

14/02/13

My name is Jennifer Trueman. I was a Community Participation Officer in Education QLD from 1993 till September 2012 when I retired. For the last sixteen years, I was based in Townsville as an officer of the North Queensland Education Region.

My position involved working with school administrators in relation to their school communities, and supporting Parents and Citizens Committees with management issues. A large part of the role involved facilitating training in various areas, problem edification solving, conflict resolution and mediation when all else failed.

In 2009, my role changed abruptly. There was no warning, or consultation, regarding this change. I was simply told that, as of that moment, my job was to coordinate the QLD Ready Reader Program in the North QLD Region. Our region was one of three across the State to trial the program; the following year, all Community Participation Officers across the State followed suite.

The new role involved training of volunteers to work in classrooms to assist young readers and the collection and recording of copious amounts of data. The former I was well-equipped to handle, the latter was a mystery to me. I spent a stressful year juggling folders and make-shift data sheets that only I could decipher. When others came on board in 2010, a data collection tool was developed for us. It was a super stressful first year. For the first time in my career with Education Queensland, I was overwhelmed, couldn't sleep, unhappy and feeling under-valued.

This was not the job any of us had signed up for and people fell away; quite a few across the State dropping out and moving to other departments or into the private sector.

When the new government offered a round of redundancies in 2012, we received no communications from our management regarding the offer. Rumours started, worried people shared a few words with colleagues in corridors, mostly along the lines of, "Have you heard anything? Do you know what's happening?"

Finally, people started receiving information from friends in other government departments where the management had made an effort to pass on what they knew. In Education, we heard nothing, except what we were able to find on the internet. It was an extraordinary time – we found that the only way to get any information was to watch the evening news. In the meantime, production slowed dramatically as officers were reluctant to pursue programs and planning, since we had no idea if we'd even be employed three months down the track.

Several times we were told by management that there would be an announcement to staff regarding the matter, and several times this was postponed and another date announced. Morale was non-existent. People felt utterly unappreciated and frightened for the future.

I expressed my interest in the redundancy offer and was refused. I was told sorry, even though my role had gone – the Ready Reader Program was discontinued across

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the State – I was required to pick up my old role of looking after P&Cs. This, even though 20 years of resources in relation to that role, had since been binned or deleted.

I was refused redundancy because of the fact that I was of retirement age. The Regional Director, Richard English, told me that I was being refused because I had told him previously that I was considering retirement.

This seemed grossly unfair to me. I watched the Queensland Premier talk in the news about how no public servant was being forced out of his or her job and that people were being asked to volunteer for redundancy. At no stage did I hear the Premier say that redundancy packages would be offered only to people who were not of retirement age.

I watched as two devastated colleagues were made redundant very much against their wishes, while I, who had applied for redundancy, was kept on very much against my wishes. I do not believe that this was in the spirit of the Queensland Premier's promise that people would be asked to volunteer for redundancy.

The management of the restructuring process was appalling and left a trail of dead-men-walking around Queensland State Government offices waiting for execution day. I decided I didn't want to be a part of this any more. I retired.

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