

Submission  
No 247

## INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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## Inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales

by Melissa Molloy

I write as a spouse of a teacher who returned to teaching after 24 years.

If I had known how unsafe an environment the Local High School was for staff I would never have allowed him to do it. Furthermore, on numerous occasions during and after he was engaged with the Department of Education they have shown little or no regard to my husband's mental health. Even more disturbing are the attacks on our son Luke.

My first association with this Local High School was when I heard a male teacher on at least three occasions make comments about a female colleague that she was a "mental bitch". He was "sick to death of her using the mental card" and she "should just make up her mind and quit altogether." These were not only said in front of other parents but students.

However, the staff with our two eldest children (2009-2014) and (2013-2018) were very caring and supportive, so this was considered an anomaly. Our youngest started Kindergarten in 2018 and my husband decided to return to a career in teaching.

It was distressing enough to hear some of the outrageous events that would happen where the student victims and teachers at the coal face would be given little or no support.

However, at no stage did I ever envisage that higher staff would recklessly work to victimise my husband and my son at the same Local High School and that more than two years on our family would still be waiting for matters to be properly deal with – not letters advising so.

My husband made complaints about a Deputy Principal including a formal written one. This was not sent to the person he was advised it would – not asked for any more information. A GIPA appears to show collusion between staff and a reply with a threat to get my husband.

A Department of Education person called our home against official protocol requested by our Solicitor. This person was asked that in future to please call later in the day, like after 3.30pm because he was working at a different school. The caller went off his brain and continued to rave and rant "I will make a *special* time. Look there you go, I made a *special* time. I have even written it down for you, a *special* time just for you." It was truly astonishing. However, amongst nine other things, they finished again with a warning to my husband.

I stood and listened to some man-hating Counsellor abuse my husband over the phone; try and phish for legal information and make comments about his plans – completely out of her area. The comments she made were disgraceful and she should be ashamed of herself. She too decided to warn him "Do you think it's a good idea how you made complaints about those Deputy Principals?". He had only ever mentioned one of them to her.

The final straw was at 3.17pm on 15 December 2020, when my husband had started at a new high school and a Head Teacher from the old rang up on behalf of the Senior Executive how they were furious about him doing a GIPA. The caller rattled off numerous conflicts of interest the school had against him before asking for undertakings that he would not take legal action or report anything to the Minister. The caller ended by threatening to get him and comments about the safety of our son at the Local High School. My son and I heard it all.

That Head Teacher acted with excessive and unofficial justice against my husband and my son. However, nothing was reserved in their action and inaction against Luke.

1. Luke was stalked and intimidated by a member of staff between 30 July 2020 and 9 September 2020 – the day the Department person called. Strange it stopped then.
2. Luke's safety on the site was threatened by a Head Teacher in 3 calls to our house.
3. On 8 February 2021 he was king hit on the first night of camp and missed 2 days and 2 nights. 8 staff were emailed as a result of this he ended up in hospital. No replies. No questions were ever asked to Luke or his friends on the night or afterwards.
4. Luke's attendance slipped to 45% by his last day 22 June 2021 then lockdown and then he never returned.

Luke then was forced to change schools after we had no confidence the two male bullies would be "dealt with" after a phone meeting with the Principal on 29 October 2021.

There was a significant cost – 49 years of family association; he has a disability and the Department still has not provided the bus promised taking an extra ten hours of travel time; a new uniform (which at one stage the Minister's office offered to pay for); lost established friendships and had to get set in a new environment. We were paying for a Psychologist and a Paediatric-Gastroenterologist at great cost as well.

Luke attended 15 days from the first 15 days and then well into the evening a third Local High School staff member appeared on Luke's Facebook. We managed to video tape and screenshot the interaction. Perhaps they were trying to menace and intimidate or perhaps they were getting his image to cause trouble at his new school. However, the next morning his Gastro nervous system was triggered and since then all other psycho-semantic issues.

All these matters and much more were reported to the Minister for Education, Ms Sarah Mitchell. On each occasion she delegated to a local Director in the Department of Education. We are told everything is "dealt with" and "you have exhausted all your avenues with the Department". Further to this, if we did not like it all, then "go to the Ombudsman." She wrote this with not one person ever asking who the third staff member was caught in the act.

The ultimate excuse was when I wrote and asked why she did not ask for more information. She replied that their procedures stated they did not have to ask the complainant for any more information. No wonder there is never any improvement in Education.

However, all these responses many of them dismissive; many not addressing all the issues raised; and one of them threatens me in writing on behalf of the Minister. I have spent two years watching all kinds of attacks on both of them.

There exposed is a dual system of justice where permanent and higher staff are not even reported; but Casual are often not given a first initial hearing; not shown evidence; have allegations changed after response; and even then critical evidence ignored in a final response; no internal review; no external body to review and then denied access to a court.

I will never forget how upset he was describing how grown adults paid by the NSW Government thought it was okay to make fun of Suicide – when society has tried to make great progress with programs like "R U Okay?" Nothing was off limits. If I could go back in time and tell my husband's late parents who supported him through his Education anything at all – it would be please, please never let him waste his talents as a teacher.

\*\*\* I wish to appear in person at any hearing to provide any further information.