity. If not perhaps the health focus of the adjoining article will give you extra incentive to try to discourage the use of snack pack foods in your school. A quick search on the internet will lead you to many articles documenting the negative impact of junk food on student concentration and behaviour.

I will contact schools soon to organise a time for judging.

For more information contact our Environmental Education Officer, Anni Griffiths 4325 8333



A program for growing and nurturing green minds!

Congratulations to Gosford Public School who have just received \$50,000 through the National Solar Schools Program. Looking forward to seeing your solar panels.

WHAT WEEK IS IT?

CELEBRATE AND EDUCATE

Mark these dates in your diary and plan an activity.

Bike Week - September 20 - 28

A state wide initiative to raise the profile of cycling as healthy, easy, low cost and environmentally friendly. Gosford will celebrate with the Bike Week Bash on Saturday 27 September at Kibble Park. Activities include a Cycle Skills Course for children, Vintage BMX displays and stalls and information on all things bike. Further information contact [Allan Brown at GCC on 4325 8929](#)

COSS Week - September 23 - 30

A week-long event of activities highlighting the natural values and significance of the Coastal Open Space System (COSS) of the Gosford region. Activities include bushwalks, birdwatching tours, tours of active bushcare sites and native plant identification sessions. The COSS is a network of reserves within the Gosford region which provides vital corridors between areas which have been retained for conservation, such as National Parks. For further information call [Phil Wood at GCC on 4325 8222](#)

National Water Week - October 19 -25

This is a week that aims to highlight the importance of water and give assistance to the community to develop ways to save and protect this very precious resource. The NWW organisation has a great website with lots of fantastic downloadable activities and resources for schools and children. We highly recommend it - <http://www.nationalwaterweek.org.au/index.php>

Recycle Week - November 10 -16

Recycling not only reduces the amount of waste going to landfill but also saves energy, thus reducing greenhouse gases. By recycling just 1 aluminium can you will save enough energy to run a TV for 3 hours. Use this week to again reinforce the recycling message. For great educational activities and resources go to the Planet Ark website <http://www.planetark.com.au/campaignspage.cfm/newsid/9/story.htm> For local activities contact Council waste contractor Theiss Services - [Michelle Norman 4336 3121](#)



which are found nowhere else in the world. About 84 per cent of our plants, 83 per cent of our mammals, and 45 per cent of our birds are endemic - that is, they are only found in Australia.

The marine environment is home to thousands of marine species, some of which are unique to Australia and all of which contribute to making Australia the most biodiversity rich developed country in the world.

Why is biodiversity important?

Humans are dependant for their sustenance, health well being and enjoyment of life on biodiversity. We derive all of our food, many medicines and many industrial products from our biological diversity.

How can I help protect Biodiversity?

There are many ways schools can help protect biodiversity in their local area

- Create a natural habitat for example build a frog pond or mount nesting boxes for birds.
- Get rid of weeds.
- Encourage responsible pet ownership.
- Only put water down drains.
- Climate change will affect biodiversity, so be active in reducing greenhouse gases.
- Be waterwise, we share our water resources with many other animals and plants.

BIODIVERSITY MONTH

PROTECTING, CONSERVING AND IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY

September is Biodiversity Month, how will your school promote this?

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variation of life within a given ecosystem whether that is a backyard frog pond, a National Park, the Australian continent or the world as a whole. Biodiversity encompasses every living thing from the smallest one cell microbe to the enormous blue whale. It forms part of an



intricate and interdependent web of life in which we are all a part.

The biodiversity of Australia is huge. We are home to between 600,000 and 700,000 species, many of



IMPORTANT DATES

Student Project Completion

- Friday 12 September

School Judging

- Monday 8 September - Friday 26 September

Awards Ceremony

- Friday 21 November

Other Important Dates

- September - Biodiversity Month
- September 7 - National Threatened Species Day
- September 22 - World Car Free Day
- October - International Walk to School month
- October 6 - World Habitat Day
- November 10 -16 - National Recycling Week
- November 28 - Buy Nothing Day

GRANTS

Womens Weekly

- Environmental Heroes - Up to \$10,000 available each month. Entry forms in Women's Weekly. Ends November.

Kitchen Garden

- Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. Grants of up to \$60,000 to cover infrastructure costs associated with building kitchen and garden. Information at <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/>

