

# Heat prisoners: Pupils who've never been outside for lunch



**COOL HEADS:** North Adelaide Primary student Adam keeps cool during the heatwave using an ice pack from his lunch box, yesterday.

Picture: MARK BRAKE

**LAUREN NOVAK**  
EDUCATION REPORTER

THE state's peak parent body wants the start of the school year delayed or classes to begin earlier in the morning to avoid extreme temperatures.

As Adelaide's heatwave continues to take its toll on students, airconditioners are failing in some classrooms and principals are encouraging parents to use their judgment and keep children at home if preferred.

Some schools have dismissed students early while most others are keeping children inside at lunch.

SA Primary Principals Association president Steve Portlock said some first-time students were upset because they were told at school they could spend recess and lunch with their friends and they had yet to experience this.

South Australian Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey, who represents the parents of about 90 per cent of public school students, said it was unreasonable to expect children to be able to study in extreme heat.

**“This is the worst possible way to start your school year.**

- SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS DIRECTOR DAVID KNUCKEY

Mr Knuckey said because Adelaide suffered through a heatwave at about this time most years, it was worth “seriously considering” delaying the start of term one or starting classes as early as 7am, when it was cooler, if long periods of high temperatures are forecast.

“This is the worst possible way to start your school year (and) we seem to be starting every school year like this,” he said.

“We can't change the weather but we can change what week we send our children back to school.”

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said the Government was always happy to listen to suggestions but the unpredictable timing of heatwaves would make it difficult to change term times in advance.

Education Department chief

executive Chris Robinson wrote to schools yesterday warning teachers to make sure children had “plenty of cool water”, to modify outdoor activities and beware of falling branches if children were sheltering under trees.

Airconditioning units at some schools have failed in the heat, including twice last week and once yesterday at North Adelaide Primary School.

Principal Peter Rawlins said the problem, which he suspected was “due to ageing equipment”, had been fixed within an hour and the school buildings had remained cool in the meantime.

Reception student Adam, 5, said schoolyard equipment was too hot to touch but he had been keeping cool with a frozen ice pack from his lunch box.

“It's so hot,” he said.

SA Secondary Principals Association president Jim Davies said students were leaving school at “the hottest part of the day”.

“They go out of airconditioned classrooms into the sun and go on public transport but run into trouble because the trains aren't running because the rail lines have buckled,” he said.

## Below 40, but still a hot-box

**CARA JENKIN**  
**JOANNA VAUGHAN**

ADELAIDE experienced its first day below 40C yesterday in almost a week - but the thermometer is expected to rise again before the week is out.

Yesterday's temperature was still hot, peaking at 38.8C at 1.21pm, but preventing any increase to the record six consecutive days of 40C-plus.

The Bureau of Meteorology has forecast a maximum of 40C on Friday before a cool change brings an end to the heatwave over the weekend.

Meteorologist Domenic Panuccio said a front had been expected to bring slightly cooler

conditions to Adelaide on Friday but would now weaken.

It means hot northerly winds would return on Friday, pushing the temperature up to 40C.

“We are expecting the temperature to get to 34C in the morning (on Saturday) and gradually start to drop away as a south-westerly change comes through,” he said.

“Sunday is going to be a much cooler day.”

The forecast for Sunday and Monday is for temperatures in the mid-20Cs.

Meanwhile, supermarket giant Woolworths is trying to ease pressure on the power grid by running its stores at “half-light”.

Since Thursday the use of light-

ing and electricity has been restricted in all South Australian stores as the state struggles to keep up with demand.

Woolworths retail support manager Keri Foti said the decision was made that all SA stores would “do our bit to help the power grid that is struggling”.

“There has been a really good customer reaction,” she said.

All safety and hygiene factors had been considered.

In addition to the “half-light” plan, ovens at Woolworths that are traditionally used all day will be turned off at 10am and lights will be turned off in some freezers and refrigerators.

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