

Briggs downfall could topple Libs' SA dominoes

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Jamie Briggs's funeral pyre may be providing a convenient smokescreen for Mal Brough's departure from the Coalition frontbench, but the Liberal Party needs to restrain its too-evident glee at trashing its conservatives.

For in Briggs's Mayo electorate, in Labor-disillusioned SA, all that is likely needed for Xenophon candidate Rebekha Sharkie to take the seat is a higher primary vote than the Greens — and given the already significant Xenophon constituency, there are enough embittered conservatives to deliver her the extra needed. Then it's preference dominoes in play.

Add to that the potential mayhem in Christopher Pyne's seat of Sturt, and the Liberal Party hierarchy needs to be very sure of its new-found ability to win voters from the centre-Left.

Tim Fatchen, Mount Barker, SA

Your headline ("Dutton sorry for 'mad witch' attack on reporter who bagged Briggs", 4/1), says it all about the prospect of us losing our freedom to have a joke.

I understand Samantha Maiden accepted Peter Dutton's apology but the Prime Minister has described the comment as "completely inappropriate". My husband has said to me on occasions as I go outside to sweep the path, "travelling far?". We both laugh.

We have a unique sense of humour in this country, laughing at ourselves. Let's not forget it.

Lesley Beckhouse, Queanbeyan, NSW

It's the power imbalance between Jamie Briggs and his victim that makes his behaviour so abhorrent.

The back-channelling by his mate, Peter Dutton, directed at a professional journalist who questioned Briggs's behaviour, is a particularly egregious example of government power being mobilised against a victim who has the courage to speak up.

Brian Sanaghan, West Preston, Vic

When Bill Shorten was caught using a phone while driving, he was fined. Peter Dutton has been found using a telecommunication device to utter offensive language. Which police station will he report to?

Keith Russell, Mayfield West, NSW

Dutton's behaviour in putting in writing a referral to a "f...king witch" is as inappropriate as Briggs's behaviour. If the PM is serious about the conduct of his ministers, then he must demand Dutton tender his resignation.

His conduct would be deemed entirely unacceptable for any employee in any Australian company.

Bill Henderson, Eight Mile Plains, Qld

I am 60, have four degrees including a masters in clinical psychology and I wish more men would peck me on the cheek and tell me I have piercing eyes. They used to in my younger days and I loved it.

That a minister should lose his job and reputation as a result of this act in a world where women are oppressed, raped and confined to their homes is a world gone made in my opinion.

Bev Green, Yokine, WA

Is it any wonder politicians are held in such low esteem when Peter Dutton uses such crude, childish language? Turnbull should expect higher standards of his cabinet.

Liz Riordan, Newtown, Vic

As a wrinkled grandpa closer to 80 than 70, I can assure Rosalind Winterton that I have never been kissed by an MP (Letters, 4/1). On the other hand, while I am quite straight-laced by community standards, I agree that the kiss on the cheek aspect of the minister's behaviour seems pretty innocuous and nowhere near as bad as the things many MPs get up to.

David Morrison, Springwood, NSW

It's a sad reflection of our society. The blokes indulge in locker room behaviour, then abuse a woman for exposing them. No wonder we have so few women in parliament. It's a boys' club, as if we didn't already know.

Dianne Barrington, Torrensville, SA

As a very senior lady having observed the work of the feminist movement through the years, my one word of advice to men of all ages is "beware". Jamie Briggs is now paying the price for his friendly gesture to a young woman.

Women can drink and flirt, but in the end if they can accuse a man of offending them, some will delight in their power to do so, quite often with disastrous consequences.

I am ashamed to be a woman at times these days; the pendulum has swung so far to the other extreme of what it used to be. It is sickening.

Ruth Shepherd, Horsham, Vic