

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 25 June 2022

Partially
Confidential

To the commission into the NSW teacher shortage,

I am a stakeholder in the NSW teacher shortage on multiple levels:- as a parent of two school age children whose learning has been hampered by the absence of assigned trained classroom teachers (including having no teacher or “taught” by Student Learning Support Officers (SLSO’s- also known as teacher’s aides)), and whom have had to leave the private education system; as a parent whose eldest child studying a double degree in early childhood and primary education has had her four completed years of study rendered worthless by her inability to complete the practicum components of her course to graduate; and as a teacher and School Counsellor / Psychologist with 31 years of completed sacrificial service to the students of the NSW, callously terminated from her jobs in both the public and private education systems on account of a personal medical decision.

A flow-on effect from this in terms of education include my husband and I having to make the decision to withdraw our children from their private school setting into home and public schooling on account of the financial, social, psychological and academic damage and discrimination of a COVID response actively perpetrated by the education system meant to ensure their growth, protection and development. My childrens’ social and mental health has suffered as a result of being separated from their friends, supports and routines. I have needed to support and guide them through this process whilst myself enduring personal and professional vilification and isolation which has led to post traumatic stress syndrome. I believe we are all suffering from the effects of trauma from a fear campaign of lies, discrimination, censorship and disinformation intended to disunify, confuse and wear us down to the point of a mass formation compliance to undemocratic Government overreach.

I had spent 31 years working for the NSW Department of Education keeping kids safe:- teaching them they were the bosses of their own bodies, to say no to things that didn’t feel right, and to be intentional about knowing and holding their values. Suddenly - literally overnight - I became deemed the very thing students needed protecting from. One day it was unsafe for staff to be at school and we could only do so with the express permission of the Principal, and the next day, arbitrarily, everyone had to return to school, but only if double jabbed. Home suddenly became too unsafe to be permitted to work from. Hence there was no option to work remotely even though we had been operating via Telehealth multiple times throughout COVID lockdowns over two years, including immediately prior to the mandate. Hence, in the words of my Senior Psychologist, “that was it!” for my career with the Department.

Throughout this process I was treated like an unclean criminal. This included my letter from the Department - the first personal contact with me about the mandates- stating I was not allowed on school grounds from Monday and if I attempted to, the Police would be called to remove me. My sin of omission also earned me the honour of being assigned to a private investigator, who found me guilty on all charges of professional misconduct for failing to comply with the directive of the Chief People Officer, Yvette Cachia, to take an experimental gene therapy which I believed to be unsafe and ineffective, and around which I have strongly founded faith and philosophical objections. Whilst throughout this process I was denigrated for my example of poor behaviour to my students, I could not live with integrity, nor live with myself, were I to tarnish the legacy of my teaching and example to generations of students by allowing MY actions to go against my values and conscience.

I was inhumanely terminated from my private school's employ in early November 2021 without so much as even a personal phone call or meeting; and was denied opportunity to meet with the Principal. This action was taken despite me furnishing both he and the Board with much evidence as to the depth and rationale of my concerns, the antithesis of this action to the values and mission of the school, and the detrimental impacts to the mental health, connectedness, and well being of students whose counselling support was being abruptly withdrawn. I had even furnished a proposal around ways I could continue to provide direct service from home to my students (some of them with suicidal ideation) which was rejected.

The NSW Department drew the inevitable termination process out longer, tantamount to torture, to prolong the scaremongering, vilification, humiliation and threats. Here again I was not contacted at any time by my Principal, nor executive, nor any one from my school where I had been based for 11 years. Overnight I was likewise shunned by my school counselling peers:- intelligent, caring individuals who - in their fear - victim-blamed and scapegoated, becoming too scared to even meet me so I could hand back my Departmental laptop.

I was dismayed to learn - only recently - that in neither of my workplaces (in a local public high school and our local K-12 Christian school) was I replaced by another Counsellor or psychologist. In both my schools the decision was made to deprive the students of ANY psychological or well being support rather than having that long established and much needed support from me. I can only extrapolate that all over our State students were left without teachers, counsellors and other essential support services rather than allow existing established, successful supports to continue. How has this been about health? How has this benefited our children's education or wellbeing? The COVID response has decimated our education system, our workforce, and the lives of so many individuals. Whilst the COVID virus comes and leaves the vast majority of us with nothing more than a cold, the scars of the response on each and every one of us can never be erased.

Every day of school missed is lowering our kids' intelligence; every day of lockdown is increasing our youth suicide rates; every fear mongering and divisive regulation is shattering young peoples' sense of security and fostering the very discrimination, bigotry, division and non acceptance that our schools have long been teaching and training against. Wearing masks to protect from the virus is at best useless. In schools it is worse. As well as the health dangers of young childrens' depleted oxygen levels and inhaling their toxic waste causing brain damage, reduced learning ability and viral pneumonia, it teaches students to be fearful of a disease and each other, and robs young children of the opportunity to learn language, expressions, and emotions holistically.

It adds insult to injury that as teachers are striking and unions place ads about their poor conditions and overwork, the marked contribution to this situation of the school staff vaccination mandate is totally ignored - even widely denied - despite the fact that our "unclean" ranks have depleted the workforce by over 13000 dedicated servants of education.

I don't know if the system can be fixed, but the humility of the perpetrators to admit they were wrong and treated us unfairly would go a good way to building a bridge. As it appears that our mandate may soon be removed, then at the very least an acknowledgement of unhelpful

overreach, wrongdoing, and an undertaking to never again make the call to attack and divide us at any time for any reason would be the salve I would personally need to return to the jobs I loved and the career I had been called to for over three decades. That way, suddenly, the problem which was of their creation, has a magic solution. It doesn't involve perfect people; and every one of us will be left battle scarred and war weary. But it puts us back in the game of "all in this together"; on the same field and hopefully on the same team. And it needs to come from the top. For the wise words of Mark Twain ring true: "It is easier to deceive someone than to convince them they've been deceived."

We need to use our past as lessons for the future and commit to never making these COVID mistakes again.

Sincerely yours in the future of and for our children,