

Teachers advised to Draw the Line at school violence



The State School Teachers' Union has expressed concern at the increasing incidence of violence by students towards teachers and school leaders.

Education Department figures show incidents of violence have increased this year. In the first three months of 2016, there were 149 assaults, which is a 38 per cent increase on the same time last year.

The Union said it was time to draw the line.

"Our members have the right to go to work every day without the threat of violence from students," said SSTUWA President Pat Byrne.

"While we must acknowledge that the majority of students are well behaved, the number who are not, and are resorting to violence, is increasing significantly.

"We are very concerned that not only has the number of violent incidents increased, but the severity of these incidents has escalated to the point where in some cases we are concerned for our members' safety.

"While in many instances, our members have not wanted to report incidents out of concern for their students' future education prospects, teachers and leaders are expressing concerns for their safety and that of other students.

"No teacher should feel unsafe or threatened in his or her workplace. There are established protocols in place for dealing with student violence, which include police action, but which teachers have often been reluctant to pursue.

"We are now encouraging our members to use the processes that are available."

Ms Byrne said the Union had launched the Draw the Line campaign among members at the start of the year, in relation to issues of workload and student violence.

"We cannot tolerate a situation where teachers feel it is part and parcel of their job to deal with violence from students," Ms Byrne said.

She said the increase in violent incidents had occurred since the State Government had cut \$250 million from school budgets, which had forced some schools to cancel programs targeted at students at risk.

“You can’t cut millions of dollars from school budgets and expect it not to have an effect,” she said.

“We’ve seen behaviour management programs cut, and fewer staff in schools who are available to engage with “at risk” students before their behaviour escalates into violence.

“We are calling on the government to return those funds to schools to enable them to reinstate these important programs.”

Ms Byrne said teachers had also reported getting less support from parents in dealing with their children’s behavioural issues.

“Unfortunately some parents have the attitude that their children can do no wrong,” she said.

“Successful interventions in children’s behaviour need schools and parents to support each other.”