

Mikakos resigns; Tudge's criminal conduct ignored

By Jennifer Wilson

29 September 2020



In the absence of explanation, the Minister has engaged in conduct which can only be described as criminal."

It's not every day that a cabinet minister's actions are described by a judge as criminal. It's not every day that a cabinet minister thus described is [defended](#) by the Attorney-General [Christian Porter](#). Yet here we are. It's not every day a prime minister tacitly supports both his colleagues in such circumstances. Yet today in Australia, we're here as well.

Tudge is also the dark star of the [current Federal Court trial](#) concerning the [Robodebt scandal](#), where he stands accused of "reckless indifference" to the fact that the program was unlawful.

Minister Tudge appears to be recklessly indifferent to the life and wellbeing of both asylum seekers and Australian citizens in need of assistance. Prime Minister Scott Morrison appears to be recklessly indifferent to his Minister's reckless indifference.

But, hey, [Daniel Andrews](#).

There has been remarkably little commentary on this quite extraordinary ruling by Justice Flick, certainly in comparison with the ongoing, relentless and across-the-board critical attention paid to Victorian Labor Premier Daniel Andrews as he struggles to guide his state [through the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

We need the mainstream media to hold the Morrison Federal Government to the same standards they seem able to apply to the Andrews State Government, writes [Dr Jennifer Wilson](#).

LAST WEEK, Federal Minister for Immigration [Alan Tudge](#) was found by the Federal Court to have [engaged in conduct that can](#) "only be described as criminal".

In the matter of a Hazara Afghan man detained in an immigration centre, despite a tribunal determining he should be granted a visa, [Justice Geoffrey Flick](#) found that:

"The Minister has acted unlawfully.

Indeed, the situation in Victoria has been a godsend for the Federal Government, a most timely distraction from the eye-watering list of rorts perpetrated by an astounding number of its [ministers in pursuit of re-election](#), and [financial self-advancement](#). None of the ministers involved in these rorts has taken responsibility.

Only one, [Bridget McKenzie, resigned from their ministry](#). It's noteworthy that McKenzie did not resign because of the [Sports Rorts scandal](#), to which she was pivotal, but because of an undeclared sports club membership.

It is also worth noting that the Morrison Government apparently [intends to continue](#) its Community Development Grants rorts, with an overwhelming bias towards LNP electorates and other "seats of interest".

In what can only be regarded as a most remarkable contrast to Federal ministerial accountability or, more accurately, the lack thereof, Victorian Health Minister [Jenny Mikakos](#) at the weekend [resigned both from the ministry and Parliament](#) when the [Victorian inquiry into hotel quarantine](#) established that Premier Andrews [held her accountable](#) for failures that led to a disastrous outbreak of infections.

In even more remarkable contrast, the majority of our media commended Ms Mikakos on her resignation, leaving puzzled readers wondering why this same media fails to consistently demand a similar standard of accountability from the many Federal Government ministers who have not resigned and the Prime Minister [who defends them](#).

Which might lead us to conclude that perhaps the most disturbing thing in political reporting today is not Premier Andrews' situation or the resignation of his health minister, but rather much of the media's apparent agreement to restrict analysis of and commentary on the

depth and breadth of corruption in our Federal Government.

While mainstream media have demonstrated their extraordinary ability to focus on the perceived missteps of Premier Andrews – some might claim to the point of obsession – the actual missteps and worse of Morrison Government ministers escape comparable scrutiny. Federal ministers remain in positions of great power, suffering no consequences, and it is left largely to independent media to keep their abject behaviours in the public eye.

Let's imagine for a moment that the degree of attention and analysis directed at Andrews and his Government over the last couple of months had been as consistently and loudly focused on [the failure of Morrison to hold his ministers accountable](#) for, well, anything, really.

Would Senator [Richard Colbeck](#) still be Minister for Aged Care after the Federal Government's disgraceful failure on his watch to [plan for the effects of COVID 19](#) on senior citizens in nursing homes, for example?

Would Energy Minister [Angus Taylor](#) still be a minister after [allegedly forging travel figures](#) in a political attack designed to discredit Sydney Lord Mayor [Clover Moore](#), as well as his central involvement the [water buybacks scandal](#)?

While these matters are reported in the media, Morrison continues to avoid questions and shrug off all allegations of wrongdoing. Journalists do not seem to have found a way to deal with the Prime Minister's stonewalling and scandals continue to erupt, one after another, until we are all dazed and suffering from scandal fatigue.

It's an undoubted challenge for any journalist to deal with this volume of political corruption in the face of steadfast denial and refusal of

accountability by the perpetrators and their Prime Protector.

Morrison sets the tone for his ministers. As long as he refuses to answer questions, so will they. As long as he denies any culpability, so will they. We are in a situation now where nobody in the Federal Government appears to be responsible for anything — and this should terrify us as well as enrage us. Because if you are not responsible for anything as a minister, you are most certainly not doing your job.

It's a challenge to which journalists must rise in far greater numbers and with much greater persistence because the reality is, journalists are all that stand between us and the conservative authoritarianism that will destroy our democracy. We know they can do it. They've been doing it to Andrews for several months now, with far less justification.

We need to see the same intensity of critical surveillance and commentary applied to Morrison and his ministers, we need it right now and we need it consistently.

Wondering why journos commending Mikakos for resigning don't demand, on a daily basis, the resignation of all the federal ministers who have committed appalling breaches of trust & refuse to take responsibility for any of them.

— That Antifa Dr Sheep Person [?][?][?][?]
(@noplaceforsheep) [September 26, 2020](#)

[Dr Jennifer Wilson](#) *is an IA columnist, a psychotherapist and academic. You can follow her on Twitter [@NoPlaceForSheep](#).*