

Press punishes PM after Dutton's delusional dig

By Victoria Fielding

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The mainstream media was quick to chastise PM Albanese for illustrating Peter Dutton's ignorance in Parliament. Dr Victoria Fielding reports.

AS WATCHDOGS on society, journalists are meant to scrutinise the powerful. Australians don't sit in Parliament watching political debates, so are reliant on journalists interpreting politics for them. When there is bad political behaviour, voters rely on journalists to call it out. The audience trusts journalists to do this honestly and accurately.

That is why it was so disappointing in last week's Parliament to watch Opposition Leader [Peter Dutton](#) playing the media like a violin. Rather than presenting reality to the audiences, journalists accepted Dutton's strategy and used it as a stick to beat Prime Minister Albanese with.

Anyone actually watching the parliamentary debate would have seen [the following scene](#)

unfold:

Liberal Nationals MP for Capricornia, [Michelle Landry](#), rose to ask Albanese a question about road funding in Queensland.

As Albanese answered the question, having mentioned funding for the [Yeppen Floodplain upgrade](#), Dutton rudely shouted, as he often does when members of the Government are speaking, interjecting bully-like to ask Albanese where "Yeppoon" was.

The Prime Minister channels Billy Moore in shouting "QUEENSLANDER" as part of a response to a question on the Rockhampton Ring Road from LNP MP Michelle Landry. [#auspol](#)
[@SBSNews](#)
pic.twitter.com/sZwu8FM5k2

— Naveen Razik (@naveenjrazik)
[October 27, 2022](#)

Embarrassingly for Dutton, he was attempting to slam Albanese for mispronouncing Yeppoon as Yeppen, so Albanese shot back to defend himself, clarifying for Dutton that Yeppen Floodplain is a different place than Yeppoon. Since both these places are in Queensland, Albanese pointed out that it was surprising Queenslander Dutton didn't know that.

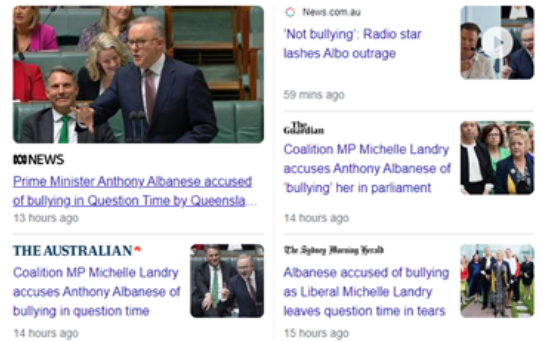
So embarrassing was this scene for

Dutton – his sledge backfiring on him – that even Michelle Landry chuckled. Had you been sitting in Parliament, watching the scene unfold, you would have seen lots of MPs laughing at the obvious mistake the now-humiliated Dutton had made.

This could have been the end of the scene. Perhaps some media would have mentioned the embarrassing gaffe, pointing to Dutton's rude behaviour. We know they love a gaffe. But no. Dutton had an ace up his sleeve. He knows how easily played the media is, how happily they distort reality to beat up a story that doesn't exist.

Just like every Liberal who has come before him, Dutton is a crude strategist when it comes to manipulating the media, usually to deflect from his own political problems. Dutton decided to invent an accusation of bullying towards Albanese, even pretending the chuckling Michelle Landry had been crying about the incident.

This nonsensical claim which defied reality should have been treated as such by the media. Michelle Landry asked the question, but wasn't the recipient of Albanese's correction. That was Dutton. Anyone who has watched the scene can see that reality as plain as day. But the bullying allegation wasn't treated as nonsensical by most journalists. It instead became headline news.



(Screenshot provided)

This whole saga might seem inconsequential in the long run, but it speaks to larger issues with how accurately media represents reality to audiences and how willing most journalists are to be used as political weapons by politicians like Dutton.

When I see false allegations like this treated as credible, defying reality, I always think of the classic [quote](#):

'Journalism 101 rule: If someone says it's raining, and another person says it's dry, it's not your job to quote them both. Your job is to look out of the window and find out which is true.'

If Dutton says Albanese bullied Michelle Landry and Albanese did no such thing, it's not journalists' job to beat up a story to make Albanese look bad for something he didn't do. It's their job to look at the footage and tell the audience what really happened.

The most basic requirement of journalism is to tell the truth. When false accusations are reported as legitimate, not only are audiences misled but bad-faith actors like Dutton are incentivised to lie and cheat, to play the media like a violin.

Everyone deserved better in this situation: the Liberal-National women

who were part of the game-playing by Dutton, Albanese who was the one rudely treated in the first place and then wrongly accused of bullying and the audience who were lied to.

When journalists fail to report what happened right in front of their eyes and instead spin the truth in aid of political game-playing, they are failing the public interest test. It's time journalists stopped being part of the game and spent way more time looking out the window.

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