

# Teachers blame parents...

**TIM WILLIAMS**  
EDUCATION REPORTER

A LARGE majority of teachers blame parents for bad student behaviour and high numbers feel disrespected by them, a national report reveals.

The Teachers Report Card survey found four in every 10 teachers felt disrespected by parents or not highly regarded by them.

And two-thirds of respondents said classroom behaviour was mostly the responsibility of parents.

The joint report from the

Australian College of Educators and Australian Scholarships Group covered the views of 380 teachers from both public and private schools.

The results echo the views of SA principals groups, which have repeatedly raised concerns about parents' lack of respect for the authority of teachers and school leaders having a flow-on effect to students' bad behaviour.

While only 59 per cent of teachers thought student behaviour was good, almost all believed they had at least adequate ability to deal with dis-

ruptive behaviour in class. Despite the lack of respect from parents – and more than a third of teachers reporting parents sometimes disagreed with their assessments of children's progress – large majorities felt levels of teacher-parent engagement were appropriate and that their views were well aligned.

Australian Scholarships Group chief executive John Velegrinis said: "When parents have a better understanding of what their child is learning in school, this helps them to further optimise educational out-

comes." The survey also found:

**TEACHERS** were evenly split on whether there was too much standardised testing, such as NAPLAN, or the right amount;

**CLOSE** to a quarter thought too much homework was set for students;

**ONE** in five considered quitting in the past three months, with public school-teachers more than twice as likely to think about leaving than independent school teachers. This was despite more than 90 per cent overall being satisfied with their jobs;

**CATHOLIC** and independent school teachers had poorer work-life balance than public school ones;

**A QUARTER** of Catholic school teachers thought use of technology has had a detrimental effect on learning outcomes;

**FORTY** per cent of all teachers said they were poorly or very poorly paid;

**HALF** claimed they "hardly ever" or only occasionally had access to support or mentoring;

**MORE** than half, and particularly female teachers, said opportunities for promotion were rare.

Australian College of Educators chief executive Helen Jentz said teachers must be given the resources they needed to succeed, after close to half of public teachers reported the level of infrastructure at their school was inadequate or "non-existent".

That was twice the rate of that reported by private school teachers.

Half of public teachers also worried that students often missed educational opportunities because of their parents' financial situation.

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## ... while parents' complaints about school are soaring

**TIM WILLIAMS**

BEHAVIOUR management and bullying issues top a skyrocketing tally of parent complaints made to the Education Department, with student suspensions and exclusions a major source of disputes.

The number of complaints jumped 28 per cent to more than 2400 last year.

In some cases, parents go straight to the department's complaints unit, while in others, disputes that cannot be resolved at the school are referred to it.

Issues around student suspensions and exclusions comprised about two-thirds of all behaviour management-related "contacts" with the unit, which include both complaints and queries.

School zoning, enrolment, department and school policies, and family law disputes were other major complaint areas.

Also high on the list were staff performance and misconduct, communication, student attendance, special education funding and access to school facilities.

The number of "contacts" rose from 2953 to 3303 last year. The proportion that were complaints climbed from 64 per cent to 73 per cent, taking the complaint tally from 1890 to 2411.

The department attributed the rise to greater community

awareness of the complaints unit and "ongoing consolidation of complaints functions" across the department.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner said there were cases where parents had "not even received a call back" from the complaints unit "for months on end". He repeated the Liberal Party's call for an education ombudsman, independent of the department.

But Australian Education Union state president Howard Spreadbury said many complaints were "very low level" and some were unreasonable.

He cited an instance where a parent wanted their child moved to another class because of low-level bullying by another student that was likely happening more in the schoolyard than the classroom.

"Some individual members have raised questions about the veracity of the complaints," Mr Spreadbury said.

A department report said 40 per cent of issues were finalised the same day and 78 per cent within a week, with 14 per cent taking more than a fortnight. Complaints data was used to improve policies on religious activities, gender diversity and administration of medication in schools.

However, the religious policy has been controversial. The Opposition claims the wording discourages Christmas carols, which the department denies.



**MINI LIBRARY:** Darlington Children's Centre's Deb Higgins with Sofia and Dulina, who are both three. Picture: TAIT SCHMAAL

**TIM WILLIAMS**

A LITTLE library is having a big impact on the community that uses Darlington Children's Centre.

Attended by up to 250 children and adults each week, the centre was one of 10 recipients of "mini libraries" of 350 books through the Little Big Book Swap program last year. Schools and community

groups can run book swap events at any time of year, where participants bring a pre-loved book to exchange and make a gold coin donation. The proceeds are pooled towards funding the libraries for vulnerable communities.

"It was a wonderful opportunity for our centre," Darlington's community development co-ordinator, Deb Higgins, said. "The biggest difference I've

found it's made for our families is availability, and the opportunity to have really high quality books in their home.

"The books are available to our preschool and community families. We also use them for our parenting group and our multicultural women's group and their children."

Centre director David Coulter said the mini library had "added such a depth to our

community play space". "We have groups on Saturday so dads can be involved too," he said. Children's and community centres at Parafield Gardens, Enfield, Balaklava and Mt Gambier were among other beneficiaries last year.

The program is an initiative of Raising Literacy Australia. To register an event, visit [thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/book-swap](http://thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/book-swap).

## Medicare system probe

THE Federal Government has ordered an urgent audit of security around Australians' Medicare information following claims that details have been sold on the "dark web".

Health Minister Greg Hunt and Human Services Minister Alan Tudge said the review of the online system, which allows health providers to access a card number using a patient's name and date of birth, would

be completed by the end of September.

The system was introduced in 2009 to ensure that, in an emergency, people could get treatment immediately even if they did not have their card.

A police investigation was sparked last week following a report that Medicare numbers could be bought through a dark web trader for less than \$30. That investigation continues.

## Drivers nabbed speeding

MORE than 1000 motorists were caught speeding on the same weekend that four people died on the state's roads.

A total of 518 expiation notices and 533 cautions were issued over the past three days while three motorists were reported as part of a crackdown on speeding.

Adelaide Hills footballer Matthew West was killed when his car hit a tree at

Woodside on the early hours of Sunday.

Tributes flowed for 18-year-old Joel Broadhead who died in a crash at Kapunda on Friday night.

Hours later, 65-year-old Ron Hatton was fatally struck by a truck at a Burton transport business.

And an elderly woman died after being hit by a truck at Gawler on Friday morning.

## Researchers cough it up

AUSTRALIAN GPs are overprescribing antibiotics for respiratory infections.

Antibiotics are prescribed for acute respiratory infections at rates four to nine times higher than recommended by national guidelines, researchers found.

The researchers led by Bond University public health professor Christopher Del Mar said antibiotic prescribing in

general practice could be substantially reduced if GPs adhered more closely to national therapeutic guidelines.

The study found an estimated mean of 5.97 million ARI cases per year were managed in general practice with at least one antibiotic.

The findings are the first to quantify the overprescribing of antibiotics for ARIs by Australian GPs.