

From: [REDACTED]
To: [House of Assembly - GAA](#)
Subject: Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools
Date: Friday, 30 August 2024 1:47:15 PM

To whom it may concern

I am writing this submission as the parent of a young transgender son who has experienced bullying, death threats and ongoing harassment whilst attending public schooling in Tasmania.

My son is a brave, courageous and kind person who has experienced direct and indirect harmful targeted harassment, bullying and threats at two colleges in Hobart.

He attended [REDACTED] at the start of 2023 full of hope and excitement only to be suddenly refused school attendance within 2 weeks of commencing. It took him another week to disclose to me why he was not able to attend school, a place that promises safety and equal opportunity to young people in Hobart.

During those first two weeks by son had been directly threatened with physical violence including death threats and no longer felt safe to attend school or use public transport. He was made to feel uncomfortable and unsafe whilst using the school bathroom facilities with young people congregating around the entrance of the facility whilst he used the bathroom. Upon discovering that my son had been threatened and harassed I made an appointment to speak with the school vice principal. To say I was disappointed and shocked is an understatement. The school would not act further unless my son disclosed the names of those involved in the threats and intimidation which of course he was too afraid to do. The school wanted Kai to return without any supports put into place and referred to the above incidents as bullying. I felt we were unheard, and the gravity of the situation lost.

My son's mental health took a huge dive, not only was he dealing with the mental health aspects of trying to access transgender services, trying to live in a body he didn't identify with and the 'normal teenage burdens' he now realised that the world doesn't always welcome gender diversity and people are cruel and violent towards others who didn't fit into the 'norm'. I took days off work as a Registered Nurse to be on 'suicide watch' as my son had disclosed to me and his GP that he had thoughts of taking his own life. We cried and cried, the sadness was overwhelming and my son broken. I thought that as a society we had overcome the discrimination, violence, and bullying of LGBTIQ+ young people and it was a huge crash to realise this is not so. And it is my son who is being targeting, threatened and hurt by people who don't even know how kind and beautiful he is.

So we picked ourselves up, my son adamant that this was not going to dictate his life and education. We enrolled him in another college this time [REDACTED]. The College was understanding of the missed time at school, enrolled him in classes he wanted to take and promised that the school was inclusive and worked hard to protect and be allies to LGBTIQ+ young people. It was hard for my son, behind in school, making new friends and trying to fit in to a new environment. School attendance wasn't 100% but we thought we had found where he needed to be and that things were on the improve. Yet once again he started refused school attendance, he was proactive engaging with the schools support services. But the damage was done and things weren't as rosy as promised. His friends started checking the toilets before he went in to make sure there was nobody using them, and then would wait outside for my son so

that he felt safe. The non gender toilets were far away at the other end of the school and he didn't feel safe walking on his own. He was diagnosed with depression and anxiety and commenced on medication to help face everyday life. In the end my son left school, with my consent. I am not going to force my child to attend a place where he does not feel safe, where he is directly and indirectly harassed bullied and threatened. Neither of us had the strength to seek further support from the system that had let my son down.

My son currently works and has surrounded himself with friends who are allies and love him. He has dreams of working on the land, as either a horticulturist or farmer and we are exploring other avenues of education so that he can achieve these goals. But mostly my son is smiling again, feels safe within his tight circle of friends and family. I think the greatest lesson to me is that my son can achieve and overcome huge obstacles, despite the violence directed at him and the rights that were taken away from him, he has been able to still shine. I know my son will be amazing, and he will be fine and that is mostly because I know how strong and resilient my son has had to be.

My hope is that no other LGBTQIA+ young people have to face the hurt and discrimination that we have seen and experienced. That LGBTQIA+ young people will not have to choose between an education or safety.

I want only love and support for all young people no matter how they identify.

Cate Steele

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