

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

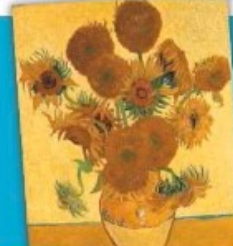


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Head to the National Gallery



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Nikki Gemmell spices things up in our penultimate chapter

STRIFE DEEPENS FOR COALITION WITH NEW ALLEGATION THAT ...

Adviser raped second woman

EXCLUSIVE

MICHAEL McKENNA
ROSIE LEWIS

A second woman has come forward to allege she was sexually assaulted late last year by the same former Morrison government adviser accused of raping a junior female colleague in the Parliament House office of Defence Minister Linda Reynolds.

The woman, a former Liberal staffer who spoke on condition of anonymity, said she would not have suffered her alleged assault if the government had supported

the original complainant over her alleged rape. "If this had been properly dealt with by the government in 2019 this would not have happened to me," she said.

"I am telling my story because I want to support Brittany (Higgins) and I want to help shine a light on this awful culture."

A family friend of the woman told The Weekend Australian that the woman had made the same allegations to her in the weeks after the alleged incident.

Ms Higgins publicly disclosed the alleged March 2019 rape on Monday, and said she felt she was forced to choose between reporting it to police or keeping her job.

She has since accused Scott Morrison of "victim blaming" and on Friday said she had asked the Australian Federal Police to proceed with a complaint against the alleged perpetrator.

An internal inquiry into whether anyone in the Prime Minister's office knew about the alleged rape before February 12 has narrowed to focus on three of his most senior aides, including his chief of staff and principal private secretary.

The Prime Minister has also asked Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet secretary Philip Gaetjens to look into an explosive text message, revealed in The Australian, that cast doubt on his claim

Inside the culture of Canberra's corridors

JAMIE WALKER
GEOFF CHAMBERS
MICHAEL McKENNA

It's not just newly minted federal MPs and senators who arrive in Canberra bright-eyed and excited. The often young and

his office first found out about the alleged sexual assault on that date. Mr Gaetjens is expected to question at least three senior staff-

uniformly ambitious advisers populating the parliamentary and ministerial offices in the big house on Capital Hill are just as caught up by the intoxicating atmosphere.

They work hard, play hard and adhere to one golden rule: staffers are never, ever to become the story for the journalists who hover in the press gallery and frequent the same restaurants and nightspots

ers who Ms Higgins claims had prior knowledge of her alleged rape, government sources said. The staffers are Mr Morrison's

in nearby Kingston. But the unwritten code was torn up this week — arguably, not before time — when Brittany Higgins came forward to allege she was raped in the early hours of March 23, 2019, in the office of then defence industry minister Linda Reynolds after a boozy Friday night out with some colleagues.

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chief of staff, John Kunkel, his principal private secretary, Yaron Finkelstein, and senior adviser Julian Leembruggen.

The second woman, who asked not to be identified, said she had met Senator Reynolds' former adviser during the 2016 federal election campaign. Following Ms Higgins' alleged rape, the man was sacked and employed in the private sector. But the pair had kept in contact and met again last year.

"We went out to dinner and he kept buying me drinks, and I'm a lightweight when it comes to that," she said. "We went back to my place and we were kissing ... we were going to have sex and I said he had to wear a condom. He refused and we argued and I told him five or six times that we couldn't have sex unless he wore a condom.

I was drunk and he just got on top of me, I said no, and then he was inside of me and I kept saying no."

The woman said the man left in the early hours of the morning and she later consulted her doctor.

The Weekend Australian could not reach the alleged perpetrator on Friday.

The Prime Minister's office has denied that any staff members knew about Ms Higgins' alleged rape until last week.

"If there was anything different here, I would like to know," Mr Morrison said on Friday.

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