

The Honourable Adrian Piccoli

My name is Dr Refaat El-Hajje and I have been the Acting Principal of Malek Fahd Islamic School for the last 6 months. I have also been the acting principal of the Islamic School of Canberra and for the last 14 years before that I was a Physics coordinator at Malek Fahd Islamic School. I hold 4 degrees; a Maths and Physics degrees, a teaching degree, a Masters in school administration and a PhD.

As the administrator of the school for the last 6 months I have seen continuous AFIC interference and unethical behaviour by both the AFIC Board members and the school Board members. The School has acted for profit with money trail moving from MFIS to AFIC. Hafez Kassem the Chairman of AFIC and the Vice Chairman of the School Board continuously boast as how he outsmarted the government and moved 18 million dollars from MFIS to AFIC to purchase the Hoxton Park and Beaumont Hill campuses. He forced the MFIS Board to pay rent in advance and this was not in the interest of MFIS since they have put the school under enormous financial pressure in forcing the school to undertake two simultaneous building projects that have had their fair share in legal challenges.

The School Board has not worked in the interest of the school but for the interest of AFIC increasing its revenue collections from the school. The MFIS campus has licence for 1600 students, yet the school has over 2200 students putting pressure on class sizes and traffic congestion. This number is not in the interest of MFIS students. The Board has been careless in monitoring this increase.

I have recently sent the AIS explanations to allegations which were prepared by the school's solicitors. I didn't have any input into this matter and I was told to forward them to the AIS. My true responses are included with this letter.

The AFIC and School Board have not changed its habits and the only change is that the Board has decided to deceive the funding bodies by claiming that they have changed. In my opinion, both the State and federal funding bodies need to follow the money trail more closely and look at the school operation for the last 15 years. Corruption is striving with the Business manager controlling the finances and not allowing the Principal to see the breakdown of the individual expenditures. **I have asked Agim Garana, the business manager to explain how he paid \$50, 000 for school shoes when the school does not sell shoes. I have asked the NSW Police to conduct a police investigation.** I have spoken to a Constable and he has said that we have an excellent case in proving that Agim Garana has committed Fraud. However, since I have been removed from my position by the Board due to the fact that I have questioned Agim Garana about his financial dealing, I cannot provide the police with the cheque details. The Minister should order a full investigation into this matter.

The Building manager Amjad Mahboob has been the CEO of AFIC and has very close ties with the Chairman of the AFIC Board. The building manager also looks at other building projects of AFIC and I honestly do not know if he is charging MFIS for services to other AFIC projects since he doesn't report to the principal.

Agim Garana has worked until very recently as AFIC financial controller and he has not cut his ties with AFIC. This can be demonstrated by the fact that AFIC has not replaced him after his move to MFIS.

AFIC legal bills have been paid from Malek Fahd funds since AFIC is low on funds and both use the same solicitors. MFIS legal bill is humongous and cannot be justified.

The Chairman of AFIC is continuously running AFIC's affairs from MFIS. The Chairman has brought secretaries from AFIC to work at MFIS and be on the school pay roll and at the same time to perform some of AFIC's work.

The Chairman of AFIC has forced me to employ his daughter and to give her a scale higher than what she deserves.

Agim registered with ASIC on the 16th of January 2013 to join the MFIS Board, while according to the AFIC minutes, he was voted to become a member of the MFIS board on the 16th of February 2013. He did not follow governance procedures.

Agim Garana had serious allegations raised against him about 18 years ago and was forced out of MFIS (This was done by the President of AFIC at that time, Yaser Naser and a Board member Ibrahim Al Zobei. These people can be questioned if an investigation was to be conducted). They have come back and now have full control over the finances of MFIS and other AFIC schools.

AFIC has full control of the Board as the AFIC chairman has the ability to dismiss the MFIS Board if the Board does not adhere to AFIC's agenda. The Board comprises of 5 Lebanese, 1 Albanian and one Indonesian. Three Fijians were removed/resigned from the Board because Hafez Kassem could not always get their vote.

In conclusion, the only solution that can save MFIS and its students is for the government to assign a caretaker body to run MFIS while AFIC changes its constitution to ensure that MFIS has a higher degree of autonomy. The state government must hold its ground and keep MFIS funds frozen until it can be 100% guaranteed that Tax payers fund are purely used for the education of the students and as the former Acting Principal I did not see a true change except deception.

Best regards
Dr Refaat El-Hajje