

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I became a teacher in my 40s. I studied while my children were young to achieve my long held ambition of becoming a teacher. I studied a combined bachelor of education/bachelor of disability (double degree, HD average) so that I could cater to the needs of all students. I was a targeted graduate and taught for three years before being terminated by the NSW Department of Education for being unvaccinated against Covid-19. Prior to my termination I taught onsite during the lockdowns. I did this because there were several students at the school I taught at who were high needs and/or at risk. I did not want these students to be endangered during lockdown or to miss out on vital months of education. I kept myself healthy by eating well and ensuring that I exercised and had regular sun exposure. After being stood down and then terminated, I suffered stress and anxiety related disorders. I was stunned that, despite my hard work, dedication, and devotion to my students, I was cast aside by the NSW DOE. The investigators had no interest in sharing risk assessments or considering my reasons for not vaccinating during the trial phase of this treatment. Two weeks after my official termination, I received a call at home advising me that my termination would be reconsidered if I had two doses of the newly released Novovax vaccine. This was despite them previously advising that my file would be marked as 'not to be reemployed'. My former colleagues are under immense pressure. Not only has their previous workload increased, but there is also a lack of casuals to cover when staff are ill or injured. This means that classes are often combined, or that sometimes students are supervised in a large group in the hall or quadrangle. The callous disregard for my personal circumstances and dedicated service by the NSW DOE is shocking. Despite the roll back of the Government mandate, the NSW DOE are still insisting that staff be double vaccinated, despite the fact that teachers who were vaccinated by 8 November 2021 (as required by the mandate) would now have little to no protection from their inoculation. Further, many of these teachers have caught COVID-19 despite their vaccination. Given this, it is illogical that the NSW DOE continue to insist on double vaccination for staff. At this stage, due to the trauma of the investigation and termination process, I am unsure that I will ever return to teaching if the requirement to be double vaccinated is ever lifted. Despite my desire to make a difference to future generations, I feel that the treatment of teachers by this NSW State Government and the NSW DOE makes it impossible for me to protect my own mental health. I cannot help others if I am not supported by my employer. The NSW DOE have treated me as the enemy, and terminated me for misconduct for being proactive in protecting my own health.