

Conservatives resort to bullying teenager over protest cosplay

By Tom Tanuki

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A teenage cosplayer has become the target of online bullying after appearing in an ADF cadet costume on a Sky News broadcast. [Tom Tanuki](#) reports.

NIKKI HAS BEEN wearing an old cadet's costume to pro-Palestinian rallies and combining it with clown make-up. I admire young Nikki for getting out and having a good time while making a public, fun display of activism, as I'm sure do you. And that should be the end of the story.

But lesser creatures than ourselves are upset about Nikki's costume.

This began when Nikki stood in the background while a [Sky News](#) anchor presented at a rally. Nikki was eating a croissant and generally being a pest, making sure to remain in the frame despite the camera twisting and turning away. It was a

laugh.

Then a group of anonymous veterans with a meme page called [The Pineapple Express](#) took an interest in Nikki's cadet costume. The meme page positions itself as being about veteran-sympathetic content, getting big mad when the Army does anything sympathetic to queer or non-binary people and fundraising for veteran's mental health. They started posting about whether Nikki should be removed from ADF service for wearing a cadet's costume to activist events.

This is when Nikki's Instagram profile was located. And then [Max Aitchison](#) wrote about it.

Max is a senior news reporter at [Daily Mail Australia](#), which is like being a senior hygienist in a sewage pipe. He's been turning out the usual breathless content about pro-Palestine rallies and last week's [grotesque display](#) of police power outside [Disrupt Land Forces](#).

One of his [articles](#) deals with Nikki, '*who wore clown make-up while dressed in an Australian Defence Force cadet uniform at the Melbourne anti-war protests*'. Nikki has '*been slammed for disrespecting diggers*', says Max, before proceeding to hold his hand over the usual faucet of free-flowing diarrhoea that constitutes *Daily Mail* content: just paste in a bunch of mad Instagram comments and present them

as the news.

Max pasted:

“This is absolutely appalling! The behaviour on display is utterly unacceptable and deeply concerning,” seethed one person.’

Then Max pasted:

‘Another critic, who claimed to be a former officer of cadets, acknowledged that young people can make “stupid decisions” but said: “This is just damn disrespectful and needs to be addressed.”’

He quotes Nikki’s political statements in the article, too, which he did by – more Real Journalism follows – going to Nikki’s Instagram page.

So he would definitely have seen, in the bio, that Nikki is a 16-year-old cosplayer.

This is why I've been calling it a costume. It is. Nikki is using it as a costume. Nikki is a teenage cosplayer who dresses up to go to rallies.

Max did not let that deter him from pitching into the orchestrated bullying of a teenager.

Of the croissant eating incident, Max wrote that Nikki *‘was filmed in the background of a live news segment, staring down the camera lens while nonchalantly eating a croissant’*.

The sheer nonchalance!

He sought comment from the Department of Defence, who confirmed they would be “investigating” the nonchalantly disrespectful costume.

[Channel 9 News](#) also suggested that Nikki was “being investigated” for it.

But if the department is investigating anything, I assure you it won't last long. Because Nikki hasn't been an active cadet for two years. That's why Nikki had the costume lying around. I know this because I spoke to Nikki.

Surprisingly, though, it's also buried in a line late in Max's article that Nikki isn't a cadet anymore, because he also confirmed this with Nikki.

Why, then, did Max feel the need to go to the Department of Defence to get quotes from them about working with Victoria Police? What might they work together on? Criminalising cosplay?

I asked Nikki about activism in costume:

‘I'm Middle Eastern and also just a human being, so of course I'm out protesting what an average person should be doing in Australia. I dress up at most protests and rallies.’

Like you might expect a cosplayer to do. Since the media treatment, Nikki has received hundreds of message requests from random adult ADF members around Australia sending vicious abuse and attacks for the use of the costume.

Said Nikki:

‘I have been told to “go back to my own country”, when in reality the people telling me this are all on stolen land themselves.’

I wondered how all this has affected Nikki:

‘No one likes hate. It doesn't particularly bother me in this situation as I know I'm in the right. But how could you hold so much hate? How are you so low in your own life you need to spread your anger and hatred to others? Get a hobby or something.’

Encouragingly, Nikki has also had anonymous messages from other cadets agreeing with how bad the culture of the Australian military's child recruitment division is:

'The staff do not care about minorities, racism, sexism or homophobia being reported. They brush it all off. I've made a big enough impact that people in the ADF know about my activism.'

It did bother Nikki being misgendered by media outlets:

'Stop fucking calling me a "young woman", you weirdos.'

That's another thing Max would have learned from visiting Nikki's Instagram profile; another thing that didn't go into his article.

I've seen this happen a lot in *Daily Mail* diarrhoea. My sense is that journalists like Max know what they ought to be doing when they visit the Instagram profile of a teenager who would obviously prefer not to be gendered as a "young woman". But they intentionally don't do it because of a political axe they have to grind, whether as chicken feed for their degenerate audience or as an authentic expression of their own politics.

Either way, Max, you really ground that axe. Good job. May you forever aspire to make children feel like shit in the course of your journalism.

But upon further conversation, I think Nikki's mental health will be fine. It will be nurtured around a healthy activist community that knows more about community care than the rest of these people ever will.

Meanwhile, someone commented on

Pineapple Express' second attack on Nikki:

'I think some on here need to take a minute to remember that this is a child we are talking about.'

So Nikki might be fine, but I think the mental health of these veterans will continue to buckle under the weight of their ignorance and hypocrisy, no matter how much fundraising they do for mental health.

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