

Push to stamp out bullying

By EMMA CHADWICK

SCHOOL and workplace bullying have come under the microscope in Townsville with a new initiative that aims to prevent bullying in both corporate offices and school yards.

Hundreds of children and adults are the target of bullies each day in Townsville and the effects on individuals and families can be devastating.

Centacare has become so concerned with the increased incidence of bullying, the family relationship service has attracted specialist consultant Jenny Creedy to help employers and schools reach zero tolerance to bullying.

Ms Creedy said there was no place for bullying and likened workplace bullying to 'a poison' that affected all staff and resulted in the loss of good staff members.

She said suicide was often linked to workplace bullying and there was an increase in the number of men aged 40 to 45 who were taking their own lives because they felt they were 'useless at work and a burden to their family', because of bullying.

"Centacare hasn't ventured into the corporate world before but bullying has been identified as an area which is causing problems with families breaking up," Ms Creedy said.

"We work with line managers and executive staff in helping them build skills, including showing them how to improve performance of their staff and identifying how well staff know their job description.

"Things such as not knowing how to conduct performance



DETERMINED . . . Jenny Creedy is heading an initiative against school and workplace bullying

reviews correctly, if not done properly, can put staff at risk of being bullied.

"There's huge benefits to the businesses who understand how to prevent bullying and the flow-on to the staff.

"It cannot only effect the person being bullied but those staff who witness bullying.

"There is no place for a bully to hide or operate in a well-run organisation and when there is one, the cost to the business can be very high, especially in staff turn-over rates.

"The majority of people I have seen affected by bullying, are really lovely people who are never the same afterwards.

"Managers have a duty of care to listen to their employees if they come to them and ensure they do something to stop bullying behaviour immediately under legislation."

Ms Creedy, who has been a private consultant to government ministers on bullying, said employers could now access a special-

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ist consultant and trainer in workplace bullying prevention and management without the expense of flying her up from Brisbane.

Ms Creedy ran her own consultancy and training business in Brisbane for 12 years and has helped councils, government departments and private companies to prevent and manage bullying.

"Bullying by definition, is repeated behaviour which is meant to harm," she said.

"It is the perception of power over another person."

One in six Queensland children are bullied weekly.

Ms Creedy is available to support schools in identifying and assisting children who are being bullied and said it was no longer enough for schools to have a 'bullying policy', they could have a 'zero tolerance policy'.

She said countries such as Norway had introduced zero tolerance policies in schools and bullying had been reduced by 80 per cent.

Jenny Creedy can be contacted at Centacare on 4772 9000.