

**INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 16 June 2022

Partially
Confidential

I am lodging this submission as a teacher who has been stood down in this mandate debacle, even though I have a medical contraindication. I would like to highlight the truly disgusting treatment of staff, as well as clarify that these mandates are an enormous reason for the current staffing crisis in NSW Public Education.

I have been teaching since 1998 and this year would have been my 24th year in Education.

I am going to share with you some highly personal information which I feel is necessary to fully explain my situation, so that you can grasp an understanding of my unique circumstances. I please ask that my name remains confidential.

I have quite a complex medical history. I have had 4 surgeries in the last 6 years.

In 2015, I had to have hysterectomy surgery. During that surgery, the anesthetist gave me the wrong medication while already under anesthetic (this was with NSW Health in a NSW Public Hospital). Instead of giving me anti-nausea medication he picked up the wrong vial and administered a massive dose of adrenaline. I suffered a severe heart attack as a result. I spent the next number of days in the high dependency coronary care unit. On the first night I had a 'code red' called on me where my room suddenly filled with 10-12 doctors, nurses and specialists (some carry a defibrillator) asking me to remain calm as my vitals were gravely concerning and critical. I sustained damage to the lining of my heart and had a troponin leak. I was told by the attending Doctor and Hospital Officials that I was extremely lucky that I had already been put under anesthetic otherwise it could have been fatal, as my own adrenaline would have also kicked in elevating my heart rate even further. These are not easy words to hear, especially when you have small children and your whole life ahead of you. I then spent months not being able to do too much to aid my recovery.

Eighteen months later, I then had to have lumpectomy surgery to remove several lumps from my breast. It was during this time that the mental impacts of the heart attack and negligence from the previous surgery became obvious. I ended up in hospital again with stroke like symptoms from severe anxiety. It was after this; I was diagnosed with PTSD, with my trigger being hospitals and medical procedures. Following this diagnosis, I spent a lot of time working with my psychologist to manage and maintain my PTSD.

Then In 2018, I had to have ACDF Surgery on my back – where a disc was removed and completely replaced due to 3 bulging discs which had impinged my spinal cord as well as compressing multiple nerve roots. Again, with my PTSD this was a tough experience but with the help and lots of effort put in with my psychologist I got through it. In short, I had a few more appointments with my psychologist following this surgery and we determined together that I was controlling and managing my PTSD to a point that I then moved to a need to see basis – so only having to see him when needed.

I did not have to see my psychologist for well over 12 months and I seriously believed that I was well and truly on top of my PTSD and on the road to long term recovery and management; that is until the mandates came into effect.

Given my history with my heart and the damage that I suffered to the lining I have to be very careful and cautious. I tried to speak to many people within the Department of Education about my health issues, my concerns and my individual medical circumstances, but to no avail. I also spoke directly to one of Brad Hazzard (the Health Minister's) Chief Physicians who also could not

provide me with a guarantee or an assurance that my heart would not suffer further damage or effects if I were vaccinated.

The stress and anxiety that this time of uncertainty has caused me has been absolutely horrendous to say the very least. The threat to have my very much loved career, that I have worked tirelessly at for 24 years, taken from me because I cannot have a medical procedure, is beyond my comprehension and has been truly devastating on so many levels. The emails that came from the Department during this period were nothing short of appalling. They were threatening, coercive, intimating and bullying in nature, and where in particular from Yvette Cachia, Sarah Mitchell and Georgina Harrison.

My PTSD has returned tenfold and been exacerbated to a level that I have never experienced before. It is far worse than what I had previously. I am back seeing my psychologist on a very regular basis again.

I lost 16kg in weight between the end of October (2021) and January of this year alone. Due to this weight loss, I suffered 5 gallbladder attacks in a week which resulted in me having to have more emergency surgery to have my gallbladder removed on January 21st. I have never had any prior issues with my gallbladder. The Drs said it was due to the rapid weight loss.

Other effects that I have suffered are severe anxiety, highly emotional – I have never cried so much in my life, I can't sleep, constant shaking, not wanting to leave the house or be around people, etc. The list could go on.

I do have a medical contraindication however the Department is challenging that also. Again, the stress and anxiety continue enormously with this.

I am otherwise fit and healthy, and my heart condition is completely managed but when no one can tell me if having the vaccine will cause further damage or exacerbate the previous damage to my heart, I cannot take that risk. I have 3 beautiful children that I must consider. My own Cardiologist has written letters for the Department stating he does not recommend me being vaccinated as the risk is greater for me to have an adverse reaction than getting Covid.

I absolutely love teaching and it is all I have ever wanted to do. I prided myself on my professionalism, dedication and hard work. I strived for each and every one of my students to be the best that they could be both academically and socially. I would leave home at 7.30am every day and every night I was the very last person to leave my school at 6pm, shutting the gates with school the cleaner.

In all my years of teaching I have never received a single complaint and I am so proud of that, but what I find difficult to comprehend is that I have been given an allegation of 'severe misconduct' and put 'under investigation for not following a direction' with the Departments' Performance and Ethical Standards unit for not being able to be vaccinated. Plus told if I turn up at school I could potentially be arrested. I can't begin to tell you the tremendous impact that this has had on me – it is truly shattering and soul destroying to be treated like a criminal for making an already extremely difficult health decision, which has staggering consequences like losing your livelihood, but on the other hand could result in potentially irreversible damage to my heart.

I have also had Covid – in which I was very mildly sick for just 3 days. So, I also now have natural immunity as well.

My current state of heightened PTSD is greatly impacting all facets of my life right now.

The current staffing crisis is due to these utterly baseless and ridiculous mandates / determinations. There is absolutely no reason why these should be in place still.

However, given the unfathomable treatment that I have had to endure from the Department I actually do not know how I will ever be able to walk back into a school again. I know so many teachers with 20+ years of experience that this has happened to - this amount of experience is absolutely irreplaceable and ultimately it is the students whose education will suffer out of these disgraceful decisions that have been made.

Again, thank you for taking the time to read my email and I hope that it gives you some insight to the total disrespect and disregard that was shown towards so many dedicated teachers by the Department. It is truly appalling.