

THE SATURDAY PAPER

Gadfly Furphy Brown



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Security tsk

National security is defined as anything with a red stamp that says “top secret” or any other phrase that sounds vague and scary. In truth, national security should be about protecting Strayans, as **Peter Dutton** calls them, from internal or external attacks to life, limb and infrastructure.

The prosecution of **Witness K** and **Bernard Collaery** in Canberra is nothing to do with national security at all. It’s to do with government embarrassment at being sprung conducting illegal activities in our neighbourhood. In the process, we once again see a craven silence from the federal opposition.

Former Australian Secret Intelligence Service officer Witness K has pleaded guilty to one summary offence, while Collaery at great personal cost is to fight on in a closed court trial into allegations he leaked information to journalists about Australia’s spying operations in Timor-Leste.

National security has morphed into anything that exposes the regime’s abuse of power. What is at risk is public trust in a legal system – prosecutors and attorneys-general included – that would pursue people who have heroically acted in the public interest.

The law has a tipping point, where if it acts perversely and without public acceptance, its findings and rulings are less likely to be respected.

Leading the charge in the Collaery–Witness K protests is **Susan Connolly** of the Josephite Sisters. She rallies the troops outside the court and with ceaseless missives from her bunker in Lakemba.

“J’accuse.” Where’s **Émile Zola** when you need him?

Richard Ackland

is the publisher of *Justinian*. He is *The Saturday Paper*’s diarist-at-large and legal affairs editor.
