

'It's been six years of hell'

Susie O'Brien
Tamara McDonald

'Missing' teacher tells of workplace bullying

The teacher at the centre of Christian College Geelong bullying claims has spoken out, saying she has endured "six years of ubiquitous bullying and harassment" at her workplace.

Pam McKeeman, head of the school's Bellarine campus, said she had been on "forced leave" for eight months while "allegations of serious misconduct were investigated against me".

She said she was advised on Thursday that "an investigation was underway after media interest".

Ms McKeeman's comments come as the embattled school moves to reassure parents it takes concerns about work-

place misconduct seriously, amid multiple allegations of bullying and harassment.

The Herald Sun revealed that Ms McKeeman's husband Glen, the school's principal, is also on leave.

In the wake of the allegations being published, board chair Rev Paul Stephens told parents in a letter sent on Friday: "I want to assure our community that we take allegations of workplace-related misconduct seriously and that we comply with the law, procedural fairness and natural justice for all parties when complaints are made".

"When we received a series

of formal complaints about the conduct of some of our staff members, we made sure these complaints were independently investigated," the letter stated.

"These investigations were undertaken by qualified workplace investigators, entirely at arms' length from the college's leadership."

Other parents have contacted the Herald Sun in the wake of the article, with one stating that the "fear in the Bellarine Campus community at the moment is paralysing".

"We are all very upset with how (Ms McKeeman) has been treated and that she is not at

school and is now being made a scapegoat," the parent said.

Another said there was "no parents' committee at the school and it seems to be only a small select few who are involved in major decisions".

The parent said there were concerns at the concentration of power and the use of school funds for non-school matters.

"Many parents like myself worry about these rumours and the lack of building maintenance and educational support offered to the children who are behind, said to be due to 'lack of funding'," the parent said. "I feel like we should know if these rumours have

any truth to them and should be investigated."

Rumours have swirled for months about the status of Ms McKeeman's "disappearance" and the nature of the investigation into claims both made by her and against her. One source said the school had "been completely unwilling to participate in an open and honest process".

Unlike most private schools, Christian College Geelong is governed by both a chief executive, Daryl Riddle, and Mr McKeeman as principal.

A source said the pair had long been "butting heads over control" of the school.

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Pam McKeeman



Glen McKeeman



Victorian seniors are being encouraged to don the big red suit to help avoid a Santa shortage. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

Tis the season to be jolly well employed as Santa

Sam McNeill

Ho, ho, hone your Christmas spirit as one of Santa's many helpers this Christmas season.

Following shortages among the North Pole crew, talent agency Scene to Believe is kicking off its Santa recruitment drive early, calling all Australians.

Experienced Claus, Tony Hooper, has donned the suit for several years and said it was a great job for older Australians due to its flexibility and time spent with

merry young families.

"It's also a great way to earn extra cash right before Christmas, which is when I need it most," he said.

"And the best part is, I can

still receive my pension."

University students, international students, older Australians and everyone in between have a place this Christmas season.

They can apply on the Scene to Believe Santa Hotline (02) 9054 2636 or visit www.scenetobelieve.com.au/santa-jobs.

Infection key is self test

Self-testing for syphilis could reduce the sexually transmissible infection's global impact, a new study has found.

Syphilis continues to be a major health issue, with an estimated seven million people infected worldwide each year.

The Monash University-led global systematic review found syphilis self-testing was acceptable and feasible

to implement. Like self-testing for Covid or HIV, syphilis self tests allow an individual to test themselves at home without the need to visit a health facility.

"If we can improve access to self-testing for syphilis, we can also have a major impact on the current syphilis epidemic in Australia and beyond," senior author and Monash University Associate Professor Jason Ong said.



Hugo T Armstrong

Blues Train needs new driver

Michaela Meade

The owner of a music experience on the Bellarine is saying goodbye to the business, but that won't spell the end of the line for the popular attraction.

Hugo T Armstrong will step away from Queenscliff's The Blues Train after 29 years at the helm.

The Blues Train offers a "shake, rattle and roll" experience, with guests invited to a

mini music festival on a steam train, complete with a blues-inspired meal and four live blues and roots entertainers.

Mr Armstrong said he had mixed emotions about his decision, but vowed he would make sure the next custodian could take it further.

"It's not something I feel that I'm going to completely walk out of," he said. "My commitment remains the same."

"After 29 years, I know it's

time for some fresh blood and fresh ideas, and people with more energy."

Mr Armstrong said the amount of work involved in running the business had evolved over the years. He said as a business that started before websites, social media and smartphones, there was a lot more involved nowadays.

Expressions of interest for running the business are now being accepted.