

Strewth: Long way down

James Jeffrey, The Australian, 12:00AM September 3, 2016

You have to hand it to Malcolm Turnbull and his emergency reserves of optimism. Following the omnishambles of missing ministers and lost votes that capped his first week in the 45th parliament like a glistening pellet of bat guano on the gateau, the PM kicked off his interview with Neil Mitchell on Melbourne radio 3AW yesterday thus: "Good morning, Neil, great to be with you." It was an early high, after which the only direction was down. And as climbers of Everest will tell you, descent is the most dangerous bit. Instead of scree and crevasses, the PM encountered "losing control", "rabble", "farce", "how the hell", "supposedly in control of the house", "lack of organisation", and "lack of commitments". By the time he came to chat with a pack of journalists, he dispensed with "great to be with you" and stuck to a plain "hello".

Soldiering on

Missing-in-action minister Michael Keenan may have spent the day looking chastened after his encounter with his "disappointed" Prime Minister, but not Christopher Pyne. The Manager of Government Business's name was doing some pretty steady traffic among his colleagues yesterday, but Pyne was pushing cheerily on. He took the time to appear with Labor's Richard Marles on their Sky News program Pyne & Marles* where he cranked up his chutzpah to its maximum setting and called on Bill Shorten to show some leadership. (*We hope this clears up matters for Marles's senior colleague who this week asked, "Is that show still on?")

Snap unhappy

As Strewth reminded readers this week, the rules governing photography in the Senate can be described at best as wildly archaic, at worst as completely (redacted). Unlike in the lower house, press gallery snappers may take aim only at senators who have the call, except on special occasions. Someone who is keen on changing the rules is new senator Derryn Hinch, a position he has stuck to even after being snapped getting in some shut-eye during the Governor-General's official opening of parliament. Not at all keen is Labor's Stephen Conroy. So here's a photo of the two having a bit of an exchange in the Senate the other day. Rescuing this photo from total illegality is the slightly out-of-focus face of the bloke who did have the call, Resources Minister Matthew Canavan.

Pet project

Not since his re-enacting in The Killing Season has Sam "Let 1000 dollars bloom" Dastyari had such an exciting week. In his honour, we have updated his entry on the 404 error page of this august organ's website; now his face is accompanied by a message in Chinese that translates as "This isn't as bad as it looks". Moving on, let's salute his diversity policy when it comes to naming pets. Dasher's two cats are called Chairman Meow (bravo) and Margaret Thatcher. (If the latter were the sort of cat that didn't show its feelings, there'd be a "The lady's not for purring" joke waiting to go.) Then there's the husky named after the man of whom Thatcher said, "We can do business together." Apparently the canine Gorbachev answers to Sasha rather than the more appropriate Misha. But furry Gorbachev is possibly just making the point that he is a Siberian husky, whereas human Gorbachev grew up a long way from Siberia in southern Russia. Well, you never know.
strewth@theaustralian.com.au