

Submission  
No 58

**INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITY IN NEW SOUTH WALES EDUCATIONAL  
SETTINGS**

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Partially  
Confidential

A submission to the NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No.3 - Education

**Inquiry into Children and young people with disability in  
New South Wales Educational settings**

by

*MBA MA BA GradDipEd*

This submission addresses the following terms of reference:

- a) the experiences of children and young people within educational settings and measures to better support students with disability
  
- (b) the barriers to safe, quality and inclusive education for children with disability in schools, early childhood education services and other educational settings
  
- (i) the measures necessary to ensure the learning environment is safe and inclusive for all students, teachers and school support staff
  
- (j) the impact of policies regarding suspensions and expulsions
  
- (m) whether existing regulatory and oversight mechanisms are sufficient to protect and promote the rights of children and young people with disability, and protect those children and young people from abuse, neglect and exploitation
  
- (n) whether children and young people with disability should be included under the remit of the Ageing and Disability Commissioner
  
- (q) any other related matters: Those being:
  - i) the impact of schools on students with a disability who are in a school environment with other issues including racism and homophobia
  - ii) the impact of School Leadership who contradict their own discipline policy, in particular failing to protect students with a disability and specifically to q) i)
  - ii) interviewing practices by Deputy Principals of children with disability
  - iv) bullying and threats to parents of a child with a disability
  - v) pressuring by Deputy Principals to get diagnosis for additional disability

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- 2) A case study of our son with a disability – Primary and High School
- 3) Examples of other students with a disability at the same Local High School
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## 1. Background

I write mostly about a local high school in Sydney. The following examples might seem extreme in their nature, but they are all true, real life events and suffering inflicted upon numerous students with a disability and their families over the past several years.

My husband and I have tried to warn about this school across multiple platforms for more than 3 ½ years. The issues I raise have little to do with funding and a need for more teachers and resources, but the failure of anybody in any authority to ask one single question to date. Any attempts always end in self-investigation and cover up of one issue after another.

There is no impartial feedback process – and therefore can be never any change and improvement. Schools with toxicity and bullying of staff, students and parents alike impacts upon teacher productivity and retention; student attendance and learning outcomes; and time, money and resources constantly being diverted to assist yet another cover up.

Teaching and Learning could be done much better – especially for students with disability. A further inquiry into these following events and how things could get so far with the common theme of no question ever asked could unlock many things wrong in Education.

I will skip through to the present day before I start to alert you to the severity of the situation:

At least two dozen teachers left the school from start of 2021 to end of 2022 - but since the last day of 2022 @ 35 more teachers have left this school.

At the end of 2023, the school had 3.5 English teachers out of 9 needed.

In February 2024, the fourth Principal in 15 ½ months started at the school.

Three male students - current and extremely recent took their own lives in 2022. Nobody may ever know the reason/s as there are typically many other factors home, family, issues of self-identity, and others and some often never explained. One of these boys was close to three “protected” bullies referred to in our first letter in July 2020. In the weeks before his death, these three were running around the school filming and ridiculing students who were blacks and homosexuals.

A fourth male student in this period who came close to being another victim was placed on mental health life support for many months. He was a student with a noticeable mobility issue, bullied about this and regularly suffering racist abuse.

## 2. Case study: Our son

has Dyspraxia - a disability which causes a speech and language delay and a similar lag in fine-motor skills and co-ordination. He had extensive Speech and Occupational Therapies before and through Primary School. He suffers from tiredness, fatigue and with extremes of weather particularly if it is hot.

### a) Primary School

During Kindergarten at our Local Public School (LPS) was regularly punched in the arm; hit with a stick in the face and had sand poured into his ears by another boy. Our local GP who flushed his ears out with a machine on several occasions filled a huge vile of sand. He commented that this was not just stray sand being thrown around, but had to be poured.

When a request to have this stopped was made an angry Deputy Principal (DP) claimed that they had spent “countless lunch hours” taking “copious notes” as s/he lay in the sand pit and that “it was all your son’s fault because he does not want to play with the boy”.

We raised his disability - that he had a Speech and Language disorder and had had regular weekly and fortnightly sessions with Speech and Occupational Therapists from a couple of years before he started school until then.

We rang the regional office and were told if we did not like it then to find another school.

Over the next several weeks, the LPS went into cover up mode. First they employed a former teacher at the school to return for one day as a casual to also back up the DP claims that all the physical violence was our son's own fault.

Secondly, [redacted] was sent to the Principal's office where he was interviewed alongside the bully and asked questions in front of the other boy – without any support person let alone his parent's permission. This was when the LPS knew full well about his speech and language disability. [redacted] did not tell us about this meeting.

We were called to a meeting with the Principal where s/he told us they had reviewed the situation and informed us the casual backed up the DP. In addition she had had a good chat to the two boys, and was resolved - [redacted] apologised to the other boy for making up stories.

A mother of one of [redacted] friends was a reading volunteer from start of the day to recess. She regularly saw this boy do those things and to her own son. When she pointed this out, all volunteers for reading support groups were not required and this task would be done by support teaching staff. All that help with reading and literacy was lost to the aggregate cohorts to cover up [redacted] and many other situations going wrong at the school.

Two years went by with good years, but then our family was suddenly pressured to have [redacted] diagnosed with a second disability – Aspergers Syndrome, because the school would gain additional funding “for him” which we know goes into a pool. The teacher's “opinion” was against regular consultations with Dr Shan Ong, one of Sydney's leading Paediatricians.

At a meeting we explained that he has been placed in a 2/3 composite class and he is repeating all the work he did last year when he was doing extension stuff. We were too polite to tell them many mornings he was refusing to go to school and crying and when asked why, he explained that he was “bored”. Every day he was finishing his work by recess and having to sit, read the School Magazine. When he finished the one given, he was told to re-read.

The teacher persisted and referred us to the School Counsellor. S/he continued to harp on. We were not going to go and “trick” him as suggested to get him to “tick the right boxes”.

We said the diagnosis of Dr Ong was final. The LPS refused to give any respite. We were getting fed up with the harassment. We can understand if something is picked up such as Speech problem or possible Dyslexia – but they wanted us to return to the specialist whom they had reports from to get him to “tick more boxes”.

It's a shame so much of the Counsellor's time; local GP and specialists time and the subsidies provided through Medicare could not be put into just helping all struggling students. By employing a funding only with “two” disabilities – so much time and cost in the Education/ Medical sphere is diverted. This is not dissimilar to Centrelink where so much of the money that could be spent in social welfare is lost in the bureaucracy itself.

The bullying from the Counsellor was amplified. They argued that “Apparently [redacted] (his older brother whom she never knew) has Aspergers, so [redacted] must have it”. A basic failure to recognise a child as an individual.

At a further meeting with the Counsellor s/he said that in the absence of the Paediatrician then the classroom teacher had said s/he was going to do the assessment anyway. My husband told them they had specific instructions not to as s/he had bias; did not have any qualifications and they were still attempting to undermine Dr Ong.

enrolled the next day at the local Catholic school. Within a month half that class left the school. I do not drive and had to find a walkable school. In effect we had to pay a tax from mid third class to end of sixth class because adult bullies forced our son to leave his LPS.

The funding model for disability is the more they can bundle the bigger the packet, but doing it this way – there are social, psychological, displacement and other costs to the child and family. On a Commonwealth level the result of this funding model for students with a disability is now one of the reasons the cost of the NDIS has blown out exponentially.

Further to the issue of funding, perhaps the student who has NDIS could use funding direct to engage Occupational and Speech Therapists and the like in the classroom – as they always said observation and help within context of real learning was much more valuable. The Department could even employ their own so funding goes direct from the NDIS.

The LPS really declined in the following years and a neighbour, also in catchment told us how she attended an interview to enrol her son for the next year. She explained that he had Autism and ADHD. The new Principal replied “Oh dear, we would not be able to accommodate him here – the children in this *area* are *not used to all that!*”

The Catholic school told us his LPS refused to send any of his file claiming they were different systems and they did not have to. I understand there is intellectual work paid for done by employees of one system – so therefore costing the other system new observation and assessment work and parents updates in specialists report. This is further loss of time – when anything relating to a disability should have to be sent on.

By the time we did a GIPA on file after he left his local high school, all the “copious notes” and much more had disappeared like numerous documents that we know should be there. However, there it was the Teacher’s observation lesson where s/he had ticked every single box – gone ahead and filled it out where specific permission had been denied.

For the purposes of the Department of Education – is a student with “two” disabilities. Even his second and current high school refers to this on his file at interviews. finished Primary School. His Naplan for 5<sup>th</sup> class had him achieve all band 5 and 6 results.

## **b) High School**

started high school in 2020. He was placed in 7E which was an Extension class.

Teachers remarked was always so well dressed and neatly presented. He helped other students put their equipment away and was always so polite to them and other students.

A DP made no effort to introduce themselves, speak to or even acknowledge him and was completely lacking any impartiality in dealing with a matter which arose in May 2020. S/he had a conflict of interest to make this situation as worse as possible, as there had been several incidents with our older children at the LHS.

Most importantly, the way the matter was handled laid no consideration for himself; and in the coming weeks older students told him how various staff had, what in my own language had done things which prejudiced and were detrimental to him and his future at the school.

It is astonishing how once they made the decision to diverge from procedures in many ways - how much they have had to continue to keep doubling down and continue working around it. Some staff at the LHS dished out unconscionable conduct against our son – all of which was never impartially investigated.

The situation reached a head in July 2020 when the Principal rang to answer a question “What conflict does the DP have?” The situation should have been addressed then.

#### **c) Formal complaint in July 2020**

The Principal rang my husband for two hours to find out what the issues were. S/he was told 1. The full context of an issue; 2. things which he believed were done wrong by the DPs which impacted on our son and how this DP has disliked our family for a long time; 3. some issues about the DP’s conduct that s/he should really know about; and 4. finally how this DP refused to handle bullying issues including minorities – often those with a disability and often not only undermined teachers but encouraged the bullying and that he could provide about eight examples. He was told to write it down and it would go to the Director and he would have to be prepared to be interviewed by them which he was.

The Principal promised that s/he would report all and seek advice from the Department where to make further reports. The content of the claims I have not included most but some are truly outrageous. I will state though that the DP had ridiculed and made fun of our eldest son’s Aspergers – boasting to our eldest daughter how s/he and another teacher could not stop themselves from laughing at him.

In regards to setting an example to students about people with disability, the DP on at least three occasions in front of students and parents ridiculed questions about whether a female colleague was okay. They replied “I don’t know when the Mental bitch will be back.” “I am sick of her using the Mental Health card.” “I wish she would make up her mind and quit.”

The letter focused on that Deputy Principal and that if the school continued in this direction the cohort and the school was heading for disaster in terms of: mental health issues; huge losses of learning time and they would lose teachers. The letter had five specific examples and he had three more to present where the school discipline policy and teachers attempts were being made a mockery by the DP. It focused on the DP covering up and helping bullies continue their torment of students including some with disability.

There was never a call from the local Director.

The standard time for response was ignored and about ten weeks later an awkward response was received. It had been sent to a fellow DP who threatened him twice in writing “that you could be got on a code of conduct of your own”.

A GIPA showed blatant collusion between them. First it was sent to the DP, then a series of emails shows them working out how to answer it. In addition, staff interviewed had their email replies creatively cut and pasted to hose down his claims without asking a question or to elaborate. The most disturbing find was when one said “All of Molloy’s reports had been destroyed.”

#### **d) Attack of a student with two disabilities**

The DP started to stalk and intimidate during this period from a few days after reporting things to the Principal. We have dates, times and witnesses when it happened.

This was reported many times in writing to the Principal and to PES (the disciplinary body) itself – however, we or the students were never ever asked a single question.

### **e) First formal letter to the NSW Government**

The first time anybody in the wider NSW Government knew about what happened to and how the LHS was on the brink of a mental health emergency that would end in certain disaster was in writing to an elected representative on 7 December 2020.

The letter reported wider things besides concerns for not limited to below:

- A Staff development day on Day one of Term three, 2019 where many teachers were caught in an official Departmental email thread making fun of Suicide. A week or so before end of term two a female student was carried out in an ambulance after a bloody and gruesome self-harming incident. The student never returned to the LHS. Two more female students that week left in ambulances for the same.
- A staff development day on the same first day of Term three, 2020 where a screen shot from a Head Teacher shows that staff appeared to play a game making fun of Paedophilia. The post names a senior person in the Department.
- A 13-14 year old Aboriginal boy who was called to a DP's office and locked in a room and interviewed by two Police officers. This was without any guardian permission or a support person present for something he had no involvement in and was outside school hours and location. The school also knew something very specific I will not write about here which made the situation even worse.

The letter did not “disappear” as we have evidence the elected representative did read it. The Principal was also urgently called into the Department for the last two weeks.

Any impartial person reading the letter would respect that lots of things were going wrong and that a cancer was growing upon the school that could only end in disasters.

### **f) The Threat**

Eight days later at 3.17pm a phone call was made to our house by a Head Teacher claiming to be ringing on behalf of the Senior Executive. S/he said they were all furious he had conducted a GIPA and that unless he ruled out legal action/s and reporting to the Minister that “They will get you! All your work at [ another LHS ] will be cut off and they will do things to you so you *mentally* cannot work anymore.”

He was reminded that he had to think about what was best for at the school.” They were told is here listening to all this, as the phone had been answered in speaker mode as it often is. They made no comment or apology and were businesslike almost to script.

They concluded with “You know what happens to whistle blowers, don't you?”

The irony of this threat was that we knew that all the DPs and Head Teachers were using school funds that could have gone to aiding students with a disability by wining and dining whilst overlooking Circular Quay at the Four Seasons Hotel. The Head Teacher claimed that they had spent well over half the day discussing my husband – obviously no wonder there is not much done improving Teaching and Learning.

This was a threat and subsequent various actions undertaken to cut off the income of the sole working parent of a child at the LHS with two disabilities.

However, despite this being reported subsequently on numerous occasions including to PES and the claims being made in the Industrial Relations Commission recorded on transcript in front of two senior people from the Department of Education – not one question has ever been asked.

I did feel safe at the time, that an elected representative I had reason to trust, had the document with all the claims from the past and the issues raised. Specific things however from the document were later discovered to be have been used against my husband.

**g) Assault at the year 7 camp**

was flattened at his year 7 camp held in early year 8, as it had been delayed by Covid-19. Eight teachers were emailed that as a result of the incident on first night of the three day camp he ended up in hospital for a couple of days and would miss even more time off school. There were no questions ever asked to his friends and students sitting nearby at this time or any time in the months afterwards. The teacher who met us when my husband and daughter picked him up did not even know he had been flattened.

They must have received the email – as two emailed some work - no comments - not one rang to ask how he was getting on. It was obvious was not welcome anymore, as the DP made it clear from day one. On return just one Teacher asked how he was.

**h) Ministerial Representation**

On 11 May 2021 a formal representation was made to the Minister. On top of claims from 7 December 2020, specific examples of mistreatment were raised and the way matters had been mishandled he had and would continue to suffer prejudice and detrimental actions against him. We also stated that certain staff had a conflict of interest to get rid of as older students had commenced telling him all kinds of things in the playground.

Further warnings were made about the LHS and likely disasters ahead. These include:

- A DP yelling at members of the P and C about an Asbestos issue in the school canteen as they were failing to get volunteers because of the state of the ceiling.
- The threat to my husband and son at end of year and that this visit to the Four Seasons was not a one-off waste of public monies but we had many more examples of regular sleep overs and even a trips to the Hunter Valley and other issues.
- A break in to a block where a Computer was accessed for 17 minutes and staff were told it would not be reported as it was likely an “inside job”. A subsequent reply to this letter with specifics, was hand delivered with wrong postcode and “not on system”.
- Examples of sexual harassment and assaults against female students covered up.
- Many more significant social and shocking bullying, racism and homophobia – some of the examples were inflicted upon students with a disability.

The letter was “Missing” for 12 weeks when we rang, but the next day after we sent it direct we received a reply from the local Director claiming that all was “dealt with” – all that in 24 hours? This was done without asking us one question – particularly the identity of the Head Teacher who made such threats.

The reply “on behalf of the Minister” also made threats in writing to me.

**i) “Do not have to ask...any questions”.**

An email was later sent to the Director asking why they did not ask for any more information or a single question and all those complex issues could be “dealt with” without asking for names of the Teachers.



S/he replied that they did not have to ask any questions. This is basically the key that unlocks exactly what is wrong with Education – why there is no change; no improvement and problems continue in linear paths to bigger problems – as nothing can be impartially examined. More funding will not really help until there is real, structural change in the way problems can be raised without paybacks and actual impartial inquiries made.

A new Director who took over from the original was later confronted with a shocking video where a student filmed another over a toilet cubicle and wrote “when you catch someone jerking”. S/he simply wrote they would tell the Principal about it. There was no request for the URL; the search terms and where to find out; ideas who the victim or perpetrator was – but the symptomatic problem with the Department is they do not have to ask a further thing.

#### **j) Meeting with Home School Liaison Officer**

No question was ever asked about \_\_\_\_\_ in all those months from February to May – nor his abysmal attendance @ 25%, but suddenly two days after the “missing” Ministerial letter an email arrived wanting to create a meeting with the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO).

The Principal greeted my Mother and I and we met with the HSLO where we discussed \_\_\_\_\_ Dyspraxia; what had happened at the year 7 camp. The HSLO said how maybe not in this example – but schools in general were not calling Ambulances when they really should be as they wanted to save money – but it was wrong. We explained as a result of all the issues, \_\_\_\_\_ was now suffering from a chronic Gastro Reflux now and severe anxieties.

My mother asked the question to the HSLO – “Could we put him on a Mental Health Care Plan?”

Before s/he could answer the Principal interjected and said to me “That’s a nice jacket. Where did you get that?”

The meeting ended soon after and the HSLO promised to send follow up emails that day about the next steps for his care.

Both my Mother, my husband and myself sent 2-3 follow up emails each and phone calls to the HSLO but never had a reply. The LHS were followed who said they would contact them.

That morning while we waited, both my Mother and I witnessed a Meeting first-hand how the DP locked a student in her room. A teacher whom I recognised attempted to open the door and had to wait for it to be unlocked. The DP was notorious for that same year group as the Aboriginal boy that any student would be kept until s/he got what they wanted.

The 22 June 2021 ended up \_\_\_\_\_ last ever day at the LHS.

#### **k) Phone Meeting with Principal**

Months went by and there was no sign of any follow up. The only thing we got was obsessive marking \_\_\_\_\_ absent for up to just very minute parts of periods. We would regularly receive please explain for this seven minute time within period one or 3 minutes in period four. They were clearly striking a map of his attendance and deliberately creating all this additional stress and work for \_\_\_\_\_ and us during Lockdown.

We emailed the Head Teacher pursuing this, and asked if other students were being chased just as keenly. There was never any reply.

There was going to be no assistance. No inquiry - only further victimisation.

The situation was not “dealt” with to any remote degree of satisfaction – or what would in any way be acceptable to any reasonable person and we asked for a transfer to another LHS which we had been told was 17% over cap. We returned to the Minister’s office to explain.

This led to a October 2021 meeting with the Principal – from which s/he clearly stated ringing “on behalf of the Minister” and repeated several times in the phone call.

i) Two adult bullies paid by the NSW Government

It was obvious nothing would be done about two adult bullies raised in this meeting in October 2021. A GIPA later revealed the excuse for not referring the DP to an investigation was that it was too long ago now and the parents could have talked about it in front of him. At the time it was happening we had dates, lesson numbers, places and witnesses when the first correspondence was sent.

The Head Teacher who threatened my husband and son - we were told that we would not hear any more – so it was obvious it was not going to be investigated. The Head Teacher also in the meeting emailed later that the Head Teacher was “counselled” by the Principal and a DP – people whom s/he claimed to act on their behalf of – a full circle – they get to conduct their own inquiry. Being “counselled” is one of the disciplinary actions.

Here we have in writing a grown adult admitting to and being permitted to threaten a child with “two” disabilities and to cause that same child stress that his own father – the sole income earner was dually threatened alongside himself. It is like so much else with the LHS it was all normalised – no topic and nobody was off limits.

The Principal concluding near the end of the meeting even said it was “normal” for a child to change high schools if they were getting bullied. There is BIG difference between another kid or a few kids – but for paid employees of the NSW Government to do it!

ii) Refused to have it on his file would not be interviewed by the DPs

The Principal refused to rule out being interviewed at any time by the DPs as they were not trusted by our family unless he had one of half a dozen support people present. We referred to his Speech and Language disability – but this made no difference.

iii) I can guarantee a bus

A very important part of our consideration to have leave his own LHS was that there was no current bus from our local area to the new proposed LHS. The next year the catchment area was changing. We asked for their advice and it was stated clearly unless there was a direct bus he would really get extra tired and fatigued the longer a week or term went on. We explained it appeared up to ten hours a week additional travel waiting time.

The Principal clearly stated they can guarantee there would be a bus with the change of catchment as the Department has to provide it.

This was a clear guarantee and a promise made as a condition of transferring to the parents of and a child with a disability – after all he had suffered.

**I) Victimisation in the end of year Report**

report at end of year was more victimisation. The DP had lost all the cohorts’ reports on the system. They were not emailed until very late on the last day. It was clearly not a true portrait what he had done. Almost all teachers had ticked every box about work not being done, yet he had it all there on his Notebook.

**m) Third staff member caught stalking and interacting with s Facebook**

started year 9 at the other LHS. He attended for 15 days straight at 100%. Late that evening he informed us that a third staff member from the LHS was stalking and interacting with his Facebook image. We were quick enough to screen shot and even video tape it.

This was reported more than once including to PES. However, a GIPA for this said that the Principal did not even ask the staff member as it "could have been somebody else".

ended up with his Gastro Reflux and to this day in year 11 – that is by far the best sequence he has had at the school.

Not one question asked about all three staff members who stalked, intimidated and threatened a student with a disability has ever been asked.

**n) The School File**

The new LHS had never seen a file as anorexic as There was next to nothing in the file – most was from the original LPS – and there it was that survey the Counsellor and Third class teacher undertook without specific permission declined to do so.

The new LHS emailed the LHS and asked where all documents were and they said all were there when it was "hand delivered by a teacher" who travelled near the new LHS.

We were told that everything should have been scanned and then emailed to the new LHS. The hard copy was only to be transferred after the main digital records had been created but the new LHS told us there had been no email at all to them.

This prompted us to do a GIPA on what actually was in the file and what was missing. There were no records about the meeting with the HSLO – only that it took place.

We had earlier done a GIPA for reports, emails, notes or anything about the camp. This revealed nothing was on record. However, this second complete file after we continued to pursue the issue found some notes made about it magically appeared in between the two GIPAs.

The new LHS Executive/ Year Adviser and academic staff did not even know that had enrolled. There was no phone call or written advice where he had come from, or any backgrounding on him. He just "appeared one day". There are no records whatsoever.

On the topic of the new LHS are much more modern and caring practices towards their student welfare. They are only just over 4km by air but it is a world if not a galaxy away.

**o) Anti-Discrimination Board**

Our family took the Department to the Anti-Discrimination Board where they have access to unlimited taxpayers time, money and resources to argue against common sense.

It had been nearly two years since the guarantee of the bus for our son, and we sought the promised bus for him and also for the 100-150 local students impacted by this change of catchment – some of whom were crossing two lots of six lane state roads.

The Department argued and the board agreed that we could not prove the Head Teacher who made the threat against with two disabilities knew that my husband had reported the Aboriginal boy locked in the room with 2 Police.

This ruled out any line of inquiry to explore the threat itself to a student with “two disabilities” which by the Department’s own records claim the Head Teacher was “counselled”.

This also saw them escape any inquiry about the guarantee that there would be a bus with the change of catchment area to the new LHS for ALL students. This was a condition of the transfer and the specific outcome applied for.

A further comment from the Department was that they do not provide a bus from the area to the particular LHS so they cannot be practising any form of discrimination because the bus does not exist. By not providing the bus, the previous local MP suffered a 9.6% swing in that booth - a reminder it is MPs and Governments swept out - not the bureaucrats.

They did not provide a bus after they changed the catchment area for then 100-150 students – but any argument, or reason and unlimited tax payer dollars can be provided to prevent change or improvement.

There was no inquiry at this point in time about the Aboriginal boy himself.

The new MP worked hard with extensive meetings about the issue and even they were surprised when a full package was delivered with more than they asked for. It was delivered albeit two years late - with all those other students without a promise but had their catchment changed denied the service.

**p) Further pay back to our son and family**

A GIPA revealed the Relieving Principal of the LHS in October 2022 emailed my husband – submissions [ Numbers 246, 246A and 247 to a Shortages of Teachers inquiry to this committee that same year ] to numerous teachers at the LHS. This amounted to a complete lack of self-awareness if they sought sympathy when almost everybody would have agreed with it as s/he had dished out so much abuse, threats and yelling at staff.

A GIPA also revealed that the new local Director for the LHS was caught stalking our Facebook pages. We are members of the public. An email was sent from the Director to the Principal that it appeared my husband was writing and releasing a book about the local area that the LHS is in – which they said they were worried it could be about the school.

The Director contacted a “Complex Complaints” unit in the Department.

By coincidence the Director had been sent a letter at this time which has been sent to the Minister about what now had become many Asbestos issues with the LHS.

The Principal wrote to my husband banning him from a LHS Anniversary date – and gloated that your son does not attend the school anymore. I wonder why!

My husband had that book launched the next day by Dr Charlie Teo. He has sold close to 10, 000 books Australia wide and in every book in the “About” section records how he was School Captain of this LHS in 1988. It has brought great credit to the LHS over twenty years.

When we returned home was in shock after being spoken to by 2 Police officers, who returned again to deliver the Principal’s letter. They were shown photos of the book launch and the book itself and immediately both apologised many times and could not leave quick enough. Gastro Reflux was set off badly again and he missed more time off school.

Another disturbing find in the GIPA was that the Director commented that my husband had shared a post – not even a comment with it – that a person would be a candidate for our local lower house seat in this Parliament. This person was subsequently elected.

However, I cannot understand why a Director was spending time at work worrying who shared a post. At the same time, the whole staff melted down at a meeting about two of these Asbestos issues - between 20-25 teachers left at the end of the year. The five Asbestos issues at the LHS needed more attention than stalking my husband - still do.

Perhaps the Director feared that a new Government by some tiny chance *might* decide to inquire into the events that were covered up which led to the school's demise.

Meanwhile my husband was not employed by the Department. We live in a democracy and the pursuit of our family is something akin to McCarthyism reporting and keeping a file on the politicians we support.

There has been no proportionality. On every single occasion the LHS used all the time, money and resources – unlimited funding backed by the tax payers to cover up and sometimes to create further harm.

Instead of asking us some questions and to ask for dozens and dozens of emails, documents, texts, screen shots and more – it is easier for the same system to live another day so that the same LHS or at another place injustice can be dished out all over again.

**q) A summary about our son**

The school environment and lack of support had a profound effect on [redacted]. It has exacerbated his issues and caused anxiety. It has impacted negatively on his Education and therefore his future Employment potential. [redacted] has lost enormous amounts of time off school.

I know there are many other parents of students with disabilities experiencing the same issues all over NSW. I hope the committee takes on board the importance of creating a safe environment for children with disabilities. Sadly it is not just the other students that need guidelines but staff as well and a truly independent body completely outside the Department of Education to review incidents.

This case study might be an extreme example, but any of the processes which have been used in a detrimental way against [redacted] and our family could be used again in the future. At the least it is a series of "mistakes" most of which were deliberate and some pre-meditated. There is even such planning caught in emails and serious concerns answered with threats.

The LHS culture that the case study events took place just happened to have a number of other very unfortunate events happen to other students in the same period of time. This is a *pattern*, or a *cluster* of events backed up by a subsequent refusal to deal with them - namely not to ask one single question of a person who has warned about it for three and half years.

### **3. Other Students with disability and the LHS**

All the following students and their parents would have their own stories to tell about this LHS - likely with layers to add to these summaries.

#### a) **Racism**

##### i) Aboriginal Male

An Aboriginal boy mentioned earlier who was just 13-14 years old was locked in a room and interviewed by 2 Police officers with no Guardian permission or a support person present for something that had nothing to do with him. The LHS knew a specific thing that would have made this much more severe to the boy. A specific date and time has been reported.

The student had a Learning Disability. The LHS knew all about it. However this did not stop him being singled out by a Head Teacher doing a Professional Learning session at a staff meeting as the worst student you could ever get. It did not stop another Head Teacher commenting that "He is a Dick that kid - A Complete Dick".

The student had a fight later in his time at the LHS. It went to the Department where he was sent a letter that he was able to return to the LHS. They made a decision to deny him entry to the school land against official Departmental advice. The year was 2020 – not 1820.

##### ii) A Muslim Male

A male student referred to earlier with a noticeable mobility disability was regularly bullied about this, his speech along with regular racist abuse. The DP who was reported did nothing to the perpetrators and the student ended up on mental health life support.

##### iii) A Muslim returns from Lebanon

A Muslim student was segregated into a Learning Support room in the library after he returned from Lebanon with his family. A DP disallowed him any contact with his Muslim friends even in the playground at recess or lunch. If he did, she was going to suspend him. He was given about a ream of photocopy paper of work every day and if he did not complete it all over the next two weeks, he would have to repeat. The boy had a Speech and Language disability and the task was insurmountable. A week or so later he quit school and his full Education was denied to him. This was reported to the Department but it was sent to the LHS to investigate themselves.

#### b) **The boy with impaired hearing**

A student repeatedly called a partially deaf boy a "spastic", a "retard" and threw in "Look at him the faggot – he's not doing his work".

The classroom teacher told the student to focus on his own work and himself. Do not worry about him. However, the tirade of insults to the student with a disability continued.

When the classroom teacher reported this, the student had the confidence to get up and say "That's it I am off to see [ DP Name ]. I am going to report you!"

This was reported by the classroom teacher on the system.

This incident and another around the same time involving that same teacher telling a male student it was not acceptable to threaten to bash four girls resulted in them having a nine day block of work cancelled on them and being offered no more work for five months.

There is three parts of how the protection of the child with a disability was undermined.

1. The bully felt confident to stand up and threaten the teacher they would complain as they did not like being told to do their own work instead of spending the lesson throwing out abusive insults to the student with a disability.
2. The culture the LHS had was for DPs to be too lazy and unwilling to back up and support teachers or head teachers resulting in open slather abuse against anybody who was black; had a disability or “suspected” of being homosexual. The standards at this school were completely out of line with what would be acceptable in society.
3. The lack of any follow up to ask about the abuse hurled out to the student with the disability rewarded the bully student.

The same steps were repeated by a second DP around this time. This was a female DP which made not following up threats of violence against girls even worse. It was easier to do nothing – which is what the LHS actually did – nothing was done about these threats – until a week later the student threatened to burn one of the girl’s houses down.

It was easier to remove a Casual or lower ranked short term contract teacher than continually have to suffer the inconvenience of them reporting such issues.

All the Education Ministers have experts out in force working overtime to find out where the system is going wrong – but the weak and lazy leadership is exactly why teachers quit; why students end up with anxiety issues and learning as a whole is rapidly declining.

The DPs were in fact accomplices to such cruel and threatening acts by doing nothing.

c) **Homophobia and intolerance of LGBTQI +**

A transgender student was being bullied and harassed in Science. This included physical touching. They wanted to escape their tormentors and asked the Science teacher if they could move from their seat and start sitting somewhere else. This request was refused. The student had Aspergers. The matter went to the DP who said “You’re Pathetic!”

When the situation became worse and their Mother had a meeting with the Principal about changing schools – a letter came from the local Director, this time not offering to find another place – but wishing them Good Luck trying to find any place in any of the other local schools.

d) **Suspension**

A male student with a learning disability was always well-behaved, very quiet and inoffensive in class. One lunch time, he and his friends were near the front oval and a teacher asked them to move back into the allocated area.

The student complied, but he quipped “Okay Boomer.” He was suspended for three days! This is in the context of DPs not even speaking to students doing so much worse. The only reasoning is that a quiet, compliant student with a disability was an easy target.

e) **Intellectually Moderate**

A male student, the LHS described as “Intellectually Moderate” was used in a PES disciplinary matter. The student was interviewed at least twice without permission or support at the LHS - one of the two staff faced domestic violence charges involving minors and should not have been at the LHS. During an investigation period, the student and family refused to be interviewed - but the Investigator wrote that they got him to agree to a “discussion”. The investigator even wrote “I *think* the boy said *something* under his breath ...”. The student was pestered and hounded on numerous occasions over several months.

f) **The Second year 7 camp goes haywire**

The year after assault at the year 7 camp, a female student with a disability injured themselves – it turned out they had dislocated their shoulder.

The LHS made the decision NOT to call an Ambulance and NOT to even call the parents.

The student was isolated from the other students except for meal times and they spent two nights alone in a cabin with a DP. I believe nothing untoward would have likely happened.

However, the girl was traumatised and upon return to school was relentlessly teased for “Sleeping with the Deputy!” The girl refused to go to school and there was no option but to change schools. A second child with a disability forced to leave their own LHS thanks to actions of DPs creating other social issues such as leaving behind friends.

In the greatest of ironies at the same time the Department fought to prevent the people in our local area having the school bus for 100-150 students and deny the promise to the student was provided with an individual bus service every day to and from school about three times further than the one we sought.

g) **Video Humiliation**

In the inappropriate videos we reported to the local Director – it included a red haired girl with a disability standing in the playground while students ridiculed her. Another video has a male student with a disability in amongst the handball courts standing and a lot of students behind him were laughing at him. Both have the LHS official logo.

The use of video making is also predominant to humiliate teachers with some photo slideshows and commentary added with text. One video still online today complete with the official LHS logo has photos of a male teacher – one showing the rainbow flag and support for Marriage equality; another with a partner or friend – but the commentary prosecutes the case how their suspicions were right all along and that this teacher is in fact Gay! This teacher a victim of Gay teasing and the LHS - as the local Director does not want to know.

The LHS and the teachers are not responsible for the backgrounds and the shocking attitudes that are brought from home - but when they are confronted with it to turn a blind eye and do nothing! Some areas of Sydney are more racist and homophobic than others. My sister's LHS which is basically in a mirrored part of Sydney has similar issues and also instability with teacher numbers - so there is at least one more LHS similar to this.

However, the one thing that stands out is the complete lack of leadership where many of these intolerances were reported by a classroom teacher often put on the system; and never dealt with in any remote way.

When it was obvious the school was heading for disasters in terms of mental health; significant lost teaching and learning time; and they would lose staff – those in authority above the LHS not only refused to do anything but sought to continue a cover up.

The long term future disabilities inflicted on students who just witnessed it all with Post Trauma Stress Disorder and other Anxiety Disorders; loss of teachers to the profession; loss of learning time for many students who have gone through and future lost productivity would be astounding.

The most outrageous is that a person who had courage and decency to speak out about it all when they could see wrongs were being perpetrated and assisted by staff at the school had the threat made to him and his son carried out. No question asked, but is why people sit by.



#### **4. Other student and family reviews**

A simple search of Google reviews for this school delivers the following:

The first one was as recent as one week ago:

*ABSOLUTELY NOTHING GETS DONE ABOUT BULLYING  
PROMISES MADE BUT NOT DELIVERED  
HAD TO GET MY CHILD OUT IMMEDIATELY*

The next review specifically discusses “special needs”.

*I have had two of my children attend this school and to say disappointing would be an understatement. Some of the teachers are unprofessional. Openly mocking and victimising children with special needs. Personal dislikes towards certain children will affect their marks, their subject choices and ultimately their life choices. Nothing will be done in regard to kids' wellbeing. Do not expect fairness understanding or education from this disgraceful school harbouring nothing but grown bullies in positions of power.*

[ Later they wrote ]... *my daughter left with nothing but antidepressants and mental health issues.*

Another review, shows so many parents end up with the same experiences:

*I'm disgusted by the amount of bullying and discrimination that happens at this school. On-going bullying and targeting happens every day at this school. The teachers refuse to do anything about it. No detentions are given, even after you've shown proof of the bullying. Children are supposed to feel safe at school, not terrified and upset. No matter the circumstances of the bullying, nothing will happen. The only time teachers decide to take the slightest bit of action is if the bullying becomes physical - but even then they don't address the situation properly. No reports are made on bullying. Suspensions are not given out for bullying. It's disgusting and embarrassing and not professional in the slightest.*

Another review states:

*terrible school, the teachers are so rude and dont care about any situation that happens with bullying etc*

Many reviews have been strangely removed over the past year or so.

A few other mothers I have recently met have said that their children don't go to the LHS much as there is little point. Many refusing to go at all. They see it as a waste of time. Their children are sick of how rude and abusive the students are to teachers and other students. There are so many lessons where they just sit outside under minimal supervision where the behaviour is even worse.

Attendance time and Learning is lost for many, when fairness and impartiality from the start would have saved so many wasted opportunities and money to the Department.

## **5. Arguments for inquiry into the events at this school and processes**

Although the events at this school might read like a script for an extreme jackass culture in a “B” grade school genre comedy film they are all true and many people are willing to come forward. One can only assume that this is the tip of a shocking iceberg.

### **a) Compartmentalising events**

One student after another at this school slipped through the cracks because the processes that report anything (if the family even bother to do so) are set towards compartmentalising each individual matter, so a broader picture can never be joined together.

Even if the family reports things it goes to PES – where almost everything is turned back to the local Principal and/ or Director. This is basically a facility to self-investigate. If a whole string of issues have taken hold – then by the time a high-up Department person or a Minister has somehow been informed enough to look, so much damage has been done.

A Minister for Education (either side of Politics at any time) if an incident ends up in the media they stand up in Parliament and say “The matter has been referred to PES.” This is not impartial. It is far from independent of the Department when it is a part of it.

There needs to be quicker triggers to sort out problematic schools and perhaps a **Young Persons’ Disability Commission** with powers similar to an Ombudsman that can review the bigger picture of all the pieces and advocate for the student or family.

The most damning document we have is the reply from the local Director who answered that they did not have to ask the complainants for any more information. This basically gives them **No obligation or a basic Duty of Care** to find out.

The second most damning document is when the replacement Director explained unanswered correspondence down to the first Director said they were “serial complainants”.

They even get to determine after the first letter which is the standard “find another school” if it’s worth dealing with or not.

The compartmentalising of each incident to different students; or many incidents done to one student is not dissimilar to having a whole series of “buffers”. This performs a similar hierarchical role similar to that in La Cosa Nostro whereby looking at just that one single event or person it could be dismissed and explained as a “mistake” or an “oversight”.

### **Lack of Impartiality**

Every rung of the ladder the LHS descended down, the two local Directors:

- failed to show a duty of care to ask one single question and they appear to only take down what has been written – then work around it;
- they covered up events hoping the LHS would somehow miraculously improve;
- they made threats and implied threats to complainants;
- one of them was caught in a GIPA email thread having stalked and colluded with a Relieving Principal in actions to send the Police to their house.

### **b) Two honourable Federal MPs and disparity to what is acceptable**

We could see great wrongs at this school. Our local Federal Member and another one who lives close to us – each on a different major side of politics - have both described some of the incidents listed above and others we have reported as human rights abuses.

**c) Fighting culture wars might be more important than funding wars.**

What culture arises which allows a year 12 kid to think it was somehow funny in anyway whatsoever to turn up to the LHS swimming carnival dressed in a full proper Ku Klux Klan outfit complete with hood – not a cheap fancy dress costume but the real thing? What society thinks it is fine to lock a 13-14 year old Aboriginal boy in a room with 2 Police officers without permission or support for something he was not even involved with? What male in authority sits back after a male student punched a year 7 female student so hard her eye socket was bruised and swollen for a week and said nothing to him? Instead the boy thrived and for seven weeks taunted her that she should commit Suicide as she did not have a Father. Earlier in the year, he had body shamed her - no parts off limits and when that did not work poured hot chocolate over her on many occasions. Nothing was ever done. The following year none of the incidents had been placed on the system. Racism and Domestic Violence being fed and encouraged at the LHS.

The evils of racism, fascism, bullying and intolerances are unfortunately humankind's weaknesses and given the right conditions can raise their ugly head at any time.

Funding, additional support teachers, resources and infrastructure will count a lot – but what would give a LHS like this the best chance of all is make real reforms to the system to allow for actual change and improvement – especially when a school is spiralling from one disaster to the next. This would include allowing teachers themselves to speak out freely and not threatened with disciplinary matters of their own for doing so whether that be other chronic issues besides bullying such as financial or Asbestos issues.

The fact that the majority of the torment, ridicule, humiliation and bullying was done by and supported by paid employees of the NSW Government is another level of shocking. When it was delivered by fellow students, then the Deputy Principals generally chose to not only ignore it but often threw bully friends lifelines and removed good caring teachers who actually were doing things about it - to save themselves some work is another level again.

At the end of the day Children with disabilities suffered the most in such a toxic environment and always will when the greatest ills of our society are allowed to flourish. The shortage, instability and constant change of staff would harm them the most - particularly students with a Learning Disability. These shortages at this school were interrelated to the events.

Surely if these past four decades since the Metherell reforms has taught anything is that Education does not fit really well into Economic Rationalism. If Governments wish to streamline it with other Departments, then McDonalised needs to also come with proper, independent, impartial and external quality control. Correspondence of a highly serious nature simply being fed back to a local bureaucrat to “deal” with it fails almost every time. However, even if these incidents had been avoided somehow - actual teaching, learning and curriculum also do not match with a one-size fits all approach and that the same lessons cannot get the same results across different socio-economic; NESB, various racial and cultural background areas.

How many more students, parents, staff have to suffer at this LHS? How many more have to suffer at other schools in one off incidents or lengthy case studies like my son, How many might have it happen during the mass decline of a school somewhere else in NSW?

We are more than willing to front such a public or candid hearing to answer questions.