

Teachers need self defence

By BRUCE MCDUGALL

SCHOOL teachers are taking lessons in self-defence as part of a crisis training program in handling violent, dangerous pupils.

Teachers have told *The Daily Telegraph* they are doing courses in how to repel a physical attack.

They are being taught a special "block-and-move" manoeuvre in which they use their arms to parry an attacker's blow and then dodge out of harm's way.

The skills have become a regular part of the armoury of teachers faced with students likely to become violent and confrontational.

Teachers and their families yesterday disputed Government claims that schools remained among the safest places in the community, many saying the classroom had become a personal hell.

Data obtained by *The Daily Telegraph* under Freedom of Information shows schools filed 252 official reports of assault or threats to teacher safety in four school terms up to August last year.

One veteran female secondary teacher, who refused to be identified, said schools were being "overwhelmed" by violent and abusive

students. "We are dealing with a whole lot of emotional baggage that kids are bringing from their home lives to school," she said.

"This year already has been bad for us ... some of our teachers believe rising rents and mortgages are placing already stressed households — and therefore the children — under even more pressure."

The Department of Education said it was training teachers and other school staff to resolve conflicts non-violently.

A spokesman said two special programs — non-violent crisis intervention and professional assault response — were part of a "range of behaviour management supports given to staff".

"The training equips school staff with skills to safely resolve situations where students or others may present with anxious, hostile or violent behaviour," he said.

"The primary focus is to teach effective verbal techniques for reducing disruptive behaviour."

Education Minister John Della Bosca said instances of student violence on teachers were rare and decreasing.

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