

Lambie wraps up evidence

BY MATT MALONEY

SENATOR Jacqui Lambie has accused two former staffers of trying to sabotage her relationship with former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull by escalating workplace complaints to him in 2017.

Senator Lambie hired Rob and Fern Messenger shortly after her election in 2014 and sacked the couple in 2017.

They have argued in Federal Court this adverse action was taken due to them sending a detailed Public Information Disclosure document to Mr Turnbull, complaining about the senator's conduct and workplace health and safety concerns.

Senator Lambie told the court on Wednesday the document was sent to humiliate and degrade her.

"It had very little if any truth to it - it was disgusting," she said.

Senator Lambie then accused Mr Messenger of trying to damage her relationship with Mr Turnbull.

"It was a low blow," she said.

"That's all it was, Mr Messenger."

Senator Lambie and Mrs Messenger had a falling out

the year before the Public Disclosure Document was sent which eventuated in the initiation of a mediation process.

Senator Lambie said there was barely any communication between the two for months before the call was made.

Even though she did not seek to enter mediation with Mr Messenger, Senator

Lambie said almost every staff member in the office had made complaints about their behaviour.

The complaints about Mrs Messenger were compiled in a document to be used for mediation.

Mrs Messenger labeled the process a sham, suggesting there was no desire to reach a resolution and for her to keep her job.

This was denied by Senator Lambie who said she wanted to give Mrs Messenger an opportunity to remain employed.

The Messengers, who are self-represented for the proceedings, were again criticised by Justice John Snaden during Wednesday's hearing for attempting to smear Senator Lambie through their questioning of her.

Inspiring brothers thriving

EIGHT years after surviving horrific burns in a car fire, inspirational Devonport brothers Fletcher and Spencer Connelly are getting on with life as happy teenagers.

Fletcher, 17, is a year 11 student who thinks about a career in IT. He recently overcame anxiety to secure his first casual job at the Hill Street Supermarket six months ago and loves it.

Spencer, 13, is at high school and has a passion for soccer and riding his bike on the pump track.

The boys' mother, Alison McGee, said Spencer needs ongoing skin grafts and, because of Tasmania's "terrible" waiting lists, had to wait 18 months for surgery. He requires laser surgery every six to eight weeks to give him more movement, but it gets pushed back.

Despite their challenges, her polite, likeable sons continue to thrive after bravely overcoming the trauma they experienced in 2012 when their father lit gas cylinders inside the family car with the boys and him in the vehicle. He's in prison serving a sentence.



BROTHERLY LOVE: Proud mum Alison McGee says sons Fletcher and Spencer are happy teenagers getting on with life. **Picture:** Simon Sturzaker.

Fletcher has a quiet, thoughtful nature, and Spencer is the socially outgoing one with a cheeky sense of humour. When asked what he wants to do after he leaves school, Spencer grins.

"I've talked about being a doughnut tester," he quips.

The brothers are dedicated Sydney Swans fans who get to hang out with the players in the clubrooms.

When Governor-General David Hurley visited Devonport late last year, he met the boys and presented them with two medallions he gives out at his discretion

to celebrate individuals.

The brothers are close and take care of each other.

The North-West community knows the boys who still suffer the stares of strangers in other places.

"North-West Coasters leave the boys alone, but in other places, it's the adults

who don't know when to stop staring, and kids will just ask what happened," Mrs McGee said.

"That happened to me yesterday," Spencer said.

"I said to them I went halfway to hell."

Mrs McGee, whose world was turned upside down,

encouraged her sons to get through tough times.

"I am proud of them and how they handle life. They're giving it a go. I've told them you don't expect anything from anyone, and if you want something, you've got to go and get it yourselves," she said.



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