

30 August 2024

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am a 51 full time teacher in DECYP, and teach VET Construction at an inner city College in Hobart. I am the only trade qualified teacher in this area in Tasmania, and also the Work Health Safety rep. Mid 2023 I was awarded runner up VET Teacher of the Year for Tasmania, my lovely colleague won first place. In 2022 one of my female students won VET Student of the Year for Construction.

During 2023 I was the target of bullying and harassment by two girls in my class. This situation initially began when these girls were bullying and harassing another female student. The student's mother approached me, deeply concerned, as her daughter had started talking about suicide due to the relentless bullying from these two girls. The girl was referred to a psychologist, and I assured the mother that I would address the issue with the girls and put a stop to it, and of course did refer to school psychologist.

These girls had been in trouble multiple times before for lying and other inappropriate behaviours, in particular targeting male staff and students with false allegations. One male student dual enrolled from the independent sector ended up being expelled from the school based on what we now know were false documents supplied from said girls. I spoke with them, making it clear that I would not tolerate any further bullying.

Unfortunately, instead of stopping, the girls secretly began devising a plan to discredit me, assisted by the then psychologist at school who had never met me (evidenced in the documentation from independent lawyer). They fabricated several verbal allegations and twisted conversations I had with students, making it appear as though I had violated the code of conduct. Another issue is DECYP not applying policy consistently to all staff involved when a complaint has been made – I know of many examples of one of the things I have been stood down for since being committed and reported with no consequence to others.

Without asking me about the girls' history of behaviour or investigating the situation thoroughly, the DECYP stood me down very suddenly, and only a week after my wife went on Workers Comp. I was asked to hand over my keys and have since been placed on an ED5 with pay. The stress this has caused me and my family has been immense, and my reputation has been severely damaged.

This situation has also significantly impacted the students this year, as they are now without a qualified construction teacher, and most students have left this class. This lack of proper instruction is a major setback, especially for my students who were being considered for positions by builders looking for skilled apprentices.

To make matters worse, one of the girls didn't even show up for her investigation interview, so very clear that all was false. The main perpetrator shared on Snapchat that she wanted me stood down, and encouraged others to join with her. She also doctored evidence.

I have been bullied and harassed by these two students mercilessly, and the DECYP has not handled this situation professionally. Why trust the word of an 18yo at college? They are actually adults. There is no consequence to these false allegations, and more students are complaining when there is no issue, as they are not deterred by a system who is so anti staff member. It would be great if the leaders of DECYP were educators and knew how schools functioned – there would never be a head of the AMA that is not a Doctor!!

There has been indirect harassment from DECYP and Teachers Registration Board. DECYP, once I was stood down, told me that I had to write a letter to them justifying why I should get paid. More stress! They clearly knew what was happening. The TRB forced me to pay my 2024 fees, and then deregistered me when a formal outcome has still not been announced. The AEU is swamped with 500+ cases in 12 months of ED5, and they are struggling to get enough lawyers to work through these silly issues. HR in DECYP also haven't applied the codes of conduct correctly, and made claims against me that didn't follow policy.

The length of time I have been on leave with pay (current since Oct 2023) is not only a waste of resources but has also prolonged the stress on my family and me (I am anxious and now stressed for such a long time away from my colleagues and profession). This matter should have been dealt with at the school level, where the full context of the situation could have been properly understood and addressed. There is simply no reason to drag this process out, as I have wanted to be back at school asap, and the investigators have deemed my case resolved and no safety to children answerable.

Another impact is that DECYP won't let me on any school sites, so when my wife had to move schools, I couldn't help her and she was very scared about being onsite. My daughter is in a DECYP primary school and 8 years old, and for 9 months I have been unable to attend parent teacher interviews, school events, or even pick her up if she is ill.

Thank you for your attention, and if you require further information I would be delighted to support.

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