

**Submission  
No 13**

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

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I'm a primary teacher with an Honours degree. I graduated in Dec 2019 and was offered a temporary part time teaching position in a small rural catholic school where my mum and family went to school. I accepted, moved to my mum's home town and began to work in a kinder class of 6 children. Then the pandemic hit in week 7 of my first term as a teacher. I didn't know how to teach because my teacher training was inadequate and then I was being asked to teach from home. The other staff were either as inexperienced as I was or so stressed about the impact of their families that they couldn't me and I couldn't help them. We made it through, I survived a year in what I was later told was a class that would've made most first year teachers quit and wasted hours reapplying for the same job the next year because I was temp. I got the job but got put on anxiety medication at the same time because I was so riddled with stress that I had constant chest pain. The next year was better- a better co-teacher, a better class, more experience and confidence. I was loving my time in the class with my kids but I was missing my new partner in Newcastle, 2 hours away. Then the next lockdown happened. I got to spend more time with my partner, I went off my anxiety meds because my stresses had dramatically reduced but I missed my kids. Towards the end of lockdown, talk started of vaccine mandates. I had my flu shot that year at school and a whooping cough shot to visit my niece and nephew. Im not against vaccines, in fact they're fascinating and wonderful medical inventions. But something just felt off about the covid vaccines by the middle of 2021. In Jan 2021, my family was begging me not to be the first to get the new, experimental jab just so I could travel but 18 months later, I'm the last one unjabbed. My gut told me that this wasn't for me and my natural intuition has never let me down before. I've been told I'm a pod judge of character. I could sense it wasn't for me and a vaccine mandate wasn't going to change my mind. In fact, it cemented my decision even more- I will not be forced to do anything I don't want to do. So I stuck by my guns, hoped that there would be exemptions and crossed my fingers. On October 11th 2021, 'Freedom Day', it was dubbed for the double vaxxed, I lost my ability to leave my LGA to attend my school. I had effectively lost my job. The same day, my loan was approved for a new car. I had to sell that car 4 months later because I hadn't worked since the day the loan was approved. My savings were being drained, I nearly fell into a depression, my anxiety went through the roof. I couldn't work in the field I had trained in for 4 years. I couldn't apply for new jobs- everywhere needed double vaxxed staff. I couldn't apply for Centrelink as I was only on leave without pay- I still technically had a job. Then work overpaid me on my last pay and were chasing me for \$1000 I couldn't afford to pay back. I was denied sick leave by my GO , I was denied surgery because the doctor wouldn't risk herself and her team operating on me. I was lectured and belittled by that doctor. My sister wouldn't get in the car with me to go to a cafe but would sit across from me at the cafe for 3 hours. I wasn't told about or invited to my grandparents' Christmas party that my vaxxed siblings were invited to. I'd gone to year before when no one was vaxxed. The same grandparents lectured me about my reputation as a teacher and how I was throwing my career away over a safe vaccine. There is so much more than that. I wrote a diary detailing what had happened on a daily basis from August to January. Well, the Pfizer documents released this year prove what I'd been worried about. They proved that following my gut had been the right thing to do. So many I know regret the jab but they had no other choice- lose your job or lose your house! So many more don't want the booster. These mandates are wrong. They are a violation of human rights, bodily autonomy and basic freedom of choice. It's a form of rape- forcing consent the way they did. It nearly destroyed my mum. But she just bought a house and needs her job. She has headaches and body aches daily now. So does my aunt and uncle. None of them wanted it but they were forced to submit through one pressure or another. No amount of money will fix their daily suffering. They should have been trusted to make their own medical choices. I'm so grateful that I held out. I suffered greatly and still can't tell people why I'm in the wine industry now. I lie and say I'm burnout and they believe me so readily because it was nearly true. And there are thousands like me. We get told constantly at Uni that 50% of us will not by teachers by our 5th year out of uni. I told myself I wouldn't be one of the failures. I wasn't a failure, I was forced out. But it's so common for young teachers to quit that people believe it! And in

some ways, I'm glad I was forced out. I was close to burn out. I loved my kids but I would be at school from 7am to 8pm some days and do it again the next day. There was a never ending amount of work. And no support for new teachers. It was so confusing and overwhelming.

There are thousands of people with similar or worse stories than mine. The education system was broken and these mandates have crippled it even more. I don't know who can change this but reverse the mandates to start with then put real teachers with real experience in charge of the DOE. We need people who know what it's actually like in a classroom to be making the rules. There's too much assessing and reporting and proving you're a good teacher to the point you can't actually teach. Something needs to change. For teachers' sake, for children and for our communities and our future as a nation. Education is key.