



# Bully bookies

## Kids bashed when schoolyard bets go bad

SOME Mackay high school students have been threatened with severe bashings after they were unable to cover illegal schoolyard bets, a student confirmed yesterday.

The student, who did not wish to be named, said pupils at some Mackay high schools were able to place bets worth hundreds of dollars with other students acting as illegal bookmakers.

He said he could have placed a couple of hundred dollars on last night's State of Origin series opener.

Gambling was gang controlled and those not able to cover bets were threatened with severe beatings.

School principals contacted yesterday said they had no knowledge of any such activity in their school.

They said if solid evidence was

forthcoming, immediate action would be taken to stamp out the problem.

Mackay police school-based officer Constable Leisa Aitken said police would start investigations.

Const Aitken said she had not heard of any incidents.

The student said teachers did not know much about the activity with beatings conducted outside of school grounds.

Gambling expert Dr Grant Schofield, who will present his latest research findings into Central Queensland gambling problems next week, said adolescent males were the group most likely to gamble.

"Certainly a significant portion of the population around adolescence, heading into their college

years, have difficulties," Dr Schofield said.

"They are gaining financial independence and do not have much idea on how to control their finances."

Mackay North State High School acting principal Vince Tye said there had been no reports from students, teachers or parents about gambling to him.

"If we have any concrete information I will follow it up straight away as would be the case with any unacceptable activity," Mr Tye said.

Gambling Help Services Mackay councillor Melanie Patman said she would not be surprised if children gambled.

