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Hi, Matthew

News NSW

The Sauce: New Police Minister in 'embryonic position' over top cops' dust-up

The incoming Police Commissioner's firing of a rival for the top job has left the new Police Minister in an "embryonic position", The Sauce reveals.



Linda Silmalis [Follow](#)

@LindaSilmalis 4 min read January 22, 2022 - 6:00PM The Sunday Telegraph 7 comments



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NSW Police Minister David Elliott says Karen Webb, who will be replacing Mick Fuller as NSW Police Commissioner, has a "great reputation".

NSW

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Sacked deputy police commissioner Mick Willing has long been privately blamed for the leaking the "Big Merino incident" when fellow deputy police commissioner Mal Lanyon acted aggressively towards ambulance and police crews who came to his aid after he was found on the footpath near the Goulburn monument.

The assumption among those pointing the finger at Willing for the leak was that it was his attempt to knock Lanyon out of the race to become the next police commissioner after Mick Fuller retired. Willing has always strongly denied these claims.

The Sauce can reveal that it was not Willing who first leaked the details of [the February 2020 altercation](#) to this publication.

Hint: The origin of the story was much closer to the Big Merino than Willing.





"The Big Merino incident" rocked the search for the next NSW Police Commissioner. Picture: Sean Davey





The scandal likely ruined Deputy Commissioner Mal Lanyon's chances at the top job. Picture: Nikki Short

While the revelation of the late-night incident more than likely cost Lanyon his chances at the top job – ambulance officer notes from the night tabled in state parliament allege he “shaped up” to crews and told one to “f-k off” while also suggesting the high-ranking cop was “intoxicated” – just why Willing was fired by [incoming police commissioner Karen Webb](#) last week is less clear.

While some say Willing and Webb were mates, others suggest relations between the pair were “extremely tense”, especially while they competed for the top job.



Former Assistant Commissioner Mick Willing was a contender to replace Commissioner Mick Fuller, but has now been let go. Picture: Gaye Gerard



NSW has its first female police commissioner with the appointment of Karen Webb. Picture: Christian Gilles

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Despite this, it is understood Willing, who declined to comment, is shocked at the [decision to punt him](#).

And he is not alone. A senior government source said new Police Minister Paul Toole has been in an “embryonic position” since learning Webb had fired Willing.

This is because many Nationals MPs had been lobbying Toole to help install Willing, who hails from Dubbo, in the top job.

“All eyes are now on Toole to see how the relationship will be between him and Webb,” the source said.



Paul Toole has been sworn in as NSW's Police Minister. Picture: Gaye Gerard

As for Lanyon, he has always blamed a medical episode for the collapse and subsequent behaviour, for which he has apologised.

Knives Sharp-ened

The knives are already out for new Transport for NSW boss Rob Sharp.

Appointed to the top transport job in April last year on a salary just shy of \$600,000, the public servant raised eyebrows last week after appearing on live-stream forums from Queensland.

Huh? Had the former Virgin Australia group executive fled NSW to run the show from the safety of the Sunshine State?



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Former Virgin Australia group executive Rob Sharp (left) was appointed the top job in Transport for NSW in 2021. Picture: AAP Image/Darren England

That certainly was the word around the traps among some of his departmental staff who were privy to an email that had been sent around the office in late December which stated that Sharp had taken annual leave but “will be returning on Monday, 10 January 2022”.

Upon contacting his office on Friday, The Sauce was told Sharp was still in Queensland.

However, we were told it would be wrong to suggest he was “running the show” from the northern state, despite having appeared on several work video calls.

While holidaying up north, he had caught Covid which had delayed his return to official duties, The Sauce was told.

His staff said he had been due to return to work last week, but would instead be returning this week.

Given he had been well enough to participate in video calls, The Sauce asked why he had so far refrained from calling or messaging his new ministerial boss, former police minister David Elliott who took over the portfolio a month ago.

The Sauce can reveal Elliott has been openly complaining to his parliamentary colleagues about how he is “yet to meet the bloke”.

Apparently Sharp has not so much as even sent a text to the new minister.



David Elliott was sworn in as Transport Minister and Minister for Veterans last year. Picture: Gaye Gerard

When asked about the lack of contact, a spokesman for Sharp claimed the public servant had been in “regular contact” with “each of the incoming ministers” with transport responsibilities.

And Sharp would be “arranging face-to-face meetings with each new minister” once the state government removed its work-from-home directions, the spokesman said.

Watch. This. Space.

Strained relations

18/09/2023, 15:47

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Nationals Minister Ben Franklin must be a really tolerant kind of bloke.

Here he was inviting one of his best mates to stay over at his Byron Bay home for the summer holidays only for the said mate to take to Twitter to smash up the government he's a part of.

The "mate" is none other than Labor leader Chris Minns, who regularly visits Franklin's place for a getaway. A source close to the pair say the political rivals are friends from way back – Franklin is even godfather to one of Minns' sons.





Franklin is close friends with parliamentary rival Chris Minns. Picture: AAP Image/Dan Himbrechts

Minns has been heading to the celebrity hotspot to stay with Franklin as part of an “end of year” tradition for the past 10 years, the source said.

However, this year was apparently a little more “awkward” given Minns was last year promoted to the Labor leadership and Franklin to a ministry in the Perrottet government.

The Sauce has visions of the pair enjoying a cold ale over the cricket only for Minns to slip into the kitchen – “am just grabbing another beer” – before furiously pushing out a few anti-Coalition tweets.

Who says you can't separate friendship from politics.

Going viral

Every workplace has its own set of acronyms, which become “words” that come into use among staff.

The latest to emerge in the notebooks of health staff handling incoming cases in the emergency wards is “SCCOVID” – an abbreviated form of “suspected Covid patient”.

You heard it here first.

Board ambitions

He may have found himself without a frontbench gig in the Perrottet government, but veteran Upper House MP Don Harwin appears to be already looking to the future.

While the former arts minister declared he would stay on the Legislative Council until the end of his term in March 2023 after announcing the end of his ministerial run, The Sauce hears Harwin has quietly enrolled in an Institute of Company Directors course.

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Board gig perhaps?

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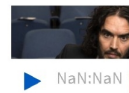
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