

Explosion in schoolgirl weapons and violence

SPECIAL REPORT

By BRUCE McDOUGALL
and KELVIN BISSETT

ASSAULTS by schoolgirls have exploded, with attacks or serious threats of violence against teachers and other students reported to police at a rate of nine a week.

Knives and other weapons, including broken bottles, have been used by girls in the attacks, which experts say are close to catching up with boys in frequency and intensity.

Figures released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research show there were 373 assaults or threats of violence reported to police in schools in 2006 involving a female "person of interest".

The figure — covering individuals aged 10-17 years — covers both government and private schools. It is almost a third of the total 1242 reports of criminal incidents of assault handled by police for both government and private schools in school hours.

The statistics include 21 attacks identifying girls filed by private schools.

Incident reports obtained under Freedom of Information reveal in de-

Bottles, knives & fists

- A YEAR 8 female student brandishing a broken glass bottle chased a Year 5 girl at a western Sydney primary school
- Year 7 student held a knife to the throat of two female classmates in Liverpool area and demanded money, before claiming it was a prank
- In Sydney's east, a Year 11 female punched another Year 11 female breaking her nose
- A basketball match between females from two high schools in Marrickville ended in a brawl



tall 80 attacks involving girls in government schools over a 20-week period.

In one assault, a Year 8 girl from a school on the North Coast was battered into a "semi-conscious state" by another Year 8 student. The victim was grabbed by the hair, slammed on to the ground, punched continually and kicked in the head and stomach.

Broken noses, bruising and other injuries to female students show up in incident reports.

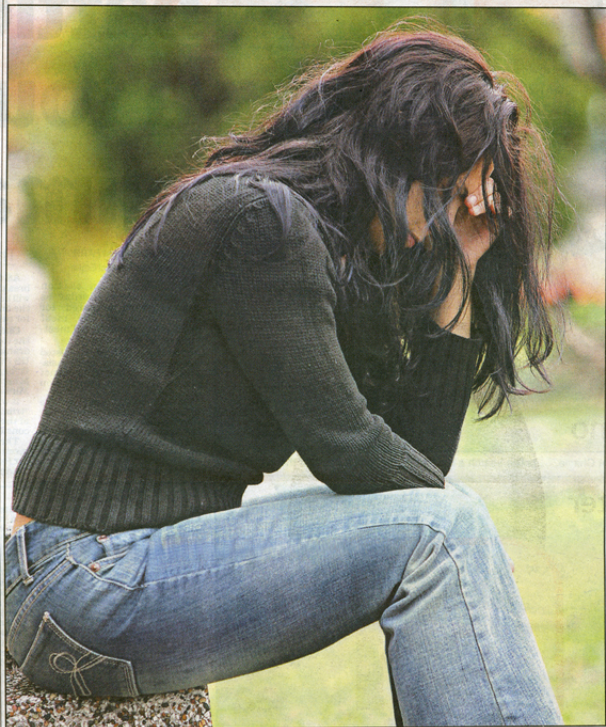
A principal was hit in the leg by a knife when a Year 9 female in the Fairfield area threw a waste paper bin at a teacher and menaced other staff.

The attacks fly in the face of a claim by Premier Morris Iemma more than a year ago that the Government would crack down on teenage lawlessness.

Since then, victims of female assault have been hospitalised and police called to schools when violence has surged out of control.

Bullying expert Professor Donna Cross, of Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, said female violence had become a worldwide phenomenon.

"There is an acceptance of this behaviour that we haven't seen before. It has become somewhat normalised that girls can be aggressive... they see it on TV that girls can behave in this way," she said.



Hospitalised... dance teacher Despina Rosales, who says she was punched, kicked and spat at. Picture: STEPHEN COOPER

Teacher 'punched and spat at'

By BRUCE McDOUGALL

A DANCE teacher claims she was "punched, kicked, spat at and hit repeatedly" by up to seven female students while trying to drive out of a high school car park.

During the nasty altercation at Randwick Girls High School in Sydney's east the teacher, Despina Rosales, says she was first punched in the head through her open car window.

Ms Rosales, 35, said the students

surrounded her car as she tried to leave the school, hurling abuse and calling her a "loser".

After she was allegedly punched through the window she got out of the car and attempted to restrain one of the girls but another student said: "Let go of her, she'll kill you."

One of the students claimed Ms Rosales had driven over her foot.

Police were called to the school after the incident on June 13 but no charges were laid.

Ms Rosales had medical treatment at Prince of Wales Hospital for a "serious blow to the right side of her head".

A spokesman for the Department of Education and Training said one student had received a "long suspension, pending expulsion" and four other students were suspended for four days and given detentions.

"The school found that while the students had been provoked their reaction meant disciplinary action was necessary," the spokesman said.