LOVE BITES IN POLITICS
By The Canberra Times
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I t was a December sitting period, just before the summer recess, and Parliament was consumed by debates about WorkChoices, terrorism and voluntary student unionism. The political contest was heated and the working hours were long, which is why it was 10pm when a female adviser to a Howard government minister knocked off one hot night and walked out of the building. Soon enough a car cruised up alongside her with a Liberal MP behind the wheel. He asked her if she needed a ride. "We'd barely ever spoken but one evening he offered me a lift to the Holy Grail," the adviser, who requested anonymity, told The Canberra Times. "When we arrived, he parked his car, grabbed my hand, placed it squarely on his crotch and asked if I liked the feel of that, then thrust his tongue down my throat." It's not your typical boy meets girl story, or perhaps it is in the rarefied realm of politics.

This week the NSW Labor Government was scandalised and the state's health minister resigned after his six-month affair with an attractive 26-year-old postgraduate student was exposed in the media. John Della Bosca, who had long touted himself as a future premier, was reduced to the back bench and to apologising for the embarrassment caused to "my colleagues, my friends, my community, my church and my family". It was the latest controversy for the party heavyweight and his fiery wife, Belinda Neal, the federal MP ordered into anger management classes by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd last year following the "Iguana-gate" debacle, which was sparked when she abused staff at a NSW Central Coast nightclub. This week, as saucy anecdotes emerged provided by his scorned former mistress Kate Neill of Della Bosca's extramarital trysts, including an alleged episode on the couch in his ministerial office and another that caused him to miss a flight to Armidale for the opening of a hospital and meetings with health officials, the constituency was enthralled. Other politicians, however, were probably appalled given that occupants of the halls of power have long been known to rub more than shoulders. It's a heady mix, power and sex, and for the federal politicians who converge on Canberra for about 18 sitting weeks a year, it can be an irresistible perk of the job. The anonymous ministerial adviser who found herself in a car on a Kingston street with an interstate MP says political pairings are so customary that discretion was no real concern, even though he was in a long-term relationship with a woman back home in his electorate. "It led to a steamy tangle on the backseat as his colleagues and advisers streamed past into the bar. The streets were lousy with politicians, advisers and journalists." And all of them looked the other way. Over the next few years the twosome exchanged knowing glances, in-jokes and romps in his parliamentary suite, and they weren't the only ones doing it, she says, with some MPs enjoying sexual interactions "with a smorgasbord of dames in lifts and taxis and on their parliamentary desks with the blinds up!" A woman famous for having sex on a desk in Parliament House albeit with her husband John Brown, the then minister for sport is Jan Murray. In an interview with 60 Minutes in 1987, she disclosed that they'd enjoyed the Commonwealth's property and she'd even discarded her knickers in his office ashtray. Her revelations caused a media storm to rival Della Bosca's. This week, however, Murray remained unrepentant. "Whether it was a faux pas or a confession or a rush of blood to the head, it was husband and wife, for God's sake!" She was astonished at the attention, especially when other politicians were known to be indulging in extra-marital interactions. "I knew what was going on behind the scenes, my God! There was a lot of it going on, always has been." But Murray, who has written a book called Sheer Madness: Sex, love and politics, which is due out in May pending legal clearance, says politicians have a right to privacy, even the philandering ones, and any focus on their sex lives is voyeuristic and prurient. "We're not judging them on what they're doing in the bedroom, we're judging them on what they do in the Parliament." Some of them, however, are apparently doing it in the Parliament too. For her part, Kate Neill has confessed that she fell in love with the 53-year-old Della Bosca, describing him as "hot" and "sexy". She says she had hoped for a future with the married father of two sons because "he kept telling me he was going to leave his wife". But after an affair lasting almost six months, Neill ended the relationship, having given up any hope that he would end his 23-year marriage. Former press gallery journalist from 1982-2003, Fia Cumming, who wrote the 1991 book Mates: Five Champions of the Labor Right, says political affairs are nothing new. "He's not blazing any trails," Cumming says of Della Bosca. "You know what they say, power is an aphrodisiac and all that sort of stuff." More to the point, they usually don't end up on the news. "A lot of these things never came out, did they?" In fact, the media has generally adhered to a discretionary code relating to politicians and adultery. "People in the gallery have known about them but they haven't made their way into the press so much." To Cumming, who says she is aware of "some quite serious long-term relationships that were conducted in Canberra with senior people", the break with protocol in
exposed by the Nine Network's Laurie Oakes in 2002. It also hasn't proved particularly damaging to the looks do in the research. The bulging wallet is always rather attractive.' Dr "What attracts women are status and power and money. Those sorts of things usually come a lot higher than affairs minister Gareth Evans and his ex-lover Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot, who had their five-year affair exposed by the Nine Network's Laurie Oakes in 2002. It also hasn't proved particularly damaging to the careers of international political playboys, including former United States president Bill Clinton, who survived an impeachment trial in 1998 relating to his affair with 22-year-old White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Other womanising world leaders include former US presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, Thomas Jefferson, Dwight D. Eisenhower and, of course, John F. Kennedy, who dallied with actress Marilyn Monroe. Lower profile proponents were Ohio's Wayne Hays, who quit in 1976 when it was revealed that his secretary, Elizabeth Ray, was his mistress. As she said of her bona fides: "I can't type. I can't file. I can't even answer the phone." The most notorious contemporary Casanova, however, is probably 72-year-old Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who has been at the centre of a string of sex scandals this year. Photos of naked women mingling at his Sardinian villa have been published, his wife is divorcing him, he says, he is "ill", while his recordings of him talking to a prostitute were recently posted on the internet. In the audio, which was secretly taped at his official residence in Rome in November 2008, Berlusconi says: "I'm going to take a shower as well ... and then will you wait for me in the big bed if you finish first?" High-class call girl Patrizia D'Addario, 42, replies, "Which bed? ... Putin's bed?" Then in a recording from the following day Berlusconi can be heard to call D'Addario, asking how she is. "I'm fine ... my voice as gone ..." she says, which prompts him to remark, "Eh? We didn't even scream." This week Berlusconi hit back at the sleazy suggestions, declaring that he has never paid escort girls for sex and describing himself as "not ill but Superman". Closer to home, some extracurricular entanglements have made it into print. Former prime minister Bob Hawke was said to be liaising with his biographer Blanche d'Alpuget from the 1970s. They married in 1995. In 1974 the deputy prime minister in the Whitlam government, Jim Cairns, and his private secretary Junie Morosi attracted extraordinary media interest in their relationship. He was eventually dismissed from the ministry and_because of them continued to deny their affair, suing a sequence of newspapers for suggesting it, until Cairns admitted in 2002 that their relationship had been sexual. In 1975, former Liberal leader Sir Billy Snedden, 60, who was separated from his wife at the time, had a fatal heart attack in a Sydney motel while having sex with his son's ex-girlfriend. It prompted Melbourne newspaper The Truth to print the front-page headline: "Snedden dies on the job". The downfall of Della Bosca has led some politicians to claim that affairs of state have no place on the public record. Federal opposition treasury spokesman Joe Hockey was one of them: "I would hope that you always judge a person by what they do in their professional life, and how they live their lives is a matter for them and their god and their family," he said on ABC TV's Lateline. "I think there's lots of ways to judge a person's character without prying into their home." NS W Police Minister Tony Kelly contributed that the former health minister should be able to return to the front bench once the scandal has subsided. "John Della Bosca is by far the most talented, strategic political person in this state, and possibly in Australia." For now, though, the allegedly talented strategist is "taking his medicine", as he described it, for a dire case of stupidity that saw him send Neill a raft of text messages, including one that said, "Boy oh boy am I in love with you." Sex therapist Bettina Arndt says the excitement of an affair can make people behave in foolish ways. "I'm always blown away by the stupidity of people in this situation," she says. "It is quite extraordinary. To me it speaks to the power of the temptation can be potent, though, with politicians, like others in the public eye, often offered the opportunity of bedding women out of potential infidelity is looked at for that, to recapture that buzz." Our anonymous ministerial adviser agrees and says that for her philandering federal MP the thrill of discovery "seemed only to excite him to necessarily think of soundbites themselves because they've got people feeding them for them. Same as if they make a gaff there's people to tidy that up. So there's a situation that's already been set up to cushion them from this behaviour." And when it comes to gambling with their careers, Rosewarne says, politicians are by their very nature risk-takers. "I think that's something that in politics is very much par for the course, this idea that there's no little risks. You take big risks in politics all the time and that's one of them and it's potentially part of that whole adrenaline and buzz. It's very difficult to keep that going in a committed relationship so potential infidelity is looked at for that, to recapture that buzz." Our anonymous ministerial adviser agrees and says that for her philanthro...
with their dog knocked on the window and screamed that we were disgusting.”