TEACHERS ON THE FRONT LINE

The Territory Opposition will use Parliamentary Estimates to investigate whether teachers continue to be subject to an unacceptable threat of assault within the education system.

“The number of assaults on teachers has risen dramatically in the past 3 years and that situation must not be allowed to continue,” says Terry Mills, Shadow Minister for Education.

The Martin Government’s own figures show that whereas just 12 teachers were either physically or verbally assaulted in 2003/04, that number had risen to 28 in 2004/05 and jumped to 51 in 2005/06.

“A four-fold increase in the number of assaults on teachers in the three year period is alarming, particularly when the vast majority of those assaults involve physical violence,” Mr Mills says.

“I'll want to know what steps the Minister for Education, Paul Henderson, has taken to curb the incidence of assault and have him explain how successful he believes those measures have been.

“In particular, I’ll be very interested in what punishment has been meted out to the perpetrators of the violence.

“How far we have come from when teachers were amongst the most respected members of our community.

“We need a zero tolerance approach to the assault of teachers by students in schools; our schools are places of learning, not intimidation and thuggery.

“Unfortunately it looks as if the rise in violent assault in the wider Territory society is being mirrored in our schools.

“The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures on crime rates show the number of assaults in the Territory has jumped from 3431 in 2002 to 4350 in 2006.

“Those figures should be prompting a complete re-think of the Martin Government’s strategy for curbing violent assault.

“I won’t stand for this decline in social order, particularly in our schools.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594