



Parents are worst bullies

by **Tanya Chilcott**

VIOLENCE, threats and bullying among parents and school staff need immediate attention and should be investigated by an independent taskforce, a report recommends.

The taskforce would have the power to interview parents, teachers and students in a bid to “look for the causes and reduce the levels of adult-to-adult bullying, threats and actual violence”. The controversial recommendation, set to be released this week, is attached to a report which found principals experienced physical violence six times more than other workers.

It found parents were the main perpetrators of the violence and bullying.

The Courier-Mail revealed last week violent and distressing incidents, many involving students, led to more than \$10 million in compensation payments made to state school staff for psychological injury over

five years.

In his final *The Australian Principal Health and Well-being Survey* report, Monash University researcher Dr Philip Riley warns the recommendation to set up a taskforce either in individual states and territories, or federally, to address adult-to-adult violence – and bullying was “the most urgent”.

In Queensland, 37 per cent of principals surveyed had

experienced threats of violence and 28 per cent physical violence, while 34 per cent had experienced bullying.

The report also recommends principals be further educated on the emotional aspects of their job, including dealing with conflict and debriefing.

P and C’s Queensland president Dan Smith and Queensland Association of State School Principals president Hilary Backus said they believed the State Government’s “Great Teachers

equal Great Results” plan, which included a plan to strengthen discipline, was dealing with issues involving parents and violence in schools.

Mrs Backus said she did not believe staff-to-staff bullying was a significant issue in Queensland state schools and there were procedures in place to deal with complaints of this nature.

Right to Information documents show more than

\$2 million over five years was paid out to state school staff for psychological injury claims which involved bullying, staff conflict, workload or management issues.

Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) assistant director-general Craig Allen said the department took the psychological welfare of its staff seriously and had a range of programs and systems to ensure staff felt supported in carrying out their duties.