

# Herald Sun

---

## Pupils go to ground

Milanda Rout  
14dec05

ONE student is rushed to hospital every 12 minutes after being hurt on school grounds.

Latest statistics show pupils have suffered amputations, broken bones, brain injuries and spinal cord damage.

The figures come as principals, parents and health organisations say a lack of State Government funding for playground maintenance contributes to the number of school injuries.

The data from the Victorian Injury Surveillance and Applied Research System reveals 22,400 students aged five to 15 have been injured on school grounds between July 2001 and June last year.

The statistics showed 18,507 were treated by emergency doctors and 3893 were admitted to hospital.

The biggest cause of injuries was falls, affecting 13,413 pupils.

Another 6183 school children were hit by an object or another person. Students suffering brain injuries accounted for 838 cases, while cuts affected another 2369.

Some children choked, suffocated or suffered burns and were treated in emergency wards.

Animals, cars and bikes were also responsible for some injuries.

The statistics included children from private and state schools.

Victorian Injury Surveillance and Applied Research System director Erin Cassell said playground maintenance was a key issue.

"The most pressing problem is play equipment related to the falls," Ms Cassell said.

"We find falls are related to the height of the playground and surfacing."

Ms Cassell said a study at Monash University's accident research centre found most school equipment didn't have proper soft under-surfacing like tanbark.

"Only about 5 per cent of school equipment complies to Australian standards in terms of under-surfacing," she said. "That is to do with maintenance and that they are not replacing the tanbark as much as they should."

Kidsafe Victoria state manager Anne Murphy said a lack of soft surfaces and playground maintenance played a significant part in the number of falls.

"We think the Government should provide specific budgets for school committees for maintenance of playgrounds," Ms Murphy said.

Victorian Principals Association president Fred Ackerman said much school play equipment did not comply to Australian standards because schools could not fund maintenance.