

R.J. Tait
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

18 February 2014

The Presiding Judge

District Court of New South Wales

I have known Michael Williamson for the past 35 years and consider him to be a personal friend. I have gone over in detail the agreed facts of Michael case, whilst I don't agree with Michael's actions over the past few years I know this is not in keeping with his very strong beliefs of equity for all.

I first met Michael when I was a witness at an appeal hearing of the Government and Related Employee's Appeals Tribunal in Inverell. The appeal related to the dismissal of an Ambulance Officer stationed in Inverell. Michael appeared as the Industrial Advocate for the then Health Commission of NSW. It would be safe to say that we locked horns very heavily. Immediately after the decision was handed down Michael approached me outside the Inverell Court House and said "Are you up for a beer" this took me by surprise, however I agreed and a 35 year friendship followed.

I will be the first to admit that we were never in each others pocket 24/7 however when I needed an honest appraisal of a circumstance or issue I could always rely on Michael to be straight with me and I would like to think that it was the same coming from me.

Michael moved from the Industrial section of the then Health & Research Employee's Association (now Health Services Union) and very quickly progressed in the organization. All through these years I held the position of New England Sub Branch President and had a lot of dealings with Michael, I was in a position whereby I was required to regularly attend meetings in Sydney and dealt directly with Michael on a number of occasions. I watched on when Michael's frustration

at times came to a head when a member of the union was being badly treated by an employer. He would say things like, this person is defenseless against this employer and this union has the responsibility to represent them and right the wrong.

Michael became State Secretary of H&REA and the union progressed at a rapid rate, from an old ramshackle building in Elisabeth Street to modern offices in Pitt Street. He injected a sense of achievement in all the staff and gave them the leadership they needed to carry the union forward, which flowed on to the membership in a number of ways. Wage and award negotiations became a priority for Michael and the subsequent benefits flowed. It has been said that Michael is arrogant and cocky and this is true, however that only occurred on occasions.

I watched one day when Michael cried as he was told of the suicide of one of my Ambulance colleagues who had worked as a union sub branch official.

Michael's concern was that the union in some way had overworked this individual and the thing paramount in Michael's mind at the time was this person's family and how the union was ever going to repay the great debt that Michael believed was owed. On another occasion a colleague was tragically killed in a helicopter accident, Michael spoke to the leadership of other emergency service unions to rally support to donate to the family of the deceased. This resulted in the donation of large sums of money to the family.

Michael has always as long as I have known him had to fight for the rights of the underprivileged and those that are not able to defend themselves. At the State Conference a couple of years ago Michael arranged for a group of Down's Syndrome children to perform as a dance group. It brought the conference to a standstill and the joy in the faces of these children performing in front of over two hundred delegates was obvious. I spoke to Michael that afternoon after conference and asked where he got the idea to involve these kids. He replied "that they had the right to have their moment in the spotlight as much as anyone. attending conference" I have never forgotten those words which inspired me to

become a director on the board of Multi Task which is the governing body of Challenge Disabilities Lismore.

Michael is a half full person rather than half empty and I have watched as he has inspired others to achieve. He is a very dedicated family man and his children mean everything to him and each one is in fact a credit to Julie and Michael. I am aware that as a direct result of the current proceedings that Michael marriage has failed and that following conversations I have had with Michael that he is deeply remorseful for his actions, the fact that he has let a lot of people down that both respected and trusted him plays heavily on his mind. The fact that he has let his wife and children down also plays on his conscious and he realizes just how stupid he has been and wished he could rewind the tape, which he can't.

I believe that Michael is now a lot better person than the way he is being portrayed, although I cannot condone his conduct in any way. I have seen the soft side of a man that is considered to be hard, arrogant, well connected, and that side shows compassion, consideration for others and a champion for the under dog and for those reasons, I have absolutely no hesitation in writing this reference.



Yours faithfully,

Raymond Tait

Short CV

- Inspector with the NSW Ambulance Service 40 years
- Former Councillor Tamworth City Council 2000-2004
- Former Councillor Tamworth Regional Council 2008-2012
- Director Multi task resources Challenge Disabilities Lismore
- Director of NewTrain Pty Ltd- Child care centres throughout NSW
- Director Zambuck Investments