

MUNGO MACCALLUM: Corruption is rife among Morrison's minions

By *Mungo MacCallum*

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Scott Morrison has been quick to defend Bridget McKenzie against accusations of rotting (Screenshot via YouTube)

The Prime Minister's control over his ministers has been useful in times of dealing with corruption and political scandal, writes [Mungo MacCallum](#).

[SCOTT MORRISON'S puerile sneer](#) that most Cabinet ministers wouldn't even know who NSW Environment Minister [Matt Kean](#) was actually contained a grain of truth.

Not just because most of his ministers are pig-ignorant (well, not all of them and not entirely) but because they realise that there is no point in them knowing anything that their glorious leader has not ordained.

Most of his ministers almost certainly know that Kean is the rational Liberal in the broad church and if they didn't before, Morrison has thoughtfully drawn it to their attention.

Kean is the one who accepts the science, acknowledges the urgency of the situation and wants to [do something](#) about it. Morrison equivocates on the first proposition, plays down and dismisses the second and summarily rejects the third.

"most of the federal cabinet wouldn't even know who Matt Kean was"

Not knowing your state cabinet colleagues is not a good thing, my guy

Also, Morrison saying someone else doesn't know what they're talking about is laughable <https://t.co/Y2bPtBpKxz>

— Charlotte Buckingham (@CC_Buckingham) [January 20, 2020](#)

So even if his ministers disagreed with him (and despite Morrison's indignant denials, some of them do and would desperately like to change to a more sensible policy), they can't actually say so — blind obedience to their leader is part of their job description. There are those who do not know what day of the week it is until it has been confirmed by Big Brother and his talking points. So they might as well move on and get on to the more important business of rotting public money to preserve the votes in the marginal electorates.

Similarly, Morrison also claims that Kean

does not know what is going on in the Federal Cabinet; again true, but nor does anyone else and that includes more than a few of his ministers. The Prime Minister likes to make a great play about frank and fearless discussion, consultation and consensus. But, in fact, his ruling clique – or often just him personally – makes the decisions and announces them. These decisions are then left to the rest of the Cabinet and, through them, the rest of the party, to defend as best they can. If they can't, or find them insupportable, then it's over for them.

Before the last election, he boasted on national television that he would be the one to call the shots and his autocratic style has only hardened since his unexpected victory. This is government from the leader, by the leader, for the leader. Not quite democracy as we know it and certainly not the egalitarian and transparent system that Morrison and his sycophants like to spruik, but just the way it is and the way it is going to be.

So, as his claims of success of reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions to within and below the [Paris targets](#) become ever wilder and [less credible](#), there is no one in the cabinet room willing to refute him and even fellow Liberals like Kean have to be crushed and demeaned.

[@ScottMorrisonMP @abcnews](#)

You're recent statement that Australia is on track to meet it's Paris Agreement targets is fundamentally incorrect. Simple math can tell you that emissions have increased since 2014-2015 and a 26 % reduction (rel. 2005) is still a long way off.

pic.twitter.com/fldeV4rmoA

— Jason (@jpmuzi) [January 13, 2020](#)

As [John Harington said](#):

'Treason doth never prosper: what's the reason? Why, if it prosper, none dare call it treason.'

Kean is for the tower and thence to the chopping block.

Not so but far otherwise has been the reaction to the utterly shameless [Bridget McKenzie](#), who in her earlier career as Sports Minister elevated the fine old National Party pastime of [pork-barrelling](#) into an art form, if not beyond. Here, Morrison was happy to defend the theft of public funds, offering, among other risible justifications, the line that since those who trousered the ill-gotten loot were happy about it, this meant it was good policy. Well, surprise, surprise.

Even some of the rusted-on supporters of the Morrison mafia found this a trifle over the top. McKenzie herself insisted that she had done nothing wrong and from her perspective as a deputy leader of the party of handouts, subsidies, privileges and rorts, she can make a case.

After all, when the Nationals were formed as the old [Country Party](#), the whole idea was to provide special treatment for the rural and now regional voters at the expense of the wider polity. It was felt by such seasoned pork-barrellers as [Earle Page](#) that the bush was getting a raw deal from city-based politicians, so no effort was to be spared to redress, or even reverse, the

supposed bias.

At times this was fair enough; the tyranny of distance meant that there were times when extra money and resources were needed to provide reasonably equitable outcomes for those in the remote back blocks of the sprawling nation. But once the Coalition with the majority Liberal Party was set in stone, the heavyweights – Page and then, particularly, [Arthur Fadden](#) and [John McEwen](#) – realised that the possibilities of blackmail and extortion could be exploited to the limit, if not further.

Michael Pascoe: Morrison's grants corruption defence working a treat | The New Daily
<https://t.co/DJsNMf1J5i>

— Wayne Swan (@SwannyQLD) [January 24, 2020](#)

The threat of leaving the Coalition, although seldom if ever a serious one, cowed successive Liberals into submission. Even when Liberal Prime Ministers like [Malcolm Fraser](#) and [John Howard](#) were in a position to govern in their own right, they regarded the bond between the two disparate forces as sacred.

Thus the Nats (they wisely avoided the abbreviation of the appellation of their former members) could and did get away with malfeasance that would

have sunk Liberals guilty of the same offences. Labor ministers, of course, would have been and were hung out to dry.

Morrison desperately clung on to McKenzie; his latest anodyne remedy was an inquiry to be initiated from one of his favourite bureaucrats, Cabinet Secretary [Phil Gaetjens](#), formerly an apparatchik in Morrison's own office — a crony and a supporter. Gaetjens will look at Morrison's [Ministerial Code of Conduct](#), a document devised to include loopholes which can absolve ministers of even the most egregious breaches which would never be permitted by private employees.

It did not pass the pub test, but it was not meant to; buy time, divert, distract and hope for the best. And in the meantime, find a comfortable sinecure for McKenzie when the public outrage became overwhelming. Hopeless dilemma: if she hung on, it would trash the last vestige of integrity left in this morally bankrupt government. But even if she didn't, the fact that Morrison and his minions had spent so much time and effort defending the indefensible showed that corruption has now become an intrinsic part of the regime.

Our Prime Minister knows

that most of his ministers are past both knowing and caring. The wider party, by and large, is happy basking in a state of blissful ignorance. The noisy bit of the electorate may carry on, but who cares? As long as the quiet Australians are not roused from their slumbers. So, more sedative talking points — that's all that's left.

Rorts and pork-barrelling are the new normal under 'Crime Minister' Morrison
[@IndependentAus](https://t.co/Cucu1bETxS)

— IndependentAustralia
(@independentaus)
[January 22, 2020](#)

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Morrison's integrity-less commission sums up our rotten politics

<https://t.co/cRMN2SyJZA>

— Yehoshua Yahu (@YahuYehoshua)
[January 20, 2020](#)