

Dear Parents and Carers,

BAN ON STUDENTS, STAFF AND VISITORS BRINGING KNIVES TO SCHOOLS

The Department of Education has a paramount duty to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff in attendance at its schools. This is a duty that the Department and I as Principal of Chatswood High School take very seriously. You have a right to expect, when sending your children to school, that they will be safe.

We also have legal obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety (so far as is reasonably practicable).

The Department already has a strict policy specifying no weapons being allowed at school. To date there has been a legal exemption for knives carried for religious purposes (including a kirpan carried by some Sikh students).

Following a recent incident, the Department has now implemented a temporary ban on students, staff and visitors carrying any form of knife into government schools (including those carried for religious purposes). This temporary ban is to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff at all of our schools.

The Department is currently working with a range of community stakeholders including religious organisations to develop a new policy to enable students, where appropriate, to continue to express their faith, while still maintaining safety within the school context.

From Wednesday 19 May 2021, and until further notice, no students may carry a knife while at school, even those worn for genuine religious reasons. We request that parents and carers talk with their children to make sure they understand this change. Knives carried for religious purposes, including kirpans, will need to be kept at home for the foreseeable future.

We recognise this is a sensitive issue for many within the community and wish to assure you that the Department will be working urgently to find a solution which respects every student's faith alongside the safety of everyone in our school.

We ask all parents to support the school with these changes, parent information on knives in schools can be found on the **No knives at school – parent factsheet**. Parents may also find the information on the [No knives at school – student factsheet](#) useful in their discussions with their children.

If you have any question in regards to this information please ring the school on [phone number] to make a time to discuss.

Yours sincerely

David Osland

Principal