

Statement for meeting with the board 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023 – Belinda Hokin

Thanks John.

I am here to advocate against bullying, not only in ED, I should not need to do this.

There has been a long history of issues within the Emergency department in relation to bullying and victimisation. Both documented bullying as well as risk factors had been ignored for many years leading to a toxic and unsafe workplace. These risk factors included increased number of complaints, industrial disputes, an external review highlighting bullying in 2018 and an extensive formal industrial complaint in 2020 highlighting bullying and intimidation which was signed by 10 of the then 14 ss in the dept, many of who are also victims of bullying, there were also high staff turnover rates and sick leave rates. The district was fully aware of concerns within the ED and failed to address adequately despite being asked multiple times leading to **direct facilitation of bullying and allowing** problems to continue escalate.

The damage to the department was enormous, and many staff left and the department was in crisis. There were numerous clinical shifts with inadequate staff specialist cover and a deficiency of registrars, a direct threat to patient safety. Despite many senior vacancies, senior staffing was also deliberately excluded from the last 3 year departmental strategic plan. These positions have only recently been filled after substantial delays and we still struggle to fill registrar rosters. There is new leadership in the department and there has been significant improvement. But there has been no accountability and if lessons are not learned from the past, history is currently set to repeat.

It was also in this toxic and unsafe environment that I was also subjected to bullying after I lodged a formal complaint which ended in me having a breakdown in late 2021, the personal and professional consequences are enormous and ongoing and i am again on extended leave due to this injury. There are still times that the thought of returning reduces me to tears. I hold the district responsible for a failure of duty of care to provide a safe workplace.

I can name 7 other individual staff specialists within ED who have been subjected to bullying or harassment with variable degree of injury. Of these, we have recently lost a ss with more than 20 years service to the dept and another is blacklisted. Only 4 of the 10 signatories of the formal industrial complaint remain as ss in the department and the department has gone from one with very stable senior pool of staff specialists to one of the most junior in the state over the last few years.

I am also now aware of many names outside ED, Bullying and intimidation is widespread throughout Concord Hospital and there are many individuals that have significant psychological injury, the human impact is enormous. **THERE ARE CONSISTENT REPORTS OF FACILITATION AND BULLYING BY AREA and Ex HOSPITAL EXECUTIVE AND THAT THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT IS ALSO COMPLICIT.** There are also failures of the institution to implement appropriately either the preventative or management components of the NSW Health bullying policy or the law. The approach of the institution is highly dismissive does further damage to victims and reinforces and rewards toxic behaviours in the perpetrators. Bullying and intimidation is absolutely tolerated and facilitated by this institution and must stop.

There is substantial written evidence highlighting the above which is possessed by a number of individuals, in multiple departments but in many instances not able to be discussed due to unilateral confidentiality requirements imposed by the district.

As an aside, In addition to concerns in relation to bullying the department does not have a negative pressure room that is compliant with Australian standards and despite multiple communications hospital and area executive have refused to even perform a risk assessment continuing to expose staff to infected patients to an unsafe environment even during covid, a direct threat to both patients and staff.

Back on theme, We are dealing with a culture of Institutional bullying. there are both bullies and enablers, many are both, many of us can name more than one, but they are untouchable and unaccountable. We have asked for help but the answer is no, and individuals raising concern targeted, the MSC and ASMOF haalso raised concern, and this is not the first approach to the board, the answer still no. This is unacceptable, we need to understand how we got here and to fully define the problem, there needs to be accountability and we need to work together to fix this. We need leadership who are prepared to engage and we need a fully independent investigation.

Thankyou