

Former Rangiora High School Principal Wins Unfair Dismissal Claim

“Relieved” is how dismissed Rangiora High School Principal Peggy Burrows is describing the way she feels about comprehensively winning her unfair dismissal case against Commissioner Beverly Moore.

The decision from the Employment Relations Authority has comprehensively upheld her appeal for wrongful dismissal as Principal of the school she had led for 13 years, awarding her one of the highest awards ever of \$150,000 plus costs.

“I believe this was always about getting me out so the Ministry could control the school and its \$14M in financial assets. I thought it was vital to protect those assets and advocate for the students, staff and community,” says Mrs Burrows.

The two-week hearing into the employment dispute between Burrows and MOE Commissioner Beverly Moore was heard over seven days beginning on September 13th 2016.

“I am thrilled to have won so definitively however the money the commissioner has spent on pursuing this case means there are no real winners. That’s money which should have been spent on the students and staff at Rangiora High,” she says. “It was extremely important to me and my family to clear my name and not be remembered for something I did not do. My heartfelt thanks go to the community and teaching staff who stood by me and my family during this very difficult time. I am also very thankful for the overwhelming support I have had locally, nationally and internationally.”

Mrs Burrows said from her home in North Canterbury that she is still considering her options with regards to reinstatement, as the ERA determination did not support this request.

ENDS

There will be no further comment at this time.

Key Points from the Determination:

Unfair dismissal comprehensively upheld, on all three grounds

1. Had Peggy Burrows not been dismissed she would still have been principal
2. Peggy Burrows did not contribute in any way to the issues on which the commissioner based her decision to dismiss
3. There were no grounds for dismissal

Often an award will be reduced as in some way the dismissed person has contributed to the reasons for dismissal, however in this case, no reduction was made as the unfair dismissal was comprehensively upheld.

Clarification:

In April 2015, there were inaccurate reports in the media regarding Mrs Burrows' attendance at an international conference at Pennsylvania State University in the USA. Mrs Burrows' attendance was fully sanctioned by the Rangiora High School Board of Trustees, prior to the arrival of commissioner Moore. In addition to annual budgeted professional development funding Mrs Burrows has a fully funded scholarship from the University of Canterbury to undertake this important research into Māori student achievement. There was never any question of impropriety around her participation at this conference.