



IN DEMAND: Adelaide model Aklima walking in London for Roland Mouret.

Picture: CATWALKING/GETTY

Parents demand penalties

Bullying must be punished

TIM WILLIAMS

MORE than 80 per cent of parents and school staff want tougher laws to make it easier to prosecute bullies, including jail time of up to a decade.

The question of penalties for serial bullies became a political issue in the wake of the tragic death of an Adelaide schoolgirl last month.

The Australian Conservatives have vowed to push legislation that could be in place by the start of the 2018 school year, including jail terms.

The legislation would be similar to 'Brodie's Law', introduced in Victoria in 2011 after Melbourne waitress Brodie Panlock, 19, ended her life five years earlier amid a campaign of intimidation and humiliation by co-workers.

The latest survey by the SA Association of State School Organisations found more than four in every five respondents, of more than 1200 total, wanted the State Government to toughen bullying laws.

"Comments showed that parents and educators acknowledge that police prosecution is a drastic step, but one that is sadly necessary to combat a plague of unchecked bullying," SAASSO director David Knuckey said.

"With bullying now impacting on thousands of South Australian children every

week, the damage is incalculable.

"Studies show that current bullying strategies are having limited effect.

"Clearly we need to look at other ways of protecting children, if we are going to avoid further tragedies."

Close to 93 per cent of respondents were parents and more than half worked in schools.

Among school workers, support staff were most staunchly in favour of harsher penalties for bullies (88 per cent) followed by teachers (81 per cent) and principals (72 per cent).

"School staff stated they simply do not have the resources to tackle extreme cases," Mr Knuckey said.

One respondent said: "There needs to be severe consequences for the offender ... but jail time is probably a bit extreme."

But another said: "Trial minors as adults if necessary. Keep our children safe."

Seaford Secondary student Libby Bell took her own life last month after what her family said was years of bullying.

Police are investigating her death and preparing a report for the coroner.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP, CALL:

LIFELINE - 13 11 14

KIDS HELPLINE - 1800 55 1800