

Rachel Withers (00:00)

Horse meat allegations and stupol like has reached a whole new level of crazy. and I can't wait to see some of the people involved in this.

end up in state and federal politics

Daanyal Saeed (00:12)

Ha ha ha.

Rachel Withers (00:13)

as they inevitably will.

Hello and welcome to Cut Through Crikey's spin-free analysis of Australian news, politics, and power. I am your temporary host, Rachel Withers, filling in for Crystal Andrews. And today I'm joined by my wonderful friend and cracky media reporter, Dani Saeed, to dive into some of our favorite snoops of the past month. Dani, or should I say Koshon, welcome to Cut Through.

Daanyal Saeed (00:39)

Thank you very much for

having me and the pig on, you

Rachel Withers (00:42)

Ha ha ha.

Daanyal Saeed (00:43)

know, another I love the monthly roundup of the Snoop. It's it combines all my favorite things. It combines tippy goodness, it combines the pig, and it combines me talking often about myself and my reporting, which is always fun for me.

Rachel Withers (00:57)

Honestly,

you should be welcoming welcoming me to your show right now, I think.

Daanyal Saeed (01:01)

Ha ha

Rachel Withers (01:01)

because we are in your territory very much in the Snoop world. a refresher for those who don't know what we're talking about. these are the episodes where we go through our favorite Snoops of the past month, analyze them a bit, go into a little bit more detail, and I am really looking forward to hearing a little bit more about some of Darny's stories from the past month.

I have picked a few of my favorites. Darny has picked a few of his favorites, but before we get into that, I actually wanted to really go into a couple of big scoops as opposed to s to snoops that you have broken about One Nation in the past month, Darny, or should I say, haven't broken when it comes to our first one,

Daanyal Saeed (01:41)
Ha ha ha.

Rachel Withers (01:42)
which is a tip-off you received about Barnaby Joyce, that somehow ended up in other parts of the media.

between you putting questions to Barnaby Joyce and you reporting on it. So can you tell listeners a little bit about what happened?

Daanyal Saeed (01:55)
Yeah, I guess Barnaby Joyce sort of decided to I mean report my story for me, quite frankly. this is a bit of a weird one. I think Crikey has a great heritage of showing rather than telling how things like media and power work. And part of that is because we have that sort of slightly outsider-y feel and you know, there there is that heritage of getting locked out of the budget or so on and so forth. And this is a great example of that. Now, I've never dealt with Barnaby Joyce before in like a professional

capacity. and that implies that I have a personal relationship with Barnaby, but I I don't. but

Rachel Withers (02:27)
I've also never spoken to the man.

Daanyal Saeed (02:29)
I I I don't have a I've I've never had a prior dealing with with Himaro's office. it's obviously you you don't get to sort of deputy PM at one point without having a really shrewd understanding of how these machinations sort of work. And this is a great example of it. So

I contacted Barnaby Joyce in respect of a story I was working on. I got a tip that he was seen at the Canberra Casino, and this is also how I learned Canberra had a casino. the with some

Rachel Withers (02:58)
Must be a pretty sad place, yeah.

Daanyal Saeed (03:00)
it it's just it is a sad place. It's not like it's not somewhere I'm stinging to go. like every every image you see of the Canberra casino just like makes you more and more depressed. They needed to like walk outside after I

sort of looked it up for the first time. he'd been seen like late at night, during the middle of the week, at the Cambridge Casino with a number of far-right figures. And those included a far-right influencer, Hugo Lennon, he's known online as Ospil, and sort of Australia's I I would say fair to say, sort of the most prominent neo-Nazi in the country is a man by the name of Thomas Sore.

And he leads a group called White Australia and they're currently in Canberra, well, they were currently in Canberra, because they are before the High Court and they there have been some federal hate speech laws that have passed that have banned what was the National Socialist Network. So like

I cannot stress enough, like this is when we say neo-Nazis, this isn't like woke lefties in Melbourne like being outraged about right wingers. These are like very literally neo-Nazis that we're discussing here.

And so the National Socialist Network were disbanded as the results of some federal hate speech legislation. This group are challenging that and the basis of the challenge is the the implied freedom of of political communication that we have in the constitution.

And so there's a really interesting constitutional law sort of case brewing there.

But as a result they're in Canberra at the High Court and so after a day's hearing they go back to the Canberra Casino and they're seen with Barnaby Joyce. So that's basically what we put to him.

Rachel Withers (04:30)

And this was this when

you say seen, like somebody tipped you off that that

Daanyal Saeed (04:34)

Yes.

Rachel Withers (04:35)

they had seen it, yeah.

Daanyal Saeed (04:36)

Yes. And we spent two weeks trying to stand this story up. and eventually we put questions to Barnaby Joyce's office, and to him directly, and he doesn't answer them. no one responds to us. And eventually we get to Monday morning and I got a call from

a reporter at the City Morning Herald in the in the Canberra Girl in the Canberra Bureau there, asking me about Barnaby Joe and basically

saying that they were reporting on this story. And I was I was so frazzled by the whole thing, I thought, shit I've been scooped. And then I realised what had happened, they were repeating back to me details of it of that only I would know.

and I was like, hang on a second, how do you know that? And it turns out that Barnaby Joseph's office had, instead of responding to us, sent our correspondence to the City Morning Herald. and and this reporter was effectively like, you know, have you have you turned on a television this morning? And I was like, No, turn on a television. And there he is, he's doing Sky News and he's doing 2GB and he's doing media instead of responding to us.

Rachel Withers (05:39)

We've got some audio here of Joyce's interview on 2GB where he chooses to get out on the front foot with this story.

Daanyal Saeed (06:08)

so there was Barnaby Joyce

doing broadcast interviews the morning of on Monday morning. And then this becomes a national news story because of course One Nation's relationship with the far right has sort of been under quite a lot of scrutiny over the last few years. on a fairly regular basis, One Nation MPs, One Nation linked parties.

Are are seen and spotted in in proximity to different far right figures.

And so the relationship that the party has with the far right is really fascinating. So the day after I alleged to Barnaby that he had been seen with these people, the group themselves had independently come out and said, We're supporting Pauline Hansen for Prime Minister.

Rachel Withers (06:49)

But in Barnaby's

telling, this run-in was a pure coincidence. He didn't know who they were,

Daanyal Saeed (06:54)

Yes.

Rachel Withers (06:55)

like just happened to bump into him

Daanyal Saeed (06:57)

He said it was a coincidental meeting

and that he didn't recognise Thomas Sore.

Rachel Withers (07:01)

Yeah, and I think it's interesting for other media outlets such as 2GB and Sky to take his explanation of a story he's choosing to get out there, to take his explanation of a story that is about to drop and basically accept that for what it is, run it as if it's newsworthy while also, putting forward essentially his version of events, which is nothing to see here.

but yeah, I think it's really it's a really telling story about about media and power and how it works. And I loved the way you laid that story out by kind of giving the timeline of of you go forward with questions as we are meant to do as journalists, and he scoops you by going to more friendly media and gets the story out there with the denial, not to you, but leading the story and framing the story himself.

Daanyal Saeed (07:53)

I think this is a fair criticism of of Barnaby Joyce here is because I said the exact same thing. When I was talking to other press gallery journalists about this, I said the same thing that you did, which was you gotta hand it to him. It's actually really shrewd media management, because it it takes the air out of me and my story completely. and and it allows

Barnaby to run his narrative, and he knows that there are people that will run that narrative for a solid, in Crikey's case, we don't publish until the midday edition, for a solid four hours. He's done Breakfast Radio and Breakfast Television, and the newspapers have have gotten in the morning by the time we publish anything. So

in that sense, it's really shrewd. But it's bad faith. It is like quite transparently, it's bad faith. And so I the criticism that I had put to me by well a number of press gallery journalists was.

Hey, we shouldn't normalize this. We shouldn't allow it to go uncommented on. That this is if we allowed this to happen in every scenario where a journalist goes to comment, that there's an sort of an unspoken understanding that you don't really do that in these cases. If a if a journalist chooses to publish as we said we would when we went to Barnaby for comment, there's a there's an understanding that you'll respond to the published allegation. And so as a result.

There were there are things that we didn't publish that were that we didn't end up publishing that were ended up sort of being commented on and and discussed and denied when we hadn't put those things to Barnaby Joyce. And so a there's a clarity element there of the reason it operates on that sort of good faith and that understanding is because

it it provides clarity for an audience and there's and and that was particularly when we're dealing with federal politics, there's a there's a responsibility here. secondarily I I think a lot of other structures break down. and it's probably not great for the fourth estate to have such an adversarial relationship with politicians. It's probably good for us to have a significant degree of adversari adversarial sort of back and forth, but it's probably not good for that to break down completely.

And it does require a little bit of trust. And so there's a there's a problematic element to that as well,

Rachel Withers (10:01)

I mean, I I think the adversarial nature of of journalists and politicians is important. The problem is is when there's friendly media standing right over there and you can choose not to engage with a, antagonistic journalist or a journalist who's really going hard after the truth and asking you difficult questions. But as Barney Beer strown, you can just take an uncomfortable situation, take it over to your preferred media outlets and spin it up.

Just as you'd like. And yeah, as you say, really bad faith

media bad faith from those other media outlets to let him do that to another journalist's story.

Daanyal Saeed (10:34)

It's such a

it's such a slippery slope. Like what what what's the what's the logical extension of that that Barnaby, if I know that Barnaby's gonna treat me or any other politician, is going to not bother responding to my questions and instead go to a friendly media outlet, why should I bother giving him a right of reply? Right? Why should I bother giving him a right of reply? And of course he's entitled to a right of reply.

Rachel Withers (10:48)

Asking him. Yeah. Yeah. D Well, here's a question.

Were you expecting one?

Daanyal Saeed (10:54)

I don't know.

I I know I I you know, I wasn't naive about this. It is my job to gossip with other press gallery journalists. I I was aware that, you know, you should

play your cards close to your chest in that respect. so I I don't think so. I I don't think I fully

Rachel Withers (11:09)

Yeah. I mean

Daanyal Saeed (11:10)

expected one. But again, he's entitled to a right of reply. If we didn't, if we published without going to him, he'd be furious, rightly. He he would rightly be furious.

Rachel Withers (11:13)

Yeah, you it was important that you did. Yeah, yeah. I I think but yeah, this is a

no re non-replies or no comments up for your standard for media and especially for cracky, I would say. But in this case,

Daanyal Saeed (11:26)
Ha ha.

Rachel Withers (11:27)
he's taken it to a whole new level by taking your story and giving it to someone else. let's talk briefly about another scoop you had, one that I think One Nation did get back to you on, which is the story

Daanyal Saeed (11:38)
They see it.

Rachel Withers (11:39)
of Victorian upper house candidate Mark.

Nicholson, who in One Nations material was described as a former lawyer.

Daanyal Saeed (11:48)
this was a fascinating little one. This was very much again another sort of tip-off from the member of the public. I guess the the the detail here is sort of a little bit important. so being a lawyer is a protected title, right? It it's one of those things, a little bit like being a doctor, where going to university and and and graduating from university.

isn't enough to call yourself a doctor or a lawyer, right? You've got to do a number of other things before you can call yourself that. And in the legal case, that means that you do set of training in but it's essentially some a graduate diploma and you get admitted to the legal profession. Essentially it's a recognition from your peers in the profession that you're a fit and proper person, amongst other things.

to practice law because there are you know several privileges that being a lawyer entitles you to in sort of Western liberal democratic society. No. No. Exactly right. I'm acutely aware of of of this process for exactly this reason. I

Rachel Withers (12:39)
You're a former lawyer, is that right, Donnie? No. You you've got the law degree but not the practicing as well. Yes, okay. Okay. Okay.

Daanyal Saeed (12:49)
have graduated a law degree. I'm not a lawyer. I didn't get admitted.

Rachel Withers (12:52)

Got it.

Daanyal Saeed (12:53)

I started that admission process and and dropped out of it because I I like snooping. No former lawyers in

Rachel Withers (12:56)

Yeah, no no former lawyers here. Much to my parents'

disappointment.

Daanyal Saeed (13:00)

This room. My parents as well. But

that's a very required step. so when I got told that he had claimed to be a lawyer, it's a very verifiable statement. There are if if you're admitted in any Australian jurisdiction, you're admitted on a state by state basis, you can go to each state's practicing body and say, Hey, do you have you heard of this bloke?

And we did go state by state a couple of states didn't get back to us, but for the most part, the practicing bodies hadn't heard of Mark

Nicholson. And so at that point we went to One Nation, we went to Mark Nicholson.

again, bearing in mind, this is what his biography on One Nation's website claims. Mark is a family man, a former lawyer, and the co-creator of the renowned Please Explain cartoon series. So this is sort of his his provenance in in One Nation lore. And he keeps telling people that, you know, yes, not to be confused. and,

Rachel Withers (13:48)

Law L O I E with the law.

Daanyal Saeed (13:53)

you know, there are plenty of headlines. A Saturday paper said that he was a lawyer, took him at his word. Sky News took him at his word, Andrew Bolt interviewed him, called him a lawyer.

there are there are several sort of publications that took that at face value. And then it turns out that he actually wasn't admitted anywhere. And so we went to him, and bearing in mind it's also a crime. Like it's also an offense to claim that you're a lawyer when you're not. we went to him and we went to One Nation and they said, Mark.

Has always been open about his brief legal career, long before he ever considered running as a candidate. Mark graduated from Monash University with a Bachelor of Laws honors and spent approximately six weeks working in the legal profession before deciding that a career helping criminals get away with community correction orders was not for him. And then he said, I'm not ashamed of my decision to leave the law when I did. If I stayed, I'd still be fat, bald, and depressed. Thankfully, I'm just bald,

which is very funny to be fair to him. But

Rachel Withers (14:51)

That was a good line,

yeah.

Daanyal Saeed (14:53)

You'll note that in none of that is the word lawyer used, and that's for a

Rachel Withers (14:57)

Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (14:58)

very good reason, because as I mentioned, it is a crime to claim that you are a lawyer when you are not.

Rachel Withers (15:03)

And so what's One Nation been doing with all the material that previously described him as a former lawyer?

Daanyal Saeed (15:09)

they said that we were looking to belittle his legal experience and so on and so forth, but then they removed the references to being a lawyer, in all of their campaign material. they've changed it to his previous work in criminal law. So what would have happened

Rachel Withers (15:24)

He's six weeks, yeah.

Daanyal Saeed (15:25)

his six weeks, he said, working in criminal law.

And I, you know, we're we're not placing any doubt on on that claim. it is entirely possible to work in criminal law and not be a lawyer. I did it myself. but this is, I guess, again, another fascinating thing. And One Nation at a state level has had quite a number of sort of resume-based snafu's in the lead up to the election.

So we've had a couple of this. There's the candidate for Richmond who's who's a young fellow by the name of Harrison Reinflesch. he

initially claimed on his campaign materials that he had completed a law degree. He was in fact completing the law degree. And he was very young as well, so it was very obvious that he had not completed a law degree. none of these are sort fatal crimes, for want of a better phrase, right? Politically speaking.

But when you put them together, it's this disregard, for the truth and what matters. And again, like one nation clearly understand that there is a weight and a provenance that comes with claiming to be a lawyer. It it is a difficult degree. You have to be reasonably clever to to get into it and to complete it. and to be fair, actually, quite a number of sources have come out since we published that story saying that they went to university with Mark Nicholson.

And he was, like one person said he was the face of monash law in the time that he was there. He was a very active member at university.

Rachel Withers (16:45)

having watched him kind of spin a story, specifically watching him in the Warren Pickering press conference of a few weeks back, he's he's a clever guy. He would have made a great lawyer. What is interesting to me about these fake claims of former lawyer is you would think that.

Lawyer is one of those kind of establishment jobs that one nation voters wouldn't even be impressed by. You know, I think it's a it's a common criticism that Canberra is full of of lawy ex lawyers. you know, I think it's one that could be thrown at the new Greens leadership, which is two ex lawyers, our new

Daanyal Saeed (17:18)

Exactly right. I was just about to say that. Our a new lawyer, leading Greece.

Rachel Withers (17:21)

lawyer overlords. but it's interesting that One Nation still tries to use former lawyer as a

part of someone's biography, a candidate's biography, when I think being the guy who started the Please Explain cartoons is probably more appealing to the kinds of voters they're looking for. They're they're looking like they're speaking to outsiders who are sick of lawyers telling them what to do.

Daanyal Saeed (17:45)

there is an appeal as a candidate of someone who and and we've seen this in different political parties at different points, of someone who has seen the other side. and and and then they have come converted to whatever political

Rachel Withers (17:57)

Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (17:57)
views they might have of the day.

So we sort of saw this. Mach Max Chandler Mata, his b his big picture of the Greens was I was once a Labour member, I've seen the other side. likewise there are plenty of of Labour people who

were, you I was agreeing when was younger. Matt Canavan claims to have been a communist at university. so there's I think there's an appeal to a voter of that of someone who has considered

Rachel Withers (18:15)
Yeah.

Daanyal Saeed (18:15)
their position and come to the position they're at now.

think this is indicative of One Nation's evolution as a political party.

that like you say, a lawyer is an establishment job, it is a privileged job, it does go to privileged people. i it does carry certain connotations of of of wealth and and status and power and that often plays out in politics and these are exactly the people that One Nation has reviled for so long. I think

Part of its evolution as a mainstream political party. There are there are rumors during the rounds that the Victorian Public Service are are now, you know, preparing an orange book for the first time, in the event of a potential One Nation government. so this is part of the evolution, I think, of One Nation into a mainstream political party that that carries a mainstream proportion of the vote.

that you will

Rachel Withers (19:07)
Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (19:07)
have people from all walks of life. And again, we've seen this at the federal level already with David Farley, you will have people you know, the church is broadening in one nation. Maybe maybe that what then maybe that church, you know, will will kick people out as well as it has done historically. But I

think part of it is that church is starting to broaden and you will see endorsed candidates differ in the party line and have those sort

Rachel Withers (19:31)

Mm-hmm.

Daanyal Saeed (19:32)

of political debates and wrangle with its leadership.

sort of over the course

Rachel Withers (19:35)

Yeah.

Daanyal Saeed (19:36)

at state and federal level over the next well I think we'll see over the next twelve to eighteen months.

Rachel Withers (19:40)

moving on to a couple of other big snoops of the the Fortnite. one of my favorite stories that you actually broke for the snoop, Darnie,

it was the backlash within the Mamma Mia podcast audience community. Now I am super glad that Crikey doesn't have a vocal Facebook page where all the critics who hang out in the comments can get together and start multiple threads at once. But Mamma Mia does, as it turns out, and it's very it's a it's a

Hot space for debate and criticism, it seems. you or one of your sources has access to that Facebook group, I presume from this story. And basically, people in that group did not love some of the comments on a recent podcast from Mia Friedman talking about the

Backlash to Ed Sheeran for dropping McLemore from his tour. that was obviously a huge story. I'm sure listeners are across it, but essentially, after Macklemore, who is very, very vocally pro-Palestine and anti-genocide, said free Palestine at one of the concerts where he was opening for Ed Sheeran, Ed Sheeran faced some pressure.

From the owner of some of the stadiums his tour was going to be hitting in the US, and he dropped Macklemore from the tour. There's been lot of backlash to Ed Sheeran for that, all the other supporting acts also dropped out. Ed Sheeran got up at the next, concert and gave this quite teary apology.

public opinion has really, really turned on Etsheerin. But in this podcast, Mia Friedman chose to really, really sympathize with Achirin here. Shall we listen to a little bit of that?

whenever anybody says, you know.

Free Palestine or from the river to the sea can mean this. They are generally actively choosing to disregard what the speaker is intending. And in this case, I think it's pretty clear Macamore wasn't intending to say that all Jewish people should be eliminated. But Maya Friedman really decided to echo some of the

Zionist lobby talking points here to imply that it was a violent call. and the commenters in this Facebook group and also on a Reddit thread that a Reddit thread that you found are not happy, which I think

Daanyal Saeed (23:26)
Yeah.

Rachel Withers (23:26)
is really telling.

Daanyal Saeed (23:28)
It's not just red and I think in in in fairness to Mayor Friedman, just for a little bit more context in on those remarks, she mentions some remarks that McLamore says about to my Jewish brothers and sisters, this is not about you, it's a it's a criticism of the state of Israel and what it's doing in Gaza. And she actually specifically addresses that and she sort of says, you can say that, but it it sort of rings all

Hollow a little bit, essentially, is what she said.

now the there's sort of a number of issues with that and and the structure of that, as I can see from your face for those

privileged enough to be watching this rather than listening to this. that sort of is I think a reflection of Mama Mia's audience. And this is

you know, Facebook mums are a massive demographic for for Mamma Mia. It is I would say they're core listenership. And

Rachel Withers (24:44)
Just to be clear

just to be completely clear, we are not denigrating women over thirty, of which I am one.

Daanyal Saeed (24:48)
No, not at all. No,

not at all. so subsequently, like it's a very deliberate sort of audience strategy that they have in in curating communities like this the Outlauders Facebook group. and we've we've seen this a little bit in the past, it happened during the the infamous Nepo Baby Saga, that you know conversation about that is is very much on the terms of of Mamma Mia management.

And so lots of responses and they were all very polite as as you as Facebook mums are want to do. it was all extremely polite sort of disagreement with how Mia had handled that conversation on the podcast and and and their various opinions on it. and then lots of people reported getting booted from the Facebook group, not being allowed back in, comments were turned off, comments are then turned back on and back off. I suspect that's a defamation thing. But again, like a lot of these

Comments are extremely polite. I would not say defamation is the is the primary risk there, in my non-legal view. But

Rachel Withers (25:51)

Yeah. I

think it's really interesting though, like all that politeness and all that like genteel expressing of disappointment in Mia's statement, to me it really shows where even the not very political crowd, the the the people who are in

Daanyal Saeed (26:04)

Absolutely.

Rachel Withers (26:05)

the Mamma Mia Out Loud Facebook group, are not buying this stuff anymore. I mean, Mia Friedman is is essentially putting forward I think what

much of the media and political class in this country has been saying for the last couple of years, which is from the river to the sea and free Palestine are in some way dangerous. And her

Daanyal Saeed (26:28)

Mm-hmm.

Rachel Withers (26:28)

apolitical audience, well clearly not that apolitical, but an audience that is not gathered to be political, is not buying that. They're they are saying, hang on, that's absolute nonsense.

public opinion is not with Israel or with the Zionist lobby on this. people accept that what McElmore was saying is the humanist approach.

Daanyal Saeed (26:50)

I think there's a really another fascinating touch point here, there's a really like I I think it's quite an offensive. I think it's an outrageous suggestion that she makes

about TikTok. The idea that and

I'll and I'll quote her here, that this is a lot of people who have come to this conflict new and with a huge amount of certainty, and from TikTok. that's an incredibly offensive suggestion. in part

Rachel Withers (27:12)

Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (27:12)

because obviously this conflict did not start sort of three years ago, but it is the continuation of of longstanding conflict.

And these are things that, you know, not everyone is is is new to. And Mayor Friedman's company has only been forced to grapple with it since you know since the advent of TikTok. because it is been, you know, the assault on Gaza has been so outrageous that a company like hers taking positions like she does have had to grapple with it publicly and so it has been a post TikTok phenomenon for them.

But for

Rachel Withers (27:44)

Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (27:44)

Palestinians, this is not a post-Tik tok phenomenon. And this is not a post TikTok

Rachel Withers (27:48)

No.

Daanyal Saeed (27:48)

phenomenon. She like she like she she's not an international affairs expert either. Right? Like let's be very clear. Mamma mia hire someone to do that. they they have a a geopolitics expert on on hand to discuss on the podcast occasionally that she wasn't on this episode. But they have they Exactly. So

Rachel Withers (28:04)

Interesting. Well I suppose 'cause this was a pop culture story, wasn't it? Like it was about Ed Sheeran

and Mackelmore. Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (28:09)

Exactly. But

like Mayor Friedman is like a a a media proprietor. She's not a geopolitics expert. and so to the extent that her Jewish identity provides her like a a qualification to speak about the the the conflict and be condescending about it, like I have those qualifications too. I'm Muslim, I've got those qualifications too. But you know, th like so to speak down on you know, the the popular position,

As well, these people have just come to it from TikTok. These people are just new. These people don't have what I have. I

Rachel Withers (28:39)

been a common criticism

lobbed at TikTok and social media and the pro-palestine movement that these are just like dumb kids who don't know what they're talking about.

I'm sure actually that Friedman is probably regretting weighing into this one based on the backlash. I think it's it's really interesting to see

Both an Ed Sheeran concert and now a Mamma Mia podcast Facebook group, essentially apolitical spaces, people have shown up and said, no, actually this isn't about politics, this is about human rights.

Daanyal Saeed (29:09)

You would not have seen it three years ago, that's

for sure.

Rachel Withers (29:12)

You

would not. moving on, you broke we're recording this on Wednesday, but you broke another story in the Snoop About the knack internal teams chat? You've done quite a few knack stories,

Daanyal Saeed (29:21)

Yeah.

Rachel Withers (29:22)

haven't you?

Daanyal Saeed (29:23)

the momentum on this has been largely from from Crikey contributor Nick Fike, and and sort of the reporting he's done also for the point. but the knack I think is just I I think demonstrative of of sort of what a bit of a shambles of a of an agency it has turned out to be or of a commission as it has turned out to be.

And

What it's important to learn, I'm sure there are public servants listening to this conversation. Actually, I what we're about to discuss is how much NAC employees love listening and readings crikey. And so, yeah, they absolutely are listening to this conversation. And here's my hot tip. all of your team's conversations are totally FOIable. as one enterprising citizen, this wasn't a Crikey FOI.

This was this was in the public log of FOI documents that agencies are required to disclose. and some enterprise exists, and I don't know who it is, I have an inkling, requested a transcript of their media chat from May this year to August this year. So ostensibly to cover the period of time in which the commissioner, Paul Beraton, resigned sort of amidst quite

a significant amount of scandal and scrutiny over his links to defense.

It was a day ahead of a Senate estimates hearing he was due to face. And

Rachel Withers (30:33)

You know,

I'll just add here, I know, have never worked for something like the National Anti-Corruption, but I would be frankly horrified if any of my former teams chats or the various inter-company chat logs were

Daanyal Saeed (30:45)

likewise.

Rachel Withers (30:46)

released.

Daanyal Saeed (30:47)

Absolutely. this is a great reminder to everyone. Have those conversations at the pub over a beer. Don't have them don't have them online.

Rachel Withers (30:55)

Do not write those

things on Slack.

Daanyal Saeed (30:58)

as a result, let's say these chats like these are very common sort of forums that all public agencies have some sort of equivalent. It the purpose of them is to sort of discuss media mentions maybe of the agency or maybe of s relevant stakeholders to the agency, or like news of the day that might affect the agency. And that's typically what they're used for. They're often, you know, strategizing

They might say, we've we've given a comment to that newspaper, or we need to get in touch with that newspaper, or that newspaper got it wrong, or whatever it might be. So there is a practical purpose to these chats. These aren't just fellas group chats. but as Teams chats want to devolve into, there's some comedy in the in these chats, as it turns out. And so we've got a couple of highlights from the released log of documents.

Rachel Withers (31:41)

read these yet, so I'm really looking forward to hearing them.

Daanyal Saeed (31:44)

excellent, you're gonna get a live reaction.

so Catherine Jones, who's the Secretary of the Attorney General's department, sort of in real time, a lot of this happened in real time because Paul Brewerton resigned so abruptly ahead of a Senate estimates hearing that went ahead regardless. and so Catherine Jones didn't receive notice of his resignation until an hour before she was due to face Senate estimates. And she told Senate estimates

Whoever was responsible for sending her that notice had sent it to the wrong email address. They'd stuffed up her email.

Rachel Withers (32:13)

I remember that. I

remember

that. Yeah.

Daanyal Saeed (32:14)

and

so there is a message in here. We sent it to the wrong address, for fuck's sake. which is very funny. Bruce Lührman had reacted, so former Liberal staffer Bruce Lührmann, he was found in a civil court to have raped his colleague.

Brittany Higgins in Parliament House in 2019. he was a criminal trial into those he

Rachel Withers (32:34)

He denies it for the record.

Daanyal Saeed (32:35)

denies it and and a criminal trial into that was abandoned.

but he tweeted that he wanted his quote blue diary back. he was I think reacting to

sort of a lot of the again, tumultuous developments of the of the knack at the time. And someone has just posted a a meme from Mean Girls, the 2004 teen comedy, and I want my pink shirt back. which if anyone is familiar with the film is when the the main character, Katie Heron, played by Lindsay Lohan, sort of betrays her like nerdy friends in favor of the popular girls

this is the next one, so there's an awesome picture, and I'm hoping we can put this up. because like I said, this happened in real time and you can live stream this stuff. So Liberal Senator Michaela Cash was reacting and caught reacting to the news that Paul Burton had resigned in real time and her face is golden. it is a it's an awesome reaction image.

And there is a an associated col column item that we had published, and it said as the Attorney General's department gave evidence in the same hearing mentioned above, a news broke that the head of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, Paul Burton, was resigning. This truffle hog, Kishon, got the notification at the same time the senators did, meaning it was possible to watch the news hit in real time. And turns out our public servant friends

just said, sorry, this screenshot is hilarious, and sent screenshots of the Crikey column to the media group chat. there's also there's a couple of different current affairs reactions in there. former nine golden boy Karl Stefanovic, infamously announced that he was going to be interviewing a far-right extremist, Tommy Robinson, British far-right extremist.

and the reaction in that group chat was simply what the fuck? Yes. Yes, exactly. It's very it's very

Rachel Withers (34:24)

Okay, so these are all these are all quite light but heavy on the swearing is the sense I'm getting for what was dug up in these FOIs.

Daanyal Saeed (34:32)

utopia. I think the last one, which I think is also funny,

there was a reference to a Guardian Australia live blog item of the day that referred to the former Kyle and Jackie O show just tumbling down the radio ratings. and there's a couple of responses, my heart breaks for them, sending prayers their way. the one that capped off.

Rachel Withers (34:50)

Okay, these these

drops actually make these people seem really likable. Like I was expecting when

Daanyal Saeed (34:55)

Yes, it's very funny.

Rachel Withers (34:56)

I saw that you were gonna do one on the Knack internal teams chat thing, like that it was gonna be more like, you know, massaging stories and and like denigrating Nick Fike when he put questions to them. But no, it's actually just like people Yeah, and and that is a very important story. But I

Daanyal Saeed (35:08)

Well we've we've revealed that as well. That also happens at the knack.

Rachel Withers (35:13)

I would say that actually I kind of these faceless knack bureaucrats seem like cool people now.

Daanyal Saeed (35:19)

It's funny, it's funny,

it's funny, you know, bureaucrats are people too. There is one, and I

Rachel Withers (35:21)

It is funny. It is funny.

Daanyal Saeed (35:24)

wanna I'll wrap it up on this one, that there was news in the chat of Federal Labour MP Luke Gosling, who is currently facing charges, I think as we record, he's before the courts in Darwin today, in respect of assault charges. He allegedly assaulted another MP, another politician.

and so that news had broken sort of in this chat and the response was just another day in the Northern Territory. Just a standard day in the office in the territory was the

Rachel Withers (35:53)

Sham, okay.

Daanyal Saeed (35:54)

language used. So there's a lot happening in in the knack

Rachel Withers (35:59)

Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (36:00)

slack chats. I think this is the the lesson is leave leave these for the pub.

Rachel Withers (36:03)

Yes. And but I will say, release the WhatsApp chats of the commissioners. That's that's what I'd like to see.

Daanyal Saeed (36:10)

Yes.

Rachel Withers (36:11)

moving on to some more nonsense, really.

When I saw this story in the stoop, I was very excited to talk to you about it specifically, Darny. It is, of course, about stupol or student politics. and we have bonded and commiserated over our

past experiences in student politics, separate universities, but we both we both know how ludicrous it can get. But this story is like a whole nother level. Essentially, it first made news because one of the individuals involved is Energy Minister Chris Bowen's son.

who is involved in student politics at the University of Sydney, which I believe is your alma mater,

Daanyal Saeed (36:56)

Yes it is.

Rachel Withers (36:57)

and the place you did student politics and often where the zaniest stories come from.

Daanyal Saeed (37:01)

Did student

politics is a great stretch of of that term. I'd like to distance myself from that as much as possible. I d I I wrote for them. I didn't even edit it it's an elected pu editorship. I didn't I didn't no no no No don't no no no no no only one of

Rachel Withers (37:05)

You did honey soir did you? I'm sorry. Sorry, I'm dragging you down with me. I was fully involved and I'm dragging you into my mess.

Daanyal Saeed (37:16)

us was a was a was a stupole hack.

Rachel Withers (37:19)

you can you can find a an article quoting me when I was a stupor hack in Crikey from many years ago.

This

was about a particular piece of campaigning paraphernalia, campaigners who are supporting the Labour Left bid, But student politics, Labour Left, Labour Rights, all kind of garbage at this point. It all doesn't mean

Daanyal Saeed (37:38)

It it's all nebulous and I'm not I'm yeah, it's all very nebulous.

Rachel Withers (37:41)

anything. but that

Camp in the elections has been at pains to refute a story in Honi Swar, which involves a contractor engaged by the University of Sydney to provide a five dollar meal program, faced overseas reports of horse meat being labeled as beef. and also

that same

contractor faced allegations that a subsidiary was bribing government officials

Daanyal Saeed (38:09)

Yeah.

Rachel Withers (38:09)

in Kazakhstan.

horsemeat allegations and stupol like has reached a whole new level of crazy. and I can't wait to see some of the people involved in this.

end up in state and federal politics

Daanyal Saeed (38:22)

Ha ha ha.

Rachel Withers (38:23)

as they inevitably will.

Daanyal Saeed (38:25)

They will. It's it is fascinating. I think there's a few things here. So like it like it's good to see student politicians remain like comfortably insane. and, you know, the that that is a long and and

you know sorted tradition, at a number of universities, but especially the sandstones. and I you know, it's it's good to see them going strong.

like you say, like so many of these students will end up politicians of the future. and I think there's a fascinating sort of tension here between what kind of politicians do we want to produce, what kinds of politicians are we producing these days, campus culture is really different to what it used to be.

And and there are a number of impacts on campus culture that mean that, for example, you know, students don't learn how to articulate an argument and and and make a case to people in you know, budding student politicians don't learn how to make a case to strangers in the same way that politicians of old, student politicians of old used to learn how to do. And so there's lots of different touch points there. So, you know, in b before you went to university, Rachel, you know, in the earlier two thousands.

There was a big Howard era campus debate around voluntary student unionism, or the introduction of voluntary student unionism. So previously student unions, you know, you were everyone was a member of it, everyone was quite active. It was quite an active student political scene on Australian campuses, sort of prior to the two thousands that died at most universities, bar probably Sydney universities where it is most vibrant now. then COVID changed.

the way that people learn on campus as well. And it means that young politicians, and now we are seeing them come

through, you know, as Charlotte Walker is 21 years old, baby of the parliament, we're starting to see people

Rachel Withers (40:14)
Labour Senator.

Daanyal Saeed (40:15)
yeah, Labour Senator Charlotte Walker. and we're starting to see people who were students not that long ago, pe students post-COVID, enter the parliament and enter state

parliaments and and run for elections in in in all sorts of levels. And

I just wonder whether universities are providing are the same training ground they used to be and also whether they should be, because there's a massive like there's a class question there as well of do we really want our elected representatives to be a people who are all university educated? We talked before about one nation and

Rachel Withers (40:46)
Mm.

Daanyal Saeed (40:46)

the kinds of people that run for one nation. but also increasingly the economics of moving out of home or the economics of

going to university are very different these days, there's a cost of living crisis, wages aren't growing the same way, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

So there's all sorts of economic questions that come with that. There's all sorts of class questions about do we want to be represented by quite frankly, like disproportionately privately educated people who want to be politicians. You know, the the the old saying about people who want to be politicians not making the best politicians sort of comes to mind.

Rachel Withers (41:19)

yeah. I mean, this story I think a particularly silly example, the horsemate and the a contractor, a subsidiary of a contractor. It's a little bit

Daanyal Saeed (41:27)

There's like several

degrees of separation between the smear and the the target of the smear as well.

Rachel Withers (41:33)

I do think this one is is like a little bit silly and it's interesting that they felt the need. Like the the student

Daanyal Saeed (41:37)

It's extremely funny.

Rachel Withers (41:38)

policies can get really caught up in what's going on in their world. and it I'm not sure that many people care about this one. But, if you go back to one of my favorite documentaries, State of the Union, which

Daanyal Saeed (41:50)

No, don't say it. Fuck. She said it.

Rachel Withers (41:52)

which is about the about the liquidation of of the

Original Melbourne Uni Student Union, due to a couple of blokes, one by the name of Darren Ray, Andrew Landerieou is a name that was involved in that and is still involved in Labour Party politics to this day. but yeah, you would just be stunned how much kind of the shadiest characters, no aspers on Andrew Landerou, of course, but the shadiest characters from these student politics stories often end up

Continuing to be the shadiest characters. Again, no aspersions on Andrew Landy there. but

Daanyal Saeed (42:30)

Or any

other graduates of student politics and there are plenty in you know in the press gallery as well. Our colleagues. you know, plenty of s of failed student politicians among they they walk amongst us.

Rachel Withers (42:39)

This would this would like potentially be my moment

to embarrass a couple of my former comrades, but I will not. They

Daanyal Saeed (42:45)

They walk amongst us. They walk amongst us.

Rachel Withers (42:48)

do. Some of the top political journalists in the country did student politics with me. So illustrious company. I think that is all we have time for today. Dani, thank you so much for diving into some of the snoops with me, and s especially for diving into student politics.

Daanyal Saeed (43:06)

Thank you. I'm I I think I need a shower now, to rid myself of the student politics stench. But thank you very much for for you know, truffling through the muck with me.

Rachel Withers (43:19)

you can find all of those stories that we've been talking about in the show notes. And remember, of course, if you have anything for Koshon the pig or Donnie the Media Reporter, please do send stuff in. As you heard, several of these stories today came from listeners and readers such as yourselves. we will be back next week. Thanks so much, everyone.