AN education expert has rebutted claims by the Tasmanian State Schools Parents and Friends that the benefits of homework are yet to be proven and should be banned.

Dr Kevin Donnelly, known for his strong criticism of Tasmania's ELs curriculum, yesterday said peer-reviewed research from the US and an international study of maths and science students proved homework improved academic standards.

The executive director of Victorian-based consulting group Education Strategies said the idea of an education system or school that did not allocate homework was bizarre.

"The research is very positive about its benefits," Dr Donnelly said.

"A meta-analysis by Dr Harris Cooper looked at 120 (homework related) studies and 70 per cent found homework was beneficial, so the research is there.

"The Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) shows countries that do better in maths and science generally have more homework. So some of the research is definitely saying there is a correlation between homework and high levels of achievement."

On Monday Tasmanian State Schools Parents and Friends president Jenny Branch called for a ban on homework in public schools, claiming there was no evidence of benefit to students and that it may contribute to child obesity.

Her calls were backed up by Melbourne adolescent psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg, who agreed there was no evidence homework in primary and middle school had academic benefit.

Education Minister David Bartlett rejected the proposal as "ludicrous".

Dr Donnelly said for a change he had to agree with the minister, but added that teachers had to find the right balance.

"If you do too little or too much homework it can be counter productive, common sense should prevail," he said.

"In middle and upper primary you wouldn't want more than an hour (each day) but for middle and upper secondary it could be up to three hours, and there needs to be variety.

"I am not arguing for homework for homework's sake.

"It's good for children in terms of learning time management and working to a deadline."

Dr Cooper's research is in his book The Battle Over Homework (1989) and the TIMSS findings came from research in 1994 and 1995.

Ms Branch yesterday said the Tasmanian State Schools Parents and Friends were keen to see the homework debate continue and said a workshop on the issue would be held at the group's upcoming parent seminar in Launceston.
She said parents were asking whether homework was achieving desired outcomes.

"While we all want our children to do well and develop good study habits, I hear from a lot of parents who find the amount of homework their child receives creates unnecessary stress and takes up time they could be spending on other, potentially more valuable, activities," Ms Branch said.

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