



Loves a pat: Natasha Gillam, 7, with pet rabbit Dolly. Picture: ROB LEESON

It's boom time for bunnies

THOUSANDS of rabbits are being abandoned at Victorian animal shelters, prompting calls for more families to consider adopting a bunny.

RSPCA shelter attendant Alice Currey said each year she saw more than 430 rabbits in need of a home.

"Rabbits have become a more popular pet, but when the kids grow up a lot of families bring them to the shelter or just

let them go," Ms Currey said. "Sadly people don't think of shelters when searching for a bunny, like they do when they're searching for a dog or a cat.

"These are very intelligent animals and they come desexed and cost less than at a pet shop."

Wandin North mum Vicky Gillam adopted a white rabbit named Dolly this month after searching on the RSPCA

website. She said her daughter Natasha, 7, had developed a special bond with the newest family member.

"We wanted a bunny that was extra-special," Ms Gillam said.

"She is the most adorable animal we have ever come across. She is very affectionate and she nudges you when she wants a pat, and Natasha loves her." ALEX WHITE

'Ruined' by bully

THE State Government faces a huge compensation claim from a former schoolboy who says he was beaten so badly by a schoolyard bully he will never work.

The former student could claim more than \$3 million based on the average Australian wage over a working lifetime.

In another school assault case, a girl is suing the Government over an alleged sexual assault at a Melbourne school.

These are among the latest spate of legal actions against the Government over schoolyard bullying and assaults and follow three claims by Victorian schoolgirls two months ago.

Court documents allege a former Bundoora Secondary College student spent his high school years in terror. In 1998, when he was 13, until he turned 17 in 2002 he was severely bullied and finally bashed, causing skull fractures.

On June 25, 2002 the

SUE HEWITT

bully allegedly assaulted the victim causing "significant" head injuries including multiple fractures, bruising, lacerations and injuries that affected his vision.

The documents say the attack caused post-traumatic stress disorder and triggered or aggravated obsessive compulsive behaviour and schizophrenia.

Lawyers from Arnold Thomas & Becker said the victim, now 26, had never worked because of his injuries and probably never would.

A schoolgirl in a statement of claim lodged with the County Court says the Government failed to protect her from a classmate.

She alleges that in 2006 the boy assaulted her sexually during an excursion despite the school knowing his history of demanding sexual favours from other students.

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