

Michelle Rogers



To Whom it may concern

I am writing to hopefully have my voice heard into the inquiry regarding Youth Justice (VIC)

Firstly I apologise for handwriting this but my computer is broken and I financially cant afford to fix that just yet but really felt that it was important to write to you.

My name is Michelle Rogers and I was employed at Youth Justice for approx 8 years having been terminated about 2 years ago. I felt that something I raised and was terminated for is very relevant to the state of things now. Please Please dont dismiss what I have to say as sour grapes before reading this in its entirety as I "LOVED" my job and the centre.

I may go off track but am happy at any stage to discuss this with anybody. I want to be transparent and hope this inquiry is the same because too much has been covered up for too long.

Where to begin ???

My background was in management of fast food chains, servos etc prior to coming to realise the thing I loved was the kids and the confidence they gained

In having a job, Long Story so I switched to Youth work in Geelong both the substance abuse and residential settings. I also worked for a couple of years in the adult prison system and everything together led me to MYJC.

I worked for a substantial period in the Remand South section which was the first admission point at that time in the centre so I need for you to see the picture so I may rave a bit (sorry)

The prison van would drop off the boys to us straight from the cells or court etc and a lot of them have been living rough so they basically stunk. We would take the time (a luxury we usually didn't have) to make sure they showered so they didn't become a target instantly on the floor and get to know that child one on one for a small amount of time. The crimes may seem adult but alone and scared they are still kids. We explained the expectations of the unit and asked about them. We made a connection that can then be carried back out on the floor and the kid welcomed not just thrown to the wolves.

The group of people I was lucky enough to work with in Remand were chosen by Joan Dodson unit manager for there diversity. We had a musician an indian lady etc but no matter who got off the van a staff member made a connection which kept us SAFE.

I believe this element of initial connection was lost in the process of adding the new admissions section. Yes they do an amazing job paperwork wise and make the client feel safe but then they hand them over to a group of people in a unit usually understaffed and expected to do his best and left feeling vulnerable.

* Would love to discuss further if interested

I have been hesitant to get to this point but I believe Ian Lanyon whether he was directed by the government or ego driven destroyed the heart of the centre by terminating over 100 people who he refers to induction groups as quote "DEAD WOOD"

I need to explain: Currently its the Sudanese clients that are causing chaos so there the focus, before that it was the Islanders and before that, there has always been a group of youth coming along since the centre opened that caused grief. The difference is Ian Lanyon terminated one by one by one 100's of years of experienced staff, some rightly, most not, and the pendulum of control started to swing to the clients: "But no body was listening"

Casual Staff replaced fulltimers straight out of school, great intentions of making a difference. Then the first time a client goes off and you need to diffuse the situation the connection isnt there and gets out of control very quickly.

The staff that were there wanted to be there to work with the clients. To make a difference we played games with them, sang, danced swan with these clients and taught them how to be kids in a safe environment where the adults had control.

The rumours were that the pot of money sitting against youth justice in regards to long service leave etc was too big and existing staff were to be moved on. Yes Ian Lanyon has achieved this but at what cost???

I sent a letter that I was actually terminated on to Ian Lanyon ~~was~~ warning he had a "big" problem on his hands in regards to staffing but "Who was I to make that claim!!!"

Yes I don't like Ian Lanyon that's clear but whether directed or not the decision to loose so many core staff was to me the decision that sees the centre in the state it is now

The human element has been forgotten and the basis of the human connection and feeling safe has been taken out. The control has been taken by the clients now.

I was never scared at work as I knew I had a team around me that I never had to doubt. Now the only ones who know each other is the clients as the staff are all new.

I know maybe bricks and mortar stuff may be what your after but really if your going to redesign a broken system please ask your self what you want to achieve. In trying to fix the system Jon Lyons reign has in fact destroyed it and the lives off lots off ex staff as well

Please would love to chat more if your interested. It was an amazing place once

Regards


Michelle Rogers

I submit 2 folders of evidence and the original letter for your consideration and will try and make myself free for any further questions.

The folders show why I was dismissed and the whole process used. I fought hard and long to save my job but in the end I was too broken to continue and my family paid the price.

I am strong now and ready to discuss a centre that I still believe can rise from the ashes again with the heart put back in.