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Four Corners

Inside the Canberra Bubble

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"It is vitally important that all politicians, whether they are backbenchers or ministers, or leaders, maintain the highest possible standard of proper conduct and integrity." Liberal Senator

Parliament House in Canberra is a hotbed of political intrigue and high tension. Leadership challenges and tightly fought votes are covered exhaustively by the media, but what happens after hours has long been governed by the idea that what happens in Canberra stays in Canberra.

"One of the problems with the culture in Canberra is that you've got all of these people, you know, politicians, staffers, away from home, a stressful environment, late hours, too much alcohol...and I think people often lose sight of the fact that there are standards of behaviour and conduct which have to be maintained." Former Prime Minister

It's known as the "Canberra Bubble" and it operates in an atmosphere that seems far removed from how modern Australian workplaces are expected to function.

"I've been in politics a long time and sexism, unfortunately has been a feature of it for all that period." Labor Senator

On Monday, this Four Corners investigation questions the conduct of some of the most senior politicians in the nation.

"This isn't about party politics. This is about the nation's Parliament." Greens Senator

Inside the Canberra bubble, reported by Louise Milligan, goes to air on Monday 9th November 8.30pm. It is replayed on Tuesday 10th November at 10.00am and Wednesday 11th at 11.20pm. It can also be seen on ABC NEWS channel on Saturday at 8.10pm AEST, ABC iview and at abc.net.au/4corners.

Response from the Attorney-General, Christian Porter:

Malcolm often summoned Ministers in frustration about the amount of detail leaking from Cabinet. I had one such meeting in early December 2017, where Malcolm put to me a rumour that I leaked to journalist Sharri Markson about the Banking Royal Commission and towards the end of that meeting he queried whether there was any accuracy to what he described as another story he had heard, the answer was no to both these things. Malcolm then promoted me to Attorney-General about two weeks after. In my time as AG I never had any complaint or any suggestion of any problem from Malcolm regarding the conduct of my duties as AG until the last week of his Prime Ministership when we had a significant disagreement over the Peter Dutton citizenship issue.

Transcript

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Four Corners

9 November 2020

Inside the Canberra Bubble

JO DYER, NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHAMPION DEBATING TEAM, 1987: All political parties need to think about the type of people that they have in positions of power and authority. And Australians need to think about the type of people that they want representing them.

CONCETTA FIERRAVANTE-WELLS, LIBERAL SENATOR: Whether you're the first law officer, or you're the prime minister or you're the premier, that expectation is that one conducts oneself with the highest degree of integrity.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: Ministers, Cabinet Ministers in particular, have got to really be very conscious of the fact that when you're out in public you have to make sure that you're not doing anything that that you know, could expose you to compromise.

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: This isn't about party politics. This is about the nation's parliament. I think a big part of the problem is that women have been forced to stay silent on these things. And silence doesn't help anyone.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: The behaviour wasn't OK, and the culture is not OK. And there should be something done about it.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: There's a strong but unofficial tradition in federal politics of what happens in Canberra, stays in Canberra. Politicians, political staff and media operate in what's known as 'The Canberra Bubble'. Along with the political gamesmanship, there's a heady, permissive culture and that culture can be toxic for women. Tonight on Four Corners, we go inside the Canberra Bubble, with an investigation that questions the conduct of some of the most senior politicians in the nation.

KRISTINA KENEALLY, LABOR SENATOR: I've been in politics a long time and sexism, unfortunately has been a feature of it for all that period. I just think it's quite regrettable that younger women and people who are in a more vulnerable position are still experiencing sexist overtures or sexual harassment, quite frankly.

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: Whether it's the sexist slurs and the bullying and intimidation that I've stood up against, or a young staffer feeling intimidated or put upon in, in an office, it's part of the same problem.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: For the women who work inside the Canberra bubble, it can be a dispiriting place.

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: It is a... It's a man's world that we still haven't cracked open.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: One of the problems with the culture in Canberra is a that you've got all of these people, you know, politicians, staffers, away from home, a stressful environment, late hours, too much alcohol. It's not a healthy working environment, and it's a very isolated one. If you think Canberra is a bubble, Parliament House is a bubble inside a bubble and so it's not a great working environment and I think people often lose sight of the fact that there are, you know, standards of behaviour and conduct which have to be maintained. The attitudes to women and the lack of respect to women, of women in many quarters in Canberra reminds me of the corporate scene, you know, 40 years ago. It is, it's just not modern Australia – it really isn't.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Do you think there's a view by some of the blokes in Canberra that what happens on tour stays on tour?

CONCETTA FIERRAVANTE-WELLS, LIBERAL SENATOR: Well that's Louise a question that I would direct to the blokes. But certainly, if one conducts oneself with an appropriate standard of conduct and integrity, then whatever may have happened on tour ought to be a matter for public disclosure.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: In Australia, the private lives of politicians have traditionally been considered off-limits. But many women working in Canberra believe this culture of silence allows sexist behaviour to thrive.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: I think a lot of MPs and senators get into the kind of trap of thinking that Canberra's a place where they can come and kind of do whatever they like, because there'll be no scrutiny, they're out of their electorate, they're away from their family.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Rachelle Miller worked at Parliament House as an adviser to Liberal Party MPs and Ministers for nine years. She believes it's time to blow the whistle.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Why are you here?

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: Look, I think for two reasons. One of the reasons is that I really strongly believe that the standard that you walk past is the standard you accept, and I saw a lot of really poor behaviour in my time in parliament and I feel I let down a lot of women. As a senior staffer, I could have done a lot more to stand up for people. Instead, there was a culture of kind of just putting your head down and not getting involved. And I think that it's really important now for me to be able to speak out and say that this behaviour wasn't okay, and that if you are experiencing this behaviour and still working in parliament, it's not okay. And, you should know that.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: The Liberal Party has been grappling with what's been described as a "women problem" for several years, with accusations of endemic sexism.

LINDA REYNOLDS, LIBERAL SENATOR, 23 AUGUST 2018: "I do not recognise my party at the moment. I do not recognise the values. I do not recognise the bullying and intimidation that has gone on."

JULIE BISHOP, DEPUTY LIBERAL LEADER, 2007-2018, 5 SEPTEMBER 2018: "It's evident that there is an acceptance of a level of behaviour in Canberra that would not be tolerated in any other workplace."

JULIA BANKS, LIBERAL MP, 27 NOVEMBER 2018: “Often, when good women call out or are subjected to bad behaviour, the reprisals, backlash and commentary portrays them as the bad ones – the liar, the troublemaker, the emotionally unstable or weak, or someone who should be silenced.”

NEWSREADER, 2 JANUARY 2019: Prime Minister Scott Morrison has begun trying to win back female voters, and he's using some of the same female MPs who recently accused blokes in the Liberal Party of being bullies.

SCOTT MORRISON, PRIME MINISTER: There are seven women now in cabinet. That is the highest number of women ever in a federal cabinet.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Do you think that the Liberal Party has a woman problem?

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: Well I think women have got a problem with the Liberal Party. It's probably a better way of putting it. I think the party, ah, does not have enough women MPs and Senators. I think it is seen as being very blokey. That's a real that is a, that look, that is wrong. That is, that is wrong, full stop. Politically, it's also very mistaken.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Women remain underrepresented on the government benches.

KELLY O'DWYER, MINISTER FOR WOMEN, JOBS & INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, 3 SEPTEMBER 2018: Well, look, there's no question that the Liberal Party can and should do better when it comes to getting more women into parliament and we need to do a lot better at keeping them there.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Seven of the 30 current government ministers are women. There are fewer Liberal women sitting in the Lower House than there were 20 years ago, while the number of Opposition women has doubled.

SCOTT MORRISON, PRIME MINISTER, 8 MARCH 2019: “We want to see women rise. But we don't want to see women rise, only on the basis of others doing worse.”

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: A Gender and Politics report released just last month by Liberal think-tank, The Menzies Research Centre, found the party has a long way to go.

NICK CATER, MENZIES RESEARCH CENTRE, 28 OCTOBER 2020: If we believe that everybody should have an equal opportunity in life, and as Liberals we believe that passionately, then there's no reason why women should not be better represented in parliament.

NICOLLE FLINT, LIBERAL MP, 28 OCTOBER 2020: We know that there are barriers to women putting their hand up for preselection and being elected, and then staying elected is the other part of it as well which is why we still need to see far more women in safe seats.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: I don't feel like there's equality in the Liberal Party at the moment and it's really concerning for me. It's one of the reasons why I've thought recently seriously about giving up my membership of the Liberal Party. It's one of the reasons why I've been quite discouraged in pursuing a career with the Liberal Party. There's plenty of women working in staffing roles in parliament at the moment, but the experience is, you need to be like a male to cope, to survive.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Senior Liberal women including current Cabinet ministers, have despaired at the sexism of some of their male colleagues in a private WhatsApp message group obtained by Four Corners.

WHATSAPP MESSAGE: "It is passed [sic] time for us to get organised and collectively stand up. After listening in party room ... to bikini judging commentary enough is enough. [angry emoji]"

WHATSAPP MESSAGE: "We, each of us inspire young women to aim for leadership, how do we continue to do this in the face of puerile back-stabbing from male party members whose sole aim is to count numbers and take our place? This leads to huge party discontent and loss of loyal liberals who feel terribly betrayed..."

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: It's not just sexism that women face in this highly-charged atmosphere. There is also a pattern of inappropriate sexual behaviour which is tolerated and condoned.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: I don't for a moment kind of say that all the men were predators and all the women were victims, but it was a highly sexualised environment at times and I think that's a consequence of the stress. It's kind of that 'work hard, play hard' mentality that I've seen before early in my career in industries like advertising. And there is a kind of, an almost gung-ho kind of mentality by a lot of the senior males that they're kind of almost beyond reproach, like they can just get away with things. And...I... and they can, because nobody calls that behaviour out.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: The annual mid-winter ball at Parliament House is one occasion where politicians, staffers and journalists like to let their hair down.

KRISTINA KENEALLY, LABOR SENATOR: I attended the 2017 midwinter ball in my capacity as a Sky News presenter. I was a host of one of the Sky News tables. It was a work event for me, but you know, I was looking forward to a fun evening. I can only describe what I witnessed and experienced and quite frankly, that was some men who were clearly on the make at that event. And I know people are going to think this might sound partisan, but let's remember I was a Sky News presenter in 2017, I wasn't a member of parliament. And you know, what I experienced was some Coalition men trying to have a crack. And it, it was clumsy, it was easily fobbed off. No harm was done to me, but it did make me feel uncomfortable. I hadn't particularly experienced that at a function like that before and it made me wonder what kind of environment is this, where men think they can just have a crack at it? You know? I'm a public figure and I'm pretty publicly well-known to be married. And I was really surprised and taken aback by that. In fact, I went back and told one of my colleagues at Sky: "I'm not going to that event again without my husband. Not because I need him to protect me, but I just felt that a woman there alone had a kind of a sign on her neck that said she was available. This was an event with hundreds of people. If this is what is happening in the federal parliament in a relatively open way, what's going on behind closed doors? Particularly, if you've got men who've got a sense of power and entitlement. I just have to wonder what's going on for many of the young women in this building?"

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Media advisor Rachelle Miller was also there for her first Midwinter Ball that night in 2017. She attended with her boss, then-Human Services Minister Alan Tudge.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: I had a really lovely dress that I'd found, which was like a floor length red dress and the girls did a really good job with my hair and makeup. So it was nice to dress up and feel nice and feel that you looked, you know, you look nicer than the usual suit that you wore every day.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Both married with children, Rachelle Miller now admits she and Minister Tudge were having an affair. She was terrified they would be found out.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: I was walking with Alan and I was chatting to him and I intentionally dropped back because I didn't want to walk in with him. I mean I wasn't his guest. I wasn't his partner. And I didn't want to be on camera. And he stopped and he turned around, he said, 'no, I want you walking with me' and I'm...I was really surprised by that. I have a feeling that my appearance had a bearing on why, Alan would want to walk in with me on his arm. And I felt at that time a lot like an ornament, and that I was being used as an ornament.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: That feeling continued later, at the after-party, when Rachelle Miller remembers bumping into Mr Tudge's friend, now-Attorney-General Christian Porter, who was with another MP.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: Yeah so Minister Porter was obviously quite drunk at Public Bar after the ball. And they came up to me, and they said 'Oh, you know, you look really great, you look really hot. And of course, Alan being the media tart that he is, would want to have you on his arm when he walked into the ball, with all the cameras there, you know. And he's a total media genius, you know, thinking that, you know, to have you walk in with him.' And it really felt quite demeaning.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Alan Tudge has publicly represented himself as a social conservative and an advocate of traditional marriage.

ALAN TUDGE, MINISTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES, 6 DECEMBER 2017: “My reservations about changing the Marriage Act to include same-sex couples was my view that marriage as an institution traditionally has been primarily about creating a bond for the creation, love and care of children. And I was concerned that if the definition is changed to be purely one about recognising love, rather than a foundation for the raising of children, then the institution itself would potentially be weakened.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: That was his his public image absolutely. Look I think it's hypocrisy and I've told him that. I, you know, I'm probably I'm a moderate Liberal and it really upset me to hear him particularly during the same sex marriage debate actively speak in parliament, and you know have and express a view that for children to have the right upbringing they need they need to have a mother and father and a traditional kind of family environment. And I just thought ‘wow!’.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: There's no question that some of the most trenchant opponents of same-sex marriage, all in the name of traditional marriage, were at the same time enthusiastic practitioners of traditional adultery. As I said many times, this issue of the controversy over same-sex marriage was dripping with hypocrisy and the pools were deepest at the feet of the sanctimonious.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Conservative Liberal senator, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, believes Ministers should live the values they espouse to the public.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: I understand that you can't make specific comments about any specific ministers but generally, how do you feel about ministers who publicly to their electorates portray themselves as conservative family men, married men, and then when they are in Canberra, lead a different life? You know, carousing with staffers and so on?

CONCETTA FIERRAVANTE-WELLS, LIBERAL SENATOR: Well, values and beliefs are very important in politics. When we stand for office, when we stand for preselection and when we stand before the electorate, we stand on a set of values and beliefs. And there is an expectation, that whether it is to our preselectors, whether it is to our electors that we abide by those values and beliefs because ultimately we will be judged by them.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Is it appropriate for a Minister to have a relationship with a staffer?

CONCETTA FIERRAVANTE-WELLS, LIBERAL SENATOR: It's not appropriate. And we've seen instances of that happened, happen and different leaders of both political persuasion have taken the, have taken appropriate action. As I said, it's notwithstanding the different pressures that do exist in this place, we have to maintain a high level of conduct.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Rachelle Miller says her affair with Alan Tudge, now Acting Immigration Minister, was completely consensual... but she has lived to bitterly regret it.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: I lost a lot of self-confidence because I didn't feel I had any power at all to be able to stand up for myself. I was just exhausted, you know, really exhausted. So what I'm trying to do by speaking to you is stand up for myself and say 'This isn't okay. The behaviour wasn't okay. And the culture is not okay. And there should be something done about it'.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: She constantly had to manage the rumours about the affair that circulated in the press gallery.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: Alan put a lot of pressure on me and quote-unquote, asked me to 'war-game' the lines that I was going to give the journalists to try and kill the story. And so when I'd call it'd be all like, 'Make sure you don't talk, make sure you get your lines straight, make sure you don't answer your phone, actually it would just be better if you don't answer your phone at all.'

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: After the affair ended, Rachelle Miller left Alan Tudge's office and went to work for another minister. She says she was later demoted in a restructure. She felt she had no choice but to leave politics.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: I knew I was leaving a job that I really loved, but I didn't see that there was any other way out. And look, the culture is very much like that. It's very much, 'You sacrifice yourself for the good of the party'. You know, I actually at that time viewed myself as damaged goods and I was really worried about this coming out and impacting our chances at the election.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: It's really important to emphasise that this sort of relationship has not been acceptable in the big banks or the big corporations for years, decades. And then you move into parliament and ministers' offices – who are absolutely public property – who are living in a fishbowl, ah who have enormous responsibility. There is always a power imbalance between the boss and somebody who works for them, the younger and more junior they are, the more extreme that power imbalance is. And of course, ministers essentially have the power to hire and fire their staff, so they've got enormous power. This is again one of the reasons why these types of relations in those offices are just not acceptable.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Alan Tudge did not respond on the record to Four Corners' request for an interview or provide answers to our detailed questions.

NEWSREADER, 14 FEBRUARY 2018: Good evening, Juanita Phillips with ABC News. We begin tonight with dramatic developments in the Barnaby Joyce affair. For full coverage we go to parliament house.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: In February 2018, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull made an extraordinary announcement, in response to news that his deputy, Barnaby Joyce, was having an affair with a staffer.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: 'Barnaby made a shocking error of judgement. He has set off a world of woe for those women and appalled all of us.'

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Under his infamous 'Bonk Ban', Mr Turnbull declared that Ministers could no longer sleep with their staff.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: 'Ministers must behave accordingly. They must not, I don't care whether they are married or single, I don't care, they must not have sexual relations with their staff. That's it.'

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: What the public didn't know was that as well as his deputy, the PM also had other ministers including Alan Tudge in his sights.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Was the Bonk Ban then just about Barnaby Joyce?

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: No. No. Well I mean, Barnaby's case triggered it and look it may, it may not have happened at that time had it not been for the Barnaby issue, but it went much further than that.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Did some of the ministers think that it was acceptable to sleep with staff?

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: Oh I think there was, I think there was a quite a widespread view in parliament that this sort of thing was entirely a private matter.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Another cabinet minister whose conduct had come to the attention of the-then Prime Minister, and helped inspire the bonk ban, was the man who now holds the office of Commonwealth Attorney-General, Christian Porter.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: There had been some reports about Christian. Ah, I think he recognised that his conduct had not been up to the right standard. Ministers, Cabinet ministers in particular, have got to really be very conscious of the fact that when you're out in public, you have to make sure that you're not doing anything that that, you know, could expose you to compromise or that could be represented in a way that could expose you to compromise.

NEWSREADER: The Attorney-General Christian Porter has ordered his department to look into sexual harassment allegations made in the media by an unnamed woman who worked as an assistant on the Royal Commission.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: The Attorney-General's role, as the nation's chief law officer, includes implementing rules to protect women.

CHRISTIAN PORTER, ATTORNEY-GENERAL, 24 JUNE 2020: "No-one should have to suffer sexual harassment at work, or in any other part of their lives, for that matter. It's very, very serious, the Commonwealth Government takes it very seriously."

CHRISTIAN PORTER, ATTORNEY-GENERAL: "I think being in a good suburban Australian family is a real leveller."

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Like many of his Cabinet colleagues, the Attorney-General promotes himself as a family man.

CHRISTIAN PORTER, ATTORNEY-GENERAL: "I've got a daughter, I'm married to a lovely person who is a lawyer and has been involved in male-dominated professions for a long time. So, it's something that's constantly on your mind, and it's something that I talk to my staff about and from time to time, of course, is a subject matter of conversation with your colleagues. But this is about every individual, I think holding themselves to high standards..."

JOSH BORNSTEIN, EMPLOYMENT LAWYER: Look the reason the Attorney-General occupies a pretty unique role in our political system is because the Attorney-General's role is as the first law officer of the country. And as a Attorney-General you are meant to be above reproach, you are meant to be able to articulate the proper role of the courts, the proper role of the legal system, while also occupying a position as a politician. In other words to be impeccable in terms of personal and political behaviour.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Serious questions are now being raised about the Attorney-General's conduct... And they go back over decades.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Why are you here?

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: I'm here because, for a long time, Christian has benefited from the silence around his conduct and his behaviour, and the silence has meant that his behaviour has been tolerated and after a certain amount of time, the silence means that it's condoned and that it's considered acceptable. And I'm here because I don't think that his behaviour should be tolerated, and it is not acceptable.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Christian Porter was always destined for political leadership. A private school boy from Perth, he had a proud Liberal pedigree. His father was an Olympian who had become a king-maker in Western Australian politics. Young Porter was a champion debater who was selected for Australia's national schools team.

JO DYER, NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHAMPION DEBATING TEAM, 1987: We met CP in 1986, um, for the first time. He was very charming. He was very confident. Um, we were all quite confident back then. He had that assuredness that's perhaps born of privilege. But he was, you know, brash, blond and breezy. Christian was quite slick, in some ways. And he had an air of entitlement around him that I think was born of the privilege from which he came.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Christian Porter studied Arts/Economics and then Law at the University of Western Australia. He was at UWA for the better part of a decade.

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: I've known Christian since I was sixteen years old. I was a member of the WA state debating team and he was brought in to assist coaching, as a lot of university students were at the time. And I knew him later when I was at the State Solicitors' Office in Western Australia and he was at the DPP. So I've known him for a long time. For all of that time, I've known him to be someone who was in my opinion, and based on what I saw, deeply sexist and actually misogynist in his treatment of women, in the way that he spoke about women.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Kathleen Foley is a barrister who also sits on the Victorian Bar Council. She did Arts and then Law at UWA in the nineties, where she collected prizes for her academic achievements. She spent a lot of time with Christian Porter as she too was a champion debater.

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: He was a really powerful figure. He was a dominant personality and many people at the law school looked up to him because they felt that he was going to really be a powerful person one day. He spoke about the fact that he wanted to be Prime Minister. People knew that his father was a Liberal Party powerbroker. So he carried a lot of weight and he threw that weight around.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Christian Porter's nickname on campus was 'Chilla', after his Olympian dad. He gained a reputation as a hard-drinking party boy and womaniser.

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: Christian's persona, particularly at UWA, was the sidelining of women in any kind of forum in which they wanted to be involved. They were treated as a joke, they were objects of ridicule. The only point to women, as far as I could tell from Christian's way of treating women, was for him to hit on them, or for women to be made fun of, particularly for the way that they looked.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Chilla was a frequent contributor to the Law students' magazine, Briefs, where he's quoted as saying: "I'm going to smut my way through law school". He joked about his drinking and his "rowdy"

behaviour... particularly at the so-called 'R U Barking?' pub crawl competition, which he attended six times.

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: They would have plastic bags tied to their wrists and as they did the pub crawl, you would vomit into these plastic bags that were tied to your wrist. So you would be going through the streets of Perth, vomiting into bags and carrying the vomit around. It was really extreme. I never did it, because it wasn't the kind of thing that I was into, but the commentary around that, the way that the men spoke about that, and the way that the women who participated in that were talked about and treated, was really off-putting.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Porter wrote of what he called the "chick teams", that they were "about as gratuitous and off-putting display of female sensuality that has ever occurred on R U Barking."

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Writing about a debate on whether "Lawyers are just well-dressed prostitutes", Porter said: "Our opposition's case had more holes than Snow White's hymen". A graduation profile of Porter when he was 26 said he'd be remembered for: "Vomiting all over himself – on the dance floor!" It predicted that in 10 years time, Porter would be: "Running for PM. Being kicked out of the Liberal Party for being a fat, unattractive, sexist, political power-broker who tried to stick his tongue in a secretary's ear."

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: The fact that they're talking about him being sacked for putting his tongue in a secretary's ear. Everyone knew what kind of guy he was. Everyone knew how he felt about women and how he treated women.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: After he graduated, Christian Porter was nominated for Cleo magazine's Bachelor of the Year in 1999. In the article, he was asked what song he'd choose to serenade a woman. He selected "Another One Bites the Dust" by Queen. His self-portrait for the magazine was a stick figure, which had to be censored because he'd drawn it with large genitals.

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: I would see Christian around the traps, at functions and we moved in some of the same social circles at the time. He didn't change at all. Christian remained exactly who he had always been. I remember distinctly a couple of things that he said the time. I remember him commenting that he would never date a woman who weighed over 50 kilograms. That stood out to me. I also remember a relationship of his that ended and he commented that the woman involved was thin enough, but she didn't have big enough tits and the next woman that he was going to date needed to be as thin, but have bigger tits.

CHRISTIAN PORTER, 8 JUNE 2005: 'Well look many cases of theft of people in positions of trust relate to solicitors and accountants, but our submissions have always been ...'

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: In his thirties, Christian Porter became a Crown Prosecutor... He married his first wife, but left her for a junior colleague. While Christian Porter was a prosecutor, he worked part-time at the University of Western Australia as a lecturer in the law of Evidence. Four Corners has spoken to some of his former UWA students

who described incidents of inappropriate behaviour. They included sexualised comments about female students and a gratuitous focus on violent and sexually graphic material in the legal cases he taught.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Christian Porter's political ambitions were realised first in WA state politics, then with a move to federal politics in 2013.

CHRISTIAN PORTER, 9 DECEMBER 2013: I would also like to thank all of my new Coalition colleagues. Genuinely, the welcome here has been collegiate and very warm. I am intent to bask in this warmth before people get to know me and it grinds to an inevitable halt.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Christian Porter was quickly promoted to the front bench as Social Services Minister. His language on women changed, as he spoke up strongly on domestic violence policy.

CHRISTIAN PORTER, 25 NOVEMBER 2015: If we can change the attitudes and make sure that young boys understand what a respectful relationship is, understand what are the proper boundaries, understand what is acceptable and not acceptable, they will go on to be good fathers and good husbands and good partners and we won't have to have as many men's programs as we presently need.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: He was long touted to one day become prime minister.

REPORTER: His reputation is one of a rising star, very competent. A man who has a great capacity, and a man who as a child was referred to by his own father as a future prime minister.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: But in the corridors of Canberra, Christian Porter was developing a reputation. In late 2017 his behaviour came to the attention of then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: On 6th December 2017, I had a meeting with Porter in my office and I told him that I had had reports of him being out in public, having had too much to drink, and in the company with young women. And he, he acknowledged that, he didn't argue with that. And I just said, 'Look, this is unacceptable conduct for a Cabinet minister, and it exposes you to the risk of compromise'.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: The incident that prompted the Prime Minister's concern occurred at Canberra's Public Bar in Manuka. It was a Wednesday night – when politicians, staffers and journalists head to Public Bar for drinks and gossip. One of the people there was Liberal media advisor, Rachelle Miller who was out for a drink with her boss, Minister Alan Tudge.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: So we often on a Wednesday night would go out to some of the bars that were just around Parliament House. During a sitting week, there would be always at Public Bar lots of journos, lots of staffers, lots of Ministers, MPs.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Rachelle Miller spotted Christian Porter with a young woman. At the time, Mr Porter was tipped to soon become the next Attorney-General. He had a wife and toddler at home in Perth.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: When we were at the Bar I noticed that Minister Porter was with someone in the corner, and they were clearly very intimate, they were cuddling, they were kissing. It was quite confronting given that we were in such a public place. And we're in a place where we had multiple press gallery journalists, multiple MPs and senators. And I was quite surprised by the behaviour and while, you know, we all like to go out and have a drink and sometimes people drink too much, I thought that this was probably a step, well it was definitely a step too far.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Mr Porter's companion was a young female staffer who was working for another Cabinet minister.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: They were kissing and cuddling, and I remember turning around Alan and just going 'oh my god, like, cannot believe I'm seeing what I'm seeing, what are we going to do?' And we you know, I sort of switched right into media advisor mode and kind of scanned the room to see, well who else is seeing what I'm seeing? And who is in the room?

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Four Corners has spoken to five other people, including Coalition staffers, who were at Public Bar that night and who saw Minister Porter's behaviour with the young woman, and they were shocked by it. One man who witnessed it was a public servant. He thought Minister Porter was opening himself up to compromise. He picked up the phone of a journalist and he took a photograph.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: We spotted a group of journalists and I said I said to Alan, 'Look, you know there's a group of journos over there, looks like someone's taken a picture'. I saw somebody with their iPhone out. I was concerned from a work perspective. I suppose it sounds quite unfeeling, but I was really worried about it ending up in the papers. It would do a lot of damage to the government. It would be a scandal that we didn't need.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: We were completely really stressed out by it and we sorta hatched a plan to you know, head over there and actually confront them and say, 'Look, you know, you're taking photographs'. So Alan did head over and he asked the person taking photographs to stop taking photographs.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Alan Tudge angrily demanded that the journalist delete the photo of his friend Christian Porter.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: He was certainly quite firm and kind of demanded that 'Hey, this is not what we do on Wednesday nights, this is an off the record environment, we don't take photos of each other', and he was quite angry about it.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Mr Tudge later contacted the journalist, again insisting that the photo be deleted to erase the evidence. The news travelled back to the Prime Minister's office. Malcolm Turnbull delivered Christian Porter a stern ultimatum.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: I noted that I had heard reports of him being out in public having had too much to drink in the company of young women. I reminded him that Canberra was full of spies, ah not all of them worked for us. And of course in the age of the smartphone, you know, pictures can be taken by anybody. So it is just not acceptable. And he knew that I was considering appointing him Attorney-General, which of course is the first law officer of the Crown, and has a seat on the National Security Committee, so the risk of compromise is very very real. You know, it's not just the stuff of spy novels. People who put themselves into positions where they can be compromised or blackmailed are really taking risks, and unacceptable risks.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: What was his reaction?

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: He clearly didn't enjoy it. Nobody enjoys a discussion like that, but he took it on board and noted it. And I you know. The message was very clear that if there was, ah, you know, reports like that emerged in the future, that would have a very, very severe consequences for his role in the ministry under my leadership.

CONCETTA FIERRAVANTE-WELLS, LIBERAL SENATOR: At a time when there is a strong debate about foreign influence and foreign interference, most especially in a place like Canberra, the risk I think of compromise, is far greater. And that's why it's incumbent on all politicians, irrespective of whatever position they hold, to ensure that their conduct is one of the highest standard.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young volunteered this story to Four Corners about a young Liberal staffer who confided in her one Wednesday night at Public Bar about a secret relationship with Christian Porter. Sarah Hanson-Young did not name the young woman she spoke to. Four Corners believes it was the same woman seen with Christian Porter at Public Bar.

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: One particular conversation I remember went from being a general chat to a pretty, um, distressed young woman who was very upset about what had been going on in the office she worked in. And how she was being treated as a result of people finding out.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: So this young woman was talking about Christian Porter?

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: Yes.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: What did she say happened?

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: She told me that she'd found herself in somewhat of a relationship. And that clearly, had found herself in a position that, at some point, she didn't want to be there. I'm not going to speculate why or how. But when she was talking to me about it, she was clearly very distressed, and she was in a situation she didn't want to be in. And I think, you know, that's a terrible, that's a terrible position for any young woman to find themselves in. To feel, um, to feel like you have to question your job, your abilities, your skills – who you can talk to, who you can trust in your workplace. The sense that I had from her was that she felt pretty isolated. She was very guarded about what she'd said. But she started crying. And it was quite clear to me that there was a lot more going on, than she felt she could say.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: There will be people who say, this was a consensual relationship between two adults, shouldn't it just remain private?

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: Well, that's not really, that's not my business, of course. If people are in consensual relationships, that's fine. What I saw, and I can only speak from what the experience I had, was that this young woman was really, was not happy about the situation she was in, was distressed about it, and she spoke about, she spoke about feeling caught, that she was caught in this situation.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: Where there's significant power imbalances with senior ministers and perhaps junior staff, I think that absolutely there needs to be an acknowledgement that that sort of behaviour is not okay. And in fact I would say that given I've spent two years since coming out of parliament in the private sector, that sort of behaviour is not tolerated on any level.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Ten days after Malcolm Turnbull delivered his warning to Christian Porter, Mr Porter posted this video with his family on his website.

CHRISTIAN PORTER: Our local community is such a great place to raise a family and I'm really looking forward to working with all of the members of my local community to put some big projects and plans together for 2018.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: Ministers should be very conscious that their spouses and children sacrifice a great deal to support their political career, and their families deserve honour and respect. Ministers should recognise they must lead by example. Values must be lived. Politicians are entitled to private lives, of course they are. But in the workplace they should, and in public, they should hold themselves to a really high standard. You know, you can't get away from the fact that people look up to their leaders, they look up to politicians, and if they see politicians doing the wrong thing in any regard, that undermines faith in the system. It undermines, it just sets a bad example. I mean, it's kind of obvious, isn't it?

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: The Public Bar incident remained inside the Canberra bubble – it never leaked. Christian Porter did not respond to Four Corners’ multiple requests for an interview or answer our detailed questions. He provided a brief statement about his meeting with Mr Turnbull in December 2017. Mr Porter said that in the meeting Malcolm Turnbull “queried whether there was any accuracy” to the story Mr Turnbull had heard. According to Mr Porter, “the answer was no”. Mr Porter’s statement continues: “Malcolm then promoted me to Attorney-General about two weeks after. In my time as AG I never had any complaint or any suggestion of any problem from Malcolm regarding the conduct of my duties as AG until the last week of his Prime Ministership when we had a significant disagreement over the Peter Dutton citizenship issue.”

SPEAKER: The Leader of the House.

CHRISTIAN PORTER: Mr Speaker, I present...

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Last year, Scott Morrison promoted Minister Porter to become Leader of the House of Representatives.

CHRISTIAN PORTER, 21 OCTOBER 2020: Thankyou. And the next stage for an Integrity Commission will be a consultation phase and that will be detailed and it will be extensive..

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Minister Porter has maintained his party boy reputation. This footage was taken at a Lawyers Weekly function in Sydney last year. In January, Minister Porter released a statement announcing his separation from his second wife.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: In the course of this investigation, Four Corners has spoken to dozens of former and currently serving staffers, politicians, and members of the legal profession. Many have worked within, or voted for, the Liberal Party. And many have volunteered examples of what they believe is inappropriate conduct by Christian Porter – including being drunk in public and making unwanted advances to women.

KATHLEEN FOLEY, BARRISTER: The Attorney-General is the first law officer of the Crown. The Attorney-General is at the pinnacle of the legal profession, to put it in those terms. It would undermine the entire legal system if the Attorney-General is someone that doesn’t share the values that the legal system shares. Equality before the law and non-discrimination is an essential part of our legal system. So to have an Attorney-General who treats women and thinks about women in the way that Christian does is, to me, profoundly problematic.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: You’re someone who has had a long career in the law. Tell about what it is, what is it that’s so special about the role of Attorney-General? And why, perhaps, that role has to be held to, you know, a higher standard than even some of the other ministerial colleagues?

CONCETTA FIERRAVANTE-WELLS, LIBERAL SENATOR: The Attorney General is the first law officer of this country. And it is incumbent on all of us, whatever the ministerial role was, the highest level of integrity and the highest level of appropriate conduct. And, whether you're the first law officer, or you're the prime minister or you're the premier, that expectation is that one conducts oneself with the highest degree of integrity. The higher the office, the higher the responsibility. When we sign up to this job, we sign up for public service, we sign up as service to the Australian public. And so therefore, there is an expectation that in service of the Australian public, we abide by the highest possible conduct and integrity.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Four Corners does not suggest only Liberal politicians cross this line. But the Liberal Party is in government. And the Liberal politicians in question are Ministers of the Crown. All ministers must now abide by Ministerial Standards set down by Prime Minister Scott Morrison in 2018. They say: "Serving the Australian people as Ministers ... is an honour and comes with expectations to act at all times to the highest possible standards of probity." They also prohibit Ministers from having sexual relations with staff.

SARAH HANSON-YOUNG, GREENS SENATOR: You know, this isn't just about whether a um, this is a good look, for a Minister to be doing this, or MPs to be behaving badly, it ends up on the front page of the newspaper, whether that's a, that's a bad look for the government. This goes right to the heart of how we, what type of environment our staff work in, we work in as a group of politicians, the culture that we are promoting, and, ultimately, how we treat women. And how that place treats women.

LOUISE MILLIGAN, REPORTER: Politicians make ethical and legal judgements that govern how the rest of society should operate, including the treatment of women. For the members of the Liberal Party we spoke to, that means the least the mostly-male Ministers of the Crown can do... is to act with propriety and with respect for the women they work with... And live the lives they say they do.

RACHELLE MILLER, LIBERAL STAFFER, 2010-2018: Australians elect these people to represent them in parliament. They pay for their salaries and there's a certain expectation of a level of integrity that Australians expect from their leaders. And while you could argue that 'well that's his personal life it's got nothing to do with work', I think that that attitude is quite outdated.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER 2015-2018: No-one is conscripted to be a politician or a minister. If you choose to take a position like that you have to recognise that your life, your private life, is going to have to be perhaps more circumspect than it would have been or might have been if you were in a different line of work. It's as simple as that.

CONCETTA FIERRAVANTI-WELLS, Liberal Senator: It comes down to that basic concept of trust, and ensuring that the people that put you here, or the people that elect you, continue to have trust in you and your conduct and the things that you say. Mean what you say and say what you mean, is so important.

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Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



Why will no-one will discuss the clear inconsistencies in Porter's statement and that of many witnesses to his alleged behaviour in the Public Bar and the careful way he has parsed his words when denying relationships with staff? [#insiders](#)

9:19 AM · Nov 15, 2020 · Twitter Web App

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Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



Not sure why we expect this Government to do anything substantive about sexual assault when it ignores allegations that one of its members is guilty of the same thing. [#BrittanyHiggins](#) [#whatyouwalkpast](#) [#weremember](#) [@Milliganreports](#) [@samanthamaiden](#) [@annabelcrabb](#)

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29



Jo Dyer Retweeted



Louise Milligan  @Milliganreports · Feb 24

...

Hi Adelaide readers, it's 1 year since I was at [@adelwritersweek](#) for this incredible event, the last festival I attended in person since world turned upside down. Since then I wrote Witness & went Inside the Canberra Bubble. Delighted to return this weekend to tell all. ❤️📖




Louise Milligan  @Milliganreports · Mar 5, 2020

Huge crowd for David Marr & I, expertly moderated by @stickwithricksa, hugs, tears, support for standing up for the truth & for children. And a lovely little posy a lady picked for me from her garden. Thank you, #adlww for a truly special event. Love your fair city & its people.



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Friends of woman who accused Cabinet Minister of rape call for inquiry into allegation

Four Corners / By Louise Milligan

Posted Mon 1 Mar 2021 at 3:24pm, updated Mon 1 Mar 2021 at 4:54pm



Writer Nick Ryan is an old friend of the woman at the centre of the allegation. (*Four Corners*)

Friends of the woman who made a historical accusation of rape against a current Cabinet Minister have spoken up to urge Prime Minister Scott Morrison to hold an inquiry into the allegation.

The woman, who took her own life in June last year, travelled in circles of highly accomplished people, many of whom went on to be leaders in their chosen fields.

Her friends have told Four Corners she was someone whose intellect and vitality as a teenager far eclipsed the rest of them.

"[Many of our friends] have gone on to fairly prominent and successful careers around the place, in politics or media or banking and various things ... but [she] was always the best of them," said her old friend Nick Ryan, a wine writer.

"Take me back to 1988 ... to place a bet on which horse in this race is really going to go and succeed — my money would have been on [her]."

Another friend, Jo Dyer, who is now a literary festival director, knew the woman since they were 15.

Key points:

- Five friends of the now-deceased woman who made a historical accusation of rape against a current Cabinet Minister have urged the PM to take action
- They describe her as "smart" "forthright" and an "extraordinary" human being who they thought would achieve great things
- A friend who was with the woman on the night of the alleged rape has offered to make a statement to police

"She had such charisma and we all imagined that her life would be one of skyrocketing success, of achievement," said Ms Dyer.

"[In our circle], there were many stars shining in the firmament, but [she] really shone the brightest, or certainly one of the brightest."

Jeremy Samuel, an entrepreneur and former Liberal candidate, knew the woman for many years.

"I think it's important to keep in mind that we're dealing with a really wonderful and special person, whose life went off the rails, and that's extremely sad," he said.

Many of those who knew her have told Four Corners that everyone assumed when she was growing up that she would be Australia's first female prime minister.

"She was a star, really," Ms Dyer said.

"She was a girl with sharp intelligence, rigorous intellect, she was warm, she had a compelling eloquence."

The woman last year alleged that in 1988, when she was 16, she was raped by the man who is now a Cabinet Minister, long before he entered politics.

In February 2020, she reported the alleged rape to NSW Police.

[As Four Corners revealed on Friday](#), last week another of the woman's close friends wrote anonymously to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, urging him to set up an independent investigation into the woman's claims, similar to that commissioned by the High Court into allegations of sexual harassment against former Justice Dyson Heydon.

Friend with the woman on the night of alleged rape offers to make police statement

NSW Police set up a task force to manage the highly sensitive allegation — codenamed Strike Force Wyndarra — but their plan to travel to Adelaide to take a formal statement from the complainant was stymied when COVID-19 broke out in Australia in March 2020.

Her friend Matthew Deeble has contacted NSW Police to offer a statement in the case. He was with the woman and the man named in the anonymous letter earlier on the night that she alleges the rape took place.

Sexual assault support services:

- [1800 Respect national helpline](#): 1800 737 732
- [Lifeline \(24 hour crisis line\)](#): 131 114
- [Beyond Blue](#): 1300 224 636



Jeremy Samuel, who has twice stood for Liberal preselection, is urging the Prime Minister to commission an independent investigation into the allegation. (Supplied: Four Corners)

Mr Deeble, a non-profit executive, was supporting her through the process.



Matthew Deeble says he is willing to make a statement to police. (*Four Corners*)

"She knew what she was going to be putting herself through by coming forward, with nothing to gain as a result of doing this," he said.

"She was on a path to give her statement to the NSW Police, who were going to travel to South Australia to be with her and take that statement and move the matter forward.

"COVID restrictions stopped that occurring. And I know she was under enormous stress and distress because of those delays."

Her mental health deteriorated before she took her life in June. In the days beforehand, she informed NSW Police that she did not want the investigation to proceed.

"It's heartbreaking, it really is," Ms Dyer said.

Some of the woman's friends who have spoken up are lifelong Liberal voters.

If you or anyone you know needs help:

- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 551 800
- [MensLine Australia](#) on 1300 789 978
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) on 1300 659 467
- [Beyond Blue](#) on 1300 224 636
- [Headspace](#) on 1800 650 890
- [ReachOut](#) at au.reachout.com
- [Care Leavers Australasia Network \(CLAN\)](#) on 1800 008 774

"It's not about politics, it's about humanity," Mr Deeble said.

Friends close to woman urge Prime Minister to commission investigation

Jeremy Samuel has twice stood for Liberal preselection and is well-connected in the party.

"I strongly urge the Prime Minister to commission an independent investigation into the allegations about the Cabinet Minister made by my late friend," Mr Samuel told Four Corners.

He has seen the woman's statement and spoke to her at length about her allegation in the year before her death.

A former school friend, Mel, now a social worker, who did not want to use her surname, told Four Corners the complainant had stayed at her home in December 2019.

"While she was there, she worked on the statement for her lawyers," Mel said.

"I have known her since she and I met at school when we were 15.

"She was an extraordinary human being.

"Please, Prime Minister, investigate these claims."

"[The rape alleged by Brittany Higgins and others against a former staffer](#) to Senator Reynolds remind us of the need to do more to protect women," the letter revealed on Friday said.

"Failing to take parliamentary action because the NSW Police cannot take criminal action would feel like wilful blindness."

The letter was also addressed to Labor's leader in the Senate Penny Wong and Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young. It urged them to work together to find a solution that did not unfairly prejudice the Cabinet Minister.

It said that this was not a "partisan issue" and there were alleged rapists and rape victims "in all parties".

The woman who made the allegation against the Cabinet Minister was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and suffered from eating disorders.

She had previously attempted suicide and was admitted into psychiatric care in 2019.

She first disclosed the alleged rape in 2018, to a close male friend.

The following year, she began to contact other friends, some of whom she hadn't seen for some years.

"(It) really seemed completely consuming and completely debilitating to her," Ms Dyer said.

"She was consumed with a trauma which she told me, deeply and consistently, was as a result of an assault that had [allegedly] occurred, early in 1988, and her life at that point was really devoted to exploring how she could get some kind of ... peace from that."

Danny Kennedy, who was also with the woman on the night of the alleged incident when they were teenagers and is now managing director of the California Clean Energy Fund, said his friend was a

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"very smart, forthright woman".

"I think it's right to ask hard questions of a culture that is far too often complacent, and you know, in our silence we risk letting violence carry on."

Mr Ryan said when he discovered the woman had taken her life he was filled with "just utter sadness".

"That sense that yeah, it's such a waste," Mr Ryan said.

"That this beautiful, clever young woman with so much potential has a life squandered and a life ended far too early."

South Australia Police are investigating the broader circumstances of the woman's death, including her mental health care, for the state's coroner.

Senators Hanson-Young and Wong have referred the letter to Australian Federal Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw.

On Monday, the Prime Minister said he [became aware of the allegation on Wednesday evening last week and spoke to both the Minister and the Australian Federal Police Commissioner about it that night.](#)

"The police have had this matter referred to them, the individual involved here has vigorously rejected these allegations," he said.

"And so it's a matter for the police, and in my discussions with the Commissioner, there were nothing immediate that he considered that was necessary for me to take any action on."

The Sydney Morning Herald

Politics Federal [Federal politics](#)

Friends remember 'extraordinary' woman who claimed rape by cabinet minister



By [Jacqueline Maley](#)

March 1, 2021 – 7.26pm

In 1988, she was a brilliant teenage girl, clever and capable, with the world apparently at her feet.

But the woman who made allegations of rape against a cabinet minister is now dead, having taken her own life in the early days of the pandemic in 2020. She would have turned 50 last week.



The alleged rapist is now a cabinet minister in Parliament House. ALEX ELLINGHAUSEN

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Monday the [accused minister “absolutely rejects”](#) the allegations.

“She was extraordinary,” said Jo Dyer, a literary festival director, who had known the deceased woman since they were 15 years old.

"She was someone who was brilliant, acute. She was sensitive and had emotional and intellectual intelligence, and curiosity.

"People had high expectations of her and with that comes pressure. She was mindful of that."

After losing touch with many of her old friends for years, in 2019 the woman began talking to trusted friends about her alleged rape in 1988, when she was 16 years old.

She said she had been sexually assaulted in Sydney by a man who now holds a senior position in government.

The woman knew the man when they were teenagers.

"We had a number of conversations because we were all very mindful of the difficulties of seeking justice through the criminal justice system," Ms Dyer told *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.

"It was very difficult for her to be seeing him in the press all the time."

The woman had not spoken to any journalists but going to the media was "definitely something on the agenda as a possibility".

"How that could have worked with defamation laws, who knows," Ms Dyer said.

The woman had engaged a lawyer and had a meeting with NSW police on February 27, 2020, before her struggles overwhelmed her.

Hours before she died, she reportedly rang police to say she did not want to pursue the police process.

"She was someone who suffered from severe mental health illness," said Ms Dyer.

"Amongst all that there was a determination and a clear resolve, to tell her story, that she had reached after clear-eyed rationalisation."

An [anonymous letter](#) sent last week to Mr Morrison, Senators Sarah Hanson-Young and Penny Wong detailed the allegations against the federal government minister.

The letter is dated February 23 and states the woman had told six people who she had known at the time, and "all of them believed her account and were highly supportive of [the woman] in her attempt to process the impact of the rape".

She had also told "numerous other people" from a wider circle, the letter says.

The *Herald* and *Age* have seen a copy of the 2019 statement made by the woman, which alleges violent sexual assault.

The statement includes photocopies of what the woman said were 1990s diary entries that mention rape by a person with the same first name as the cabinet minister.

It is not a formal police statement.

Labor MP Daniel Mulino was a friend of the woman from when they were both high school debaters.



Labor MP Daniel Mulino was friends with the woman from high school days. ALEX ELLINGHAUSEN

“I first became aware of the complainant’s allegation that she had been raped some years earlier, by a person who is now a senior member of the federal government, in December 2019,” Mr Mulino said in a statement.

“She indicated to me that she was determined to proceed with a formal complaint and I supported her in that decision.”

Another woman who knew the complainant as a young debater described her as “very, very clever”.

“She was an outstanding debater,” the woman said.

“She was quite a shy person. She was not the gregarious person you would associate with a great debater.”

National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line: 1800 737 732. Crisis support can be found at Lifeline: (13 11 14 and lifeline.org.au), the Suicide Call Back Service (1300 659 467 and suicidecallbackservice.org.au) and beyondblue (1300 22 4636 and beyondblue.org.au).

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Jacqueline Maley is a columnist.

Image:

7.30 Report

Minister under cloud of rape allegations to identify himself

Posted Tue 2 Mar 2021, 8:35pm

Updated Tue 2 Mar 2021, 9:49pm

Expires: Wednesday 28 January 4759 8:35pm

New South Wales Police will not be proceeding with an investigation into allegations of historical sexual offences by a serving Cabinet Minister announcing today there is insufficient admissible evidence to proceed and that the matter is now closed.

Chief political correspondent Laura Tingle looks at other scandals from the past and speaks to a friend of the woman involved in this latest scandal.

Transcript

plusminus

LAURA TINGLE, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: It feels a bit passe these days to expect a senior politician to resign or even just stand aside when their actions come under a cloud.

In the past, ministers resigned for everything from the trivial...

REPORTER: This time it was the Paddington Bear affair...

LAURA TINGLE: To the more serious.

REPORTER: He told the ministers he'd decided at the weekend it was time for a younger man to take over...

LAURA TINGLE: But prime ministers have become increasingly reluctant to deliver what is known in politics as a scalp to the opposition - even in much more serious cases.

REPORTER: Dr Lawrence says she will be with the Prime Minister tomorrow.

LAURA TINGLE: Paul Keating famously refused to have his health minister, Carmen Lawrence stand aside when the West Australian Liberal Government called a royal commission which investigated her role in the events leading to the suicide of a woman, Penny Easton, named in the state parliament when Lawrence was premier.

REPORTER: One of the bloodiest weeks in recent political memory.

REPORTER: Not one but two federal ministers gone with surprising swiftness.

LAURA TINGLE: After losing a slew of ministers in a travel expenses scandal in 1997, John Howard fiercely resisted losing any more.

JOHN HOWARD: I have upheld standards...

LAURA TINGLE: And Scott Morrison has stood by a number of his ministers or promoted them despite significant questions over their behaviour or management of their portfolios.

Now he faces a problem which really does threaten the standing of the entire government - one of his ministers is alleged to have raped a 16-year-old girl in 1988.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister was not giving any ground and seemed to have dropped his recent empathetic stance in the latest episode of what Peter Dutton described last week as, "he said, she said".

SCOTT MORRISON, PRIME MINISTER: I had a discussion with the individual, as I said, who absolutely rejects these allegations. There are no matters that require my immediate attention.

LAURA TINGLE: In other words, despite the grave nature of the revelations, the Prime Minister is inclined to believe his Minister and take no action.

REPORTER: Do you believe the allegation to be false?

SCOTT MORRISON: Well, that is a matter for the police. I am not the commissioner of...

REPORTER: Unfortunately, it is not though, is it?

LAURA TINGLE: Well, no Prime Minister, whether you believe him is not a matter for the police, it is a matter for you, and yesterday you seem to accept your Minister's word while admitting you not even read even the documents sent to you outlining the allegations.

REPORTER: And had you heard about these claims at all before last week?

SCOTT MORRISON: No, not really of any substance.

LAURA TINGLE: Let's compare this with what the Prime Minister said in the wake of Brittany Higgins' appearance on the Project two weeks ago.

SCOTT MORRISON (Last month): I have listened to Brittany. Jenny and I spoke last night and she said to me, "You have to think about this as a father first. What would you want to happen if it were our girls?"

LAURA TINGLE: So what is the difference in the Prime Minister's view of Brittany Higgins two weeks ago and the 16-year-old girl allegedly brutally assaulted in 1988?

Brittany has a name and a face, that 16-year-old girl died last year as a 50-year-old woman.

For both legal reasons and to protect her family, her name has not been spoken but a group of her friends from those days is now determined to speak in her name.

One of them is Jo Dyer now the director of Adelaide Writers' Week.

JO DYER, FRIEND: She was an incredibly talented, impressive individual. We met when she was quite young. She was selected for the state debating team much younger than people normally are and that was because of the acute intelligence that she possessed, the extraordinary eloquence. She was so articulate.

LAURA TINGLE: The woman reconnected with her old friends from that time in 2019, told them of the alleged assault all those years ago and that she was finally going to make a complaint to the police.

JO DYER: She was under no illusions about the difficulties that she would confront if she sought to make a formal complaint against anyone of a crime of such seriousness so far in the distant past.

She had made a clear decision; she was able to articulate the reasons why she had taken that decision which were to do with the fact that bearing the trauma had not worked for her. Her life had been troubled as a result of that trauma and she saw no other way of getting past it than to ventilate it.

LAURA TINGLE: And her friends believed her.

JO DYER: The account that she gave was shocking. The acts that she described were shocking. They were far outside the experience of any of us at that time as we were in our final years at school.

The detail that she recounted, the lucidity with which she recounted it, and the clear impact that it had had on her, all of these things persuaded me immediately that she was telling the truth.

LAURA TINGLE: The New South Wales Police said today that there is insufficient admissible evidence to proceed with an investigation into historical sex offences and have determined that the matter is now closed.

However, the South Australian state coroner told 7.30 the cause and circumstances of her death are under investigation by South Australian Police on behalf of and at the direction of the coroner.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, FORMER PRIME MINISTER: She described a pretty horrific rape...

LAURA TINGLE: Former prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull is among those calling for a coronial inquiry and/or an independent inquiry. The call for an inquiry is backed by the woman's friends.

JO DYER: We are here to speak for her because she can't speak for herself. You know, it's wonderful to have young women with the strength and the eloquence of Brittany Higgins who is coming forward and saying, "I have been wronged and I am seeking justice".

They were the very words that my friend wanted herself to be able to say in a public forum, sadly she can't.

There does need to be an independent inquiry to test, to interrogate and we believe ultimately to establish the veracity of the claims that she made. We are happy to stand here and argue that case for her.

What standard is okay for the Prime Minister to accept whether it's our friend or it is Brittany or if it's another young woman whose life may not have soared in the way that we all assumed our friends would soar, no-one should accept this standard any more and I think that the anger that so many people feel indicates that they will not.

7.30

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Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Mar 7



Sadly, our friend knew spurious "false memories" claims would be deployed against her. We discussed it, right down to the media outlets likely to promote them. [@crikey_news](#) was not on our list, and their role is disappointing, but the rest are playing out as predicted. [#insiders](#)



108



1.4K



5.3K



43



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Mar 10

...

".....a mere denial does not end the matter." Sharona Coutts on the flawed logic of those who hide behind the "rule of law", reminding us there's no right to hold high office.



As a witness in the Heydon inquiry I'm speaking out on why Porter sho...
An investigation into allegations against the Attorney-General would not
destroy the rule of law.

[smh.com.au](https://www.smh.com.au)



26



215



691



44



Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



The number of areas of his portfolio from which Christian Porter has to recuse himself demonstrates how ludicrous it is he is clinging on to this role.

[#Insiders](#)

9:22 AM · Mar 21, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

428 Retweets 14 Quote Tweets 2,120 Likes

45





Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



Yes, appalling for Porter to be paid fulltime for part time work...but the point is more fundamental. Credible allegations that he perpetrated a serious crime remain completely untested beyond the PM asking him if they were true. Unacceptable. [#Insiders](#)

9:43 AM · Mar 21, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

230 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 838 Likes

46





Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



Distress ostentatiously displayed by Morrison, even as he warns media to "be careful" in their "glass houses". Good to see he's across the minutiae of complaints within News Corp if not the detail of a rape allegation against his Attorney General. [#auspol](#)

11:03 AM · Mar 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App

102 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 518 Likes

47





Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



In the last week, Porter has (a) forum shopped a defamation case against the ABC, (b) been caught lying about the S-G's medevac legislation advice, (c) appointed Mirabella to the Fair Work Commission & (d) still got rape allegations hanging over him. How good is our A-G? [#auspol](#)

5:50 PM · Mar 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App

114 Retweets 4 Quote Tweets 382 Likes

48



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Australian politics

• This article is more than 1 month old

Scott Morrison urged to demote Christian Porter to backbench in cabinet reshuffle

Sarah Martin and Paul Karp

Fri 26 Mar 2021 07.49 AEDT

Friends of the deceased woman who made an allegation of rape against the attorney general, **Christian Porter**, say they will continue an independent inquiry into the case regardless of any imminent reshuffle, and have urged his demotion to the back bench.

The prime minister, Scott Morrison, who is expected to **strip Porter of his attorney general** and manager of government business roles in his ministry this weekend, has indicated he is considering advice from the solicitor general about Porter's current duties.

Porter, who named himself as the subject of **a historical rape allegation from 1988**, has denied the allegation and has since launched **against the ABC** in the federal court.

On Thursday evening, Morrison signalled that Porter and the defence minister, Linda Reynolds, who is on medical leave for a heart condition, would both "continue to play a very important role in my cabinet" but confirmed on Channel Nine's *A Current Affair* they would both "continue to play a very important role in my cabinet".

Amid expectations that Porter will remain on the front bench in the forthcoming reshuffle, friends of the alleged victim say Morrison opportunity to launch an independent inquiry into the claims - [something the prime minister has stridently resisted](#).

"Talk is very cheap and that is all we have heard. Talk is not enough, we need to see some serious action," Jo Dyer told Guardian Aus of the victim's friends.

"We will not allow this issue to be managed away, it is not an issue for us, it is a dear friend who suffered greatly, so from our perspective that can be managed away.

"We will do everything that is in our power to ensure that this issue stays front and centre of our agenda and the political agenda ... so that the women of Australia think it can be managed away either."

Dyer said she had been "hopeful" that Morrison's change of tone on Tuesday might result in a shift in approach on the Porter case, but the attorney general portfolio did not go far enough.

"Obviously moving Christian Porter out of the attorney general role deals with a lot of the conflicts that he has because he has chosen proceedings ... but the fundamental question remains whether someone who has untested credible allegations of a serious crime has fit and proper person to hold high office. We would argue no."

The reshuffle, expected on Sunday, is likely to see Michaelia Cash replace Porter as attorney general, while Porter could take over the employment portfolio.

Morrison is also likely to use the reshuffle to dump Reynolds from the defence portfolio after the Western Australian senator took sick leave [that former staffer Brittany Higgins was raped](#) by a colleague in her office.

Reynolds was forced to [apologise and pay compensation](#) to Higgins after calling her a "lying cow" in the weeks after the allegation public.

Reynolds has been on [medical leave for several weeks](#) and her defence position was coveted by others in the government long before she broke in February.

The home affairs minister, Peter Dutton, who has been acting as manager of government business, is expected to take on the defence portfolio - a factional ally of Morrison's - is tipped to take on home affairs.

Reynolds could then take on Robert's portfolio of government services.

In parliament on Thursday, Morrison defended his decision to keep Porter in cabinet, and praised Reynolds for her role in the defence.

"I am very confident about all of my members because they continue to perform in their roles," Morrison said.

"I refer particularly to the minister for defence and the great role she has played in cabinet," he said, referring particularly to her role in defence reservists in the aftermath of the 2020 bushfires.

Labor's deputy leader, Richard Marles, questioned the speculated changes to the front bench, saying: "No matter what reshuffle the government announces, after eight long years, his ministers are beset by scandal."

In Australia, the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, family or domestic violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au. In an emergency, call 000. International helplines can be found [here](#).

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Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



Replying to [@instanterudite](#)

It is unacceptable. Porter must stand aside from ALL Ministerial responsibilities while a properly constituted investigation into the allegations occurs. If cleared, he can return to Cabinet. The failure to seek an inquiry begs the question: of what is the Government so afraid?

2:54 PM · Mar 29, 2021 · Twitter Web App

87 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 514 Likes



52





Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Mar 29



As feared, NOTHING in relation to the credible rape allegations made against Christian Porter by our friend Kate has been addressed by this reshuffle. Due to Kate's tragic suicide, the ONLY investigation of the allegations to date has been:-

Morrison: Did you do it?

Porter: No.



19



308



1K



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Mar 29



It is unacceptable. Porter must stand aside from ALL Ministerial responsibilities while a properly constituted investigation into the allegations occurs. If cleared, he can return to Cabinet. The failure to seek an inquiry begs the question: of what is the Government so afraid?



5



90



514



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Mar 29



It is a stark demonstration of what Morrison REALLY believes about this pesky Woman Question that he keeps Laming in parliament and Porter in Cabinet. [#auspol](#)



6



85



415



53



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Apr 12



"This is a matter for the NSW Police", says @ScottMorrisonMP of the rape allegations against his Cabinet Minister Christian Porter. Yet, thanks to @ShoebridgeMLC, we now know the opportunity to take Kate's statement was stymied by senior police on three separate occasions. 1/5



52



1K



2.8K



Jo Dyer

@instanterudite



Replying to @instanterudite

(1) Despite support of Detective Snr Constable Samantha Meredith, NSW Pol Child Abuse & Sex Crimes Squad investigation teams manager, DCI Mick Haddow, & Commander of the child abuse and sex crimes squad John Kerlatec, Dep Cmr David Hudson denied a request to travel to SA. 2/5

1:46 PM · Apr 12, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

191 Retweets 6 Quote Tweets 720 Likes



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Apr 12



Replying to @instanterudite

(2) Kate's request to have her statement taken via Skype was declined by NSW Police. 3/5



1



174



721



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Apr 12



(3) An offer by the SA Police to take Kate's statement on behalf of the NSW Police was also declined - without consulting Kate. 4/5



7



198



793



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · Apr 12



Why? And - given the above - how can the PM say the matter has been resolved by the NSW Police? It is more vital than ever that there is an independent inquiry into the allegations against Mr Porter, and the decisions taken by the NSW Police in relation thereto. #auspol 5/5



23



326



1.4K





Jo Dyer

@instanterudite

...

Christian Porter's defamation action was touted by his lawyers as a substitute for the Inquiry We Didn't Get to Have when the PM refused to read the allegations against him and senior NSW Police rejected the opportunity to take Kate's statement on three separate occasions. 1/4

7:51 PM · May 6, 2021 · Twitter Web App

627 Retweets 45 Quote Tweets 1,968 Likes



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · May 6

...

Replying to @instanterudite

Despite a defamation case always being an inappropriate forum for such serious criminal allegations to be tested, in the absence of anything else, we thought: "Oh well...bring it on.". 2/4

5

120

793



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · May 6

...

Now his lawyers are trying to prevent swathes of the defence evidence from being presented to their vaunted inquiry at all, which rather undermines their earlier argument that this would be a rigorous test of all evidence against their client. 3/4

7

180

1K



Jo Dyer @instanterudite · May 6

...

They are trying to prevent further batches of evidence from being made public, leading one to wonder what their client has to hide. Extraordinary but ultimately completely unsurprising tactics. #auspol #porter 4/4

20

216

1.3K



55



13 May 2021

Statement on behalf of Jo Dyer

On 15 March 2021, Jo Dyer was made aware that Sue Chrysanthou SC had accepted a brief from Christian Porter to represent him in his defamation proceedings against the ABC.

On the same day (15 March) through her solicitors Marque Lawyers, Ms Dyer expressed her objection to Ms Chrysanthou acting for Mr Porter, on the basis of an alleged conflict of interest. Her solicitors have been in continuous correspondence with Ms Chrysanthou's solicitors since that date, attempting in good faith to resolve this dispute without the need for court proceedings.

Those attempts having failed, Ms Dyer commenced proceedings against Ms Chrysanthou in the Federal Court on 10 May.

Any suggestion that Ms Dyer has not acted in a timely manner or not in good faith is false.

Ms Dyer will not be making any further public comment on the matter.

Michael Bradley
Managing Partner
Marque Lawyers

Email: michaelb@marquelawyers.com.au
Phone: 0419 610 016

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Kate was bright, brilliant and funny. She should not be defined by her alleged rape

Friends thought Kate would become the first female prime minister of Australia. She was a loyal, feisty and honest person adored by her mates.

AMBER SCHULTZ MAR 12, 2021

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57



KATE AT THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING DURING THE 1988-89
DEBATE TRIP

Note: this piece discusses sexual assault and suicide.

Much of the coverage of Kate, who *Crikey* previously called Jane Doe and whose first name was revealed on *Four Corners* this week, has been focused on her allegation of rape against Attorney-General Christian Porter — allegations which Porter has strenuously denied.

But Kate was so much more than her allegations and her trauma. She was an academic, an artist, a debater and a caring friend. *Inq* has spoken to five friends who have each described her as bright and brilliant and funny. They pegged her to be Australia's first female prime minister. She killed herself last year.

Bright beginnings

Kate was born in the UK and moved to Adelaide as a young child. She came from what friends describe as a “well-to-do family” with an ex-military father who had high expectations of his daughter.

Debate Competition years before her peers.



17-YEAR-OLD KATE IN 1988, NEARLY A YEAR AFTER THE ALLEGED ATTACK, WITH HER CAT, PEARL PUREHEART

Nick Ryan, who is now a wine writer, was a fellow debater and Kate's platonic date to her Year 11 formal.

"Anyone she might have been romantically interested in was probably far too intimidated to accept the invitation, so she settled for me," he said.

He remembers the event fondly: "I remember us laughing a lot. She was really happy. Life was good."

stuck. Throughout her life, she would periodically send him sloth-themed postcards.



KATE DEBATING. TEAMMATE DANNY KENNEDY IS BEHIND HER

Friends say she was well-liked in different social groups — but like most debaters, as one friend said, she was a “downright nerd”. Her nerdy humour continued on Facebook, with her posting

Kate developed strong friendships with those she met. One of those people was Porter.

A traumatic trip

Kate met Porter six times during debating trips from 1986 to 1988 — once, she said in her statement submitted to police, going to his house and meeting his mother, who she correctly named as Nerida.

Their one-on-one meet-ups in Perth have also been documented in a 1987 letter sent between two debate team friends and seen by *Inq*.

According to her allegations, during the early hours of January 10, 1988, she was raped by Porter in her room in the Women's College at Sydney University.

In a 2019 email to friends seen by *Inq*, Kate recalled noticing Porter had small strawberry moles, the size of freckles, on his torso. "I have them too, so does my father," she wrote. "He has skin like mine and dad's, I thought, desperate to make some sort of connection?"



KATE WITH HER NATIONAL DEBATING TEAM

Kate wrote in her police statement she felt shame and guilt the day after the alleged assault but believed it would be OK as the pair were going to get married.

Friends say they didn't immediately notice any major changes in Kate's behaviour. She had for some time been struggling with an eating disorder, logging food in a diary.

"It was Year 12 and it was something she'd been focused on for quite some time and she just put everything aside to focus on what needed to be done," Ryan said. Kate graduated with a dux of humanities.

A boyfriend she met in 1988 says he knew something had happened.

"When we first met, she told me she had a serious and traumatic event but wouldn't say what it was," he said.

Kate didn't tell friends the name of the alleged perpetrator until 2019.

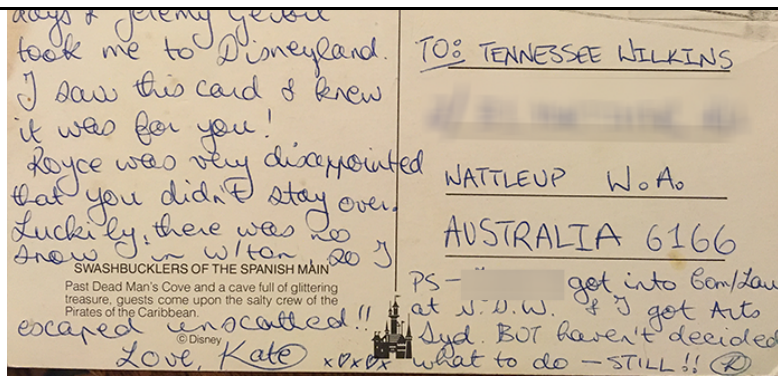
Smiling throughout

Between finishing high school and starting university, Kate travelled with her debate team to England, Canada and the United States.

One of the people she travelled with was Ian Wilkins.

"It was a fantastic experience, going to some amazing places with the debating team," Wilkins said. "We all became great friends."

The team saw the tourist sites in London, New York, Denver and went skiing in the Rocky Mountains in Canada. Kate flew from Washington to LA, where she caught up with another friend she had met through the national debating championship, Jeremy Samuel. They went to Disneyland together, where she mused over what university to attend.



POSTCARD SENT TO IAN WILKINS BY KATE DURING THE 1988 INTERNATIONAL CHRISTMAS TRIP. KATE TOOK A SIDE TRIP TO VISIT JEREMY SAMUELS (NAMED AS JEREMY GERBIL HERE) AND TO GO TO DISNEYLAND

Ultimately she decided to accept a placement at University of New South Wales studying history of ideas. There she joined the Women on Campus Council, now known as the SRC Women's Collective.

"Her feminism was very much lived by example," Samuel said.

Although Kate wasn't preachy about feminism, he said, she would point out failings in people who didn't practise what they preached, and "made her views known if she thought somebody was falling short of the mark".

"She could put you in your place without breaking a sweat."

Trauma starts to surface

Friends said it was around the time she moved out from her parents' home that Kate's mental illness

that Porter “took what he wanted. Me. My virginity and my voice”, and questioning in 1991 whether to tell her boyfriend about the abuse.

Another friend, who asked to remain anonymous, said her body image problems worsened at university: “She made a very direct link between the real challenges that she went on to face with the [alleged] assault, and there was no doubt in her mind that these things were linked.”

Kate said she last saw Porter in 1994, the year after she graduated from university, at a historians’ conference in Western Australia. After having dinner with him and allegedly rejecting his advances, she wrote in her statement she felt “shaken but relieved as if I had broken a spell that had been cast some seven years earlier”.

Samuel stayed in on-and-off contact with Kate, meeting her at a beachside cafe in Sydney in the late ’90s. *Inq* understands she told friends about one other sexual assault during this period.

“Even then it was clear that something was a bit awry,” Samuel said. “She kind of alluded to [her struggles] but didn’t really talk about it in detail.”

Academically gifted

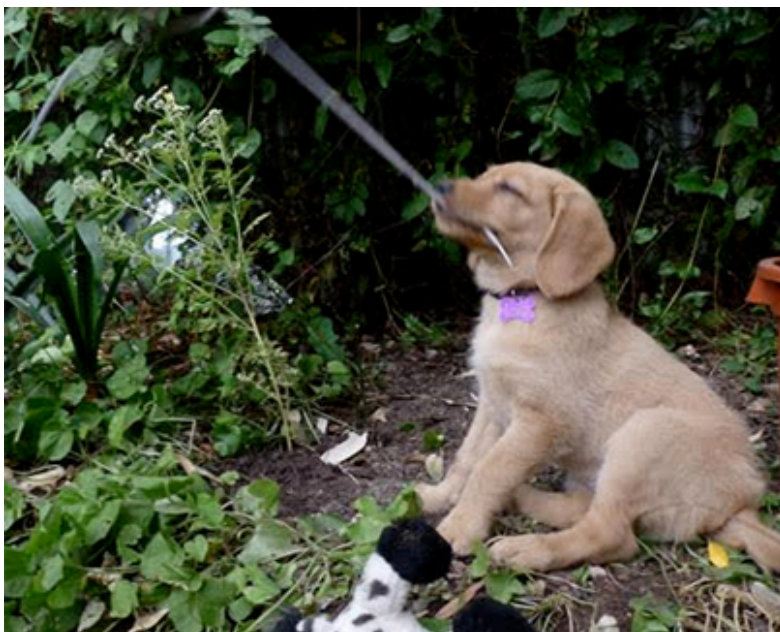
Despite her struggles, Kate graduated with her degree with honours in 1993 and worked on and off as a casual tutor at the University of South Australia for nearly a decade, writing academic

She got married and later divorced.

She worked as a school historian, publishing a book about the school. The book launched in 2010, with the now Finance Minister [Simon Birmingham in attendance](#). Although her friends thought she'd go on to become an influential figure, they said the role of a historian also suited her.

“She had an almost photographic memory,” Wilkins said. “She could reel off a quote from some historical figure. She was just this incredibly astute person.”

She bought a puppy which she called Lulu. Lulu dug holes in her garden and stole shoes. She dabbled in art, starting a series of gum leaf-based sculptures, and worked as a voice actor in an award-winning radio play about HIV/AIDs which she called one of her “proudest achievements”.



LULU THE PUPPY

described as a loving, long-term relationship for seven years.



KATE'S GUMTREE LEAF SCULPTURE FROM 2010

Around this time she started seeking help from sexual assault specialists, first chatting to a counsellor in 2013. The counsellor told *Four Corners* Kate spoke to her at least six times and mentioned a sexual assault by someone in the debating team called Christian.

Coming to terms with trauma

In 2019, Kate's mental health struggles intensified. Friends say she admitted herself to the mental health facility in Royal Adelaide Hospital in 2019 and after revealing her history of suicide attempts was once involuntarily admitted as a psychiatric patient to the Royal North Shore Hospital.

Across 2019 she also entered what has been described as a “whirlwind” romance with a man she married in 2020.

It was when she started seeing an Adelaide psychiatrist and a Sydney psychologist that Kate decided to open up to friends about the alleged 1988 assault.

“I have always remembered these things,” she wrote in her statement. “I had a better understanding of these memories, and only really understood them [after reading books recommended by the psychologist].”

From June 2019 she started messaging people via email, text and social media, creating a Facebook group for friends to chat and share information.

Ryan said she had stayed in on-and-off contact, so he wasn’t surprised to hear from her.

“She would always just sort of pop up and reappear,” he said.



**Timeline of allegations
against Christian Porter:
The story so far**

This time, though, was different, as she detailed the allegations against Porter and her plan to make them public.

“She was rallying her army up,” he said.

She met Samuel to go into detail about the alleged rape, sending his wife flowers — a

“She was fully aware that it would bring enormous scrutiny to her,” another friend said. “There was a real desire to get some kind of resolution and peace.”

All the friends *Inq* spoke to said the details of Kate’s stories never changed, and she always went into great detail.

She contacted Labor’s Penny Wong and wrote a letter to former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull. Both referred her to the NSW Police. She hired a lawyer, Michael Bradley (who writes for *Crikey*).

In February 2020 she contacted the NSW Police who were planning to fly to Adelaide to interview her — at her request, as she felt safer in her home talking about her trauma — but never did due to the pandemic.

During a trip to Melbourne in May 2020 she checked herself into a psychiatric hospital. She was released in mid-lockdown in June and returned home.

In late June, after calling NSW Police the day before to tell them she did not want to proceed with the complaint, Kate reportedly cut her hair into the same hairstyle she had in 1988 and took her own life .

One friend said the group raised their concerns on the toll the allegations would have on her mental health.

from trying to kill myself,” he said.

“The one thing she could guarantee is if she didn’t deal with this in this way, it would definitely kill her.

“And it turns out, but sadly, it definitely did kill her anyway.”

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault or violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au.

For anyone seeking help, [Lifeline](#) is on 13 11 14 and [Beyond Blue](#) is 1300 22 4636.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amber Schultz

REPORTER [@AMBERMAYSCHULTZ](#)



Amber previously worked for Nine News and *The Age* and created student comedy talk show *The Struggle*. She was a Young Walkley finalist, Jacoby-Walkley scholar, and won an Ossie Our Watch award. Amber holds a Masters in International Relations and Journalism and is fluent in Spanish.

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Defamation Act reforms are imminent, but without national consistency it’s still a minefield

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[image002.png](#)

Dear Colleagues

Please find **enclosed** proposed discovery orders. We propose that discovery be provided by close of business, Thursday 20 May 2021.

Would you please indicate by midday tomorrow whether you consent to these orders being made so we can send them to Chambers?

If your client's consent is not forthcoming, we will seek a relisting of the matter on Wednesday morning.

Regards

Alanah Tannous
(Associate)



(t) 1300 204 602
(m) 0452 069 996

Sydney + Melbourne
(the company you keep)

www.companygiles.com.au

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ORDER

No. NSD 426 of 2021

Federal Court of Australia
District Registry: New South Wales
Division: General

Joanne Elizabeth Dyer

Applicant

Sue Chrysanthou SC

First Respondent

Charles Christian Porter

Second Respondent

ORDER JUDGE: JUSTICE THAWLEY

DATE OF ORDER:

WHERE MADE: Sydney

The Court orders that the Applicant give discovery to the Respondents of the following categories of documents:

1. All documents recording or disclosing communications between the Applicant and any other person (natural person or corporation) in relation to the allegations made by AB against the Second Respondent from 23 June 2020 to date.
2. All documents recording or disclosing any communications between the Applicant and any other person (natural person or corporation) concerning the background to and nature of the Applicant's relationship with AB.
3. All communications between the Applicant and or any representative of the Applicant and any representative of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation recording or disclosing:

- a. The contents of the Applicant's discussions with Louise Milligan or journalist employed by the ABC or any other representative of the ABC concerning the allegations made by AB against the second respondent; and
 - b. the terms upon which the Applicant agreed to be interviewed by Louise Milligan.
4. Any notes or records of any communications between the Applicant and First Respondent of the communications or discussions that took place between the Applicant and the First Respondent and Messrs Bradley, Hooke and Richardson on 20 November 2021.
5. Copies of all statements published or publicly disseminated by the Applicant from 23 June 2020 to date concerning the allegations made by AB against Mr Porter including but not limited to interviews given by the Applicant, statements made to by the Applicant the media, social media postings or statements made by the Applicant in closed social media groups.
6. Any document recording or evidencing the Applicant disclosing or discussing with any third party the information or any part thereof that the Applicant contends constitutes confidential information disclosed to the First Respondent at the meeting on 20 November 2020.

From: [Alanah Tannous](#)
To: ["nathanm@marquellawyers.com.au"](mailto:nathanm@marquellawyers.com.au); ["laureng@marquellawyers.com.au"](mailto:laureng@marquellawyers.com.au); [Emma Johnsen](#)
Cc: [Rebekah Giles](#)
Subject: RE: Dyer v Chrysanthou (NSD 426/2021)
Date: Tuesday, 18 May 2021 10:02:04 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[Discovery Orders 18.05.21.pdf](#)

Dear Colleagues

Please see **attached** further proposed discovery orders, requiring your client to give verified discovery by 5pm 20 May 2021.

We await your response.

Kind regards

Alanah Tannous
(Associate)



(t) 1300 204 602
(m) 0452 069 996

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From: Alanah Tannous
Sent: Monday, 17 May 2021 9:51 PM
To: 'nathanm@marquellawyers.com.au' <nathanm@marquellawyers.com.au>;
'laureng@marquellawyers.com.au' <laureng@marquellawyers.com.au>; Emma Johnsen
<emmaj@marquellawyers.com.au>
Cc: Rebekah Giles <rebekah@companygiles.com.au>
Subject: Dyer v Chrysanthou (NSD 426/2021)

Dear Colleagues

Please find **enclosed** proposed discovery orders. We propose that discovery be provided by close of business, Thursday 20 May 2021.

Would you please indicate by midday tomorrow whether you consent to these orders being made so we can send them to Chambers?

If your client's consent is not forthcoming, we will seek a relisting of the matter on Wednesday morning.

Regards

Alanah Tannous
(Associate)



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ORDER

No. NSD 426 of 2021

Federal Court of Australia
District Registry: New South Wales
Division: General

Joanne Elizabeth Dyer

Applicant

Sue Chrysanthou SC

First Respondent

Charles Christian Porter

Second Respondent

ORDER JUDGE: JUSTICE THAWLEY

DATE OF ORDER:

WHERE MADE: Sydney

The Court orders that by 5 pm on 20 May 2021 the Applicant give verified discovery to the Second Respondent of the following categories of documents:

1. All documents recording or disclosing communications from 23 June 2020 to date between the Applicant and any other person (natural person or corporation) in relation to the allegations made by AB against the Second Respondent.
2. All documents recording or disclosing any communications between the Applicant and any other person (natural person or corporation) concerning the background to and nature of the Applicant's relationship with AB.
3. All communications between the Applicant and or any representative of the Applicant and any journalist employed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (**ABC**) or other representative of the ABC recording or disclosing:

- a. The contents of the Applicant's discussions with Louise Milligan or any journalist employed by the ABC or any other representative of the ABC concerning the allegations made by AB against the Second Respondent;
 - b. the terms upon which the Applicant agreed to be interviewed by Louise Milligan; and or
 - c. communications relating or referring to the First Respondent.
- 4. Any notes or records of any communications between the Applicant and First Respondent of the communications or discussions that took place between the Applicant and the First Respondent and Messrs Bradley, Hooke and Richardson on 20 November 2021.
- 5. Copies of all statements published or publicly disseminated by the Applicant from 23 June 2020 to date concerning the allegations made by AB against the Second Respondent including but not limited to interviews given by the Applicant, statements made by the Applicant to the media, social media postings or statements made by the Applicant in closed social media groups.
- 6. Any document recording or evidencing the Applicant disclosing or discussing with any person who was not present at the 20 November 2020 conference with the First Respondent the information or any part thereof that the Applicant contends constitutes confidential information disclosed to the First Respondent at that meeting.

From: [Lauren Gasparini](#)
To: [Rebekah Giles](#); patrick.george@kennedyslaw.com
Cc: [Nathan Mattock](#); [Emma Johnsen](#); [Nathan Buck](#); [Alanah Tannous](#)
Subject: Dyer v Chrysanthou & Anor (NSD426/2021) [ML-Documents.FID1184906]
Date: Tuesday, 18 May 2021 12:10:27 PM
Attachments: [Letter to Ms Giles and Mr George re Second Respondent's discovery orders \(18.05.2021\).pdf](#)
[Dyer v Chrysanthou \(NSD 4262021\).msg](#)
[RE Dyer v Chrysanthou \(NSD 4262021\).msg](#)

Dear Ms Giles and Mr George

Please see **attached** letter and enclosures.

Kind regards
Lauren

Lauren Gasparini
Lawyer
MARQUE Lawyers Pty Ltd
P: +61 2 8216 3087
Level 4, 343 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000
marquelawyers.com.au / [LinkedIn](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Instagram](#)
Official lawyers for [TEDxSydney](#)

We do not disclaim anything about this email. We're quite proud of it, really.

Our reference NM/13146
Phone +61 2 8216 3003
Email nathanm@marquelawyers.com.au

18 May 2021

Rebekah Giles
Company (Giles)
Level 13, 111 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Patrick George
Senior Partner
Kennedys (Australasia) Pty Ltd
Level 22, 85 Castlereagh Street
Sydney NSW 2000

By email only: rebekah@companygiles.com.au
patrick.george@kennedyslaw.com

Dear Ms Giles and Mr George

Joanne Elizabeth Dyer v Sue Chrysanthou SC & Anor (NSD426/2021) ("Proceedings") – Second Respondent's proposed discovery orders

1. We refer to the email sent by Ms Alanah Tannous of Company (Giles) at 9:51pm on 17 May 2021 enclosing proposed discovery orders purportedly drafted on behalf of the First Respondent and the Second Respondent in the Proceedings.
2. We also refer to Ms Tannous' email sent at 10:02am this morning enclosing an amended form of the proposed discovery orders, seeking production of documents to the Second Respondent (**Second Respondent's Proposed Orders**).
3. A copy of Ms Tannous' emails and the Second Respondent's Proposed Orders is **enclosed**.
4. We confirm that our client agrees to the category of documents identified as order 4 of the Second Respondents' Proposed Orders.
5. Our client also agrees with the timeframe for production proposed by Ms Tannous, being 5:00pm on Thursday, 20 May 2021.
6. However, our client does not agree to discovery orders being made in respect of categories 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the Second Respondent's Proposed Orders.

7. Our client objects to the Second Respondent's Proposed Orders in respect of those categories on the basis that they are not relevant to the issues raised in the pleadings. Further, requiring our client to produce those categories of documents would impose an oppressive burden on our client, given the limited time available for production.
8. For example, with respect to order 5 of the Second Respondent's Proposed Orders, it would not be appropriate to require our client to produce statements which are already in the public domain. Further, our client does not agree to produce copies of statements she may have made to "closed social media groups". By their nature, such communications cannot amount to public disclosure and therefore are irrelevant to the issues in this proceeding.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Mattock
Partner

Encls.