

Sky News Interview with Sharri Markson Trans

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MARKSON: Now my next guest Bruce Lehrmann is demanding millie compensation from the ACT government. The former political staffer rape in 2021 but his trial in which he was never found guilty became a national consequence. A recent inquiry found that Lehrmann's prosecutor Shane Drumgold engaged in serious misconduct and the case against him was flawed. Lehrmann has always maintained his innocence. All charges against him have been dropped and there have been no findings made against him, but this hasn't stopped the hate towards him. His lawyer says the public maintain very tribal views on the matter I spoke to Bruce Lerman for a sit-down interview this afternoon.

MARKSON: Bruce Lehrmann, thank you very much for your time today.

LEHRMANN: Good to be with you Sherry

MARKSON: What's your reaction to Brittany against being paid are reported two to three million dollars in compensation.

LEHRMANN: Well frankly it's quite shocking umm, it's taxpayer's money first and foremost. There was, there was no verdict in the criminal trial so um what else was it paid for I mean Senator Reynolds and Senator cash have maintained and threw evidence in the criminal trial that there was no harassment there was no bullying in fact the opposite she was treated really well so I do question what, what were the reasons and this is the other thing it's all kept secret it is shocking and it's alarming that within the reported 48 hours or so, such a huge amount of money can be paid when so many other people have, their lives have been shattered I mean not just me but Senators Reynolds, Senator Cash, even the system itself has been rocked um uh it's, it's alarming that that money is still being paid out.

MARKSON: The Sofronoff inquiry did find though that it was right, or the police were justified in bringing charges against you. Do you accept that finding?

LEHRMANN: Uh no I don't and there's a couple of um, points on that uh that the inquiry, well the ACT government denied funding and a request by me to have legal representation at that inquiry, um secondly, it's it seems to be the case that with the current Me-Too movement, these cases are just being progressed um to trial anyway because prosecutors don't have the balls to make a decision in the office because they don't want the media scrutiny of, of dropping a charge perhaps.

MARKSON: But this was Sofronoff finding that police and the DPP was justified in bringing the charges against you so do you still think you deserve compensation?

LEHRMANN: Uh, absolutely and, um that is because what the inquiry has found is deep rooted misconduct and malfeasance by the director. I mean he was playing a pope he was treating the criminal justice system like a poker game in which he was hiding the cards.

MARKSON: When you heard the tape that famously of, of Lisa Wilkinson, David Shiraz and the Channel 10 producer and Brittany Higgins of course, what was your reaction to their discussion about bringing in friendly Labor politicians.

LEHRMANN: Umm, it was really shocking to a lot of people around the nation just how close, in particular, Senator Gallagher was um, to this right from the start, I mean even before I became aware, I became aware of this on the 15th of February like everybody else when it went to air on the project, umm it seems apparent that Senator Gallagher was well aware of this.

MARKSON: You're saying she knew about it before you?

LEHRMANN: Uh well on what we know that's out there it would appear that Senator Gallagher um knows, knew a lot more about this than, than we've been led to believe.

MARKSON: When were you contacted for comment by The Project?

LEHRMANN: Well allegedly I was contacted on the 12th of February um I didn't see that email until the following week when the story went to air.

MARKSON: So just to be clear you didn't know about The Project interview until it went to air?

LEHRMANN: Yeah, exactly and, and um, that's the shocking thing about this is I found out with the rest of the country.

MARKSON: Do you think that Katie Gallagher's potential involvement should be investigated further? Do you think there should be an inquiry into whether or not there were any communications between her and Shane Drumgold or any other senior ACT figure?

LEHRMANN: I think um, there should be. Shane Drumgold um as I've spoken about at length has a lot to answer for here and I think um there was motivations I mean it's evident from his statement that he put out in response to the findings of the Sofronoff report that his head is still in the sand he has you know a social justice Crusade type attitude um to um to prosecuting which is totally inappropriate for the position that he held and, on another level, um Senator Gallagher seems to have a close relationship with Miss Higgin's fiancé um you know, and no one seems to be questioning that.

MARKSON: She was invited to his first wedding.

LEHRMANN: Absolutely uh, you know, I think there's clearly some Labor links there what...

MARKSON: Mmm

LEHRMANN: I mean.

MARKSON: And he was able to get a meeting with her fairly short notice judging by the text messages.

LEHRMANN: Yeah, and I mean, even we've seen reports out there that um, he was um, facilitating interactions with Tanya Plibersek as well.

MARKSON: Linda Reynolds has suggested there should be an inquiry by the new National Corruption Agency, but do you think apart from that, there should be another inquiry or Senate inquiry into whether there was involvement by the Labor party in the way this played out in the criminal justice system.

LEHRMANN: Yeah, and I think that's a great question I think that's something that the liberal party and, and the cross bench need to consider here they're able to do so and I, I really don't know why they, they wouldn't, um, I mean the criminal justice system is something that we need to protect I mean there are fundamental principles here, centuries-old principles that are being attacked by a movement really, um, and people need to stand up and protect those.

MARKSON: Look, I just want to ask you about, uh, something that you said last night on Spotlight. You said that you had coffee with Brittany Higgins on the Monday after the night in question. Brittany Higgins has always denied that she had coffee with you and in fact you and your police interview said that you had you never spoke to her again after the night in question so, so what happened where was that coffee?

LEHRMANN: Well, I, uh, through the course of the investigation and the criminal trial um it became known to us that um by the AFP that a coffee had occurred, not only that is, um, email exchanges between Miss Higgins and I occurred also on the Monday, um...

MARKSON: You emailed each other?

LEHRMANN: Well from Miss Higgins, in particular, that was, and that, that was presented at the trial in which Ms Higgins, umm, was to paraphrase in the email phoning a friend to get assistance on some back bench briefs um so...

MARKSON: So, she emailed you on the Monday to ask for help with work?

LEHRMANN: Yes, yeah indeed, um, so this idea that she didn't talk to me um is a complete furphy.

MARKSON: But on the coffee, where did you have coffee, was it at Aussies? Is there CCTV of it?

LEHRMANN: Oh well there would be CCTV possibly but it was it was often the case that as an office, when you get into the office of a morning, who wants a coffee you all go for a coffee and that that absolutely would have occurred Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, you know, every single day and usually you go to Aussies, I mean you're you've been down to Canberra, Aussies is the go-to café.

MARKSON: So, you're saying it would have occurred or you did have coffee with her on that Monday morning?

LEHRMANN: I can't remember, all I can say is that it became known to us that it did occur um from the AFP, um and I have no reason to suggest otherwise because I, that was a common occurrence but secondly, um Miss Higgins says that there was no contact between us, there was, her emailing me and getting assistance on the back bench briefs that that's in evidence.

MARKSON: So, so just to clarify you, you can't remember having coffee on that Monday morning?

LEHRMANN: Oh, not 100 percent.

MARKSON: Look, you say this entire rape allegation was invented by Brittany Higgins, that it never happened, you never saw each other in that office, look I want to ask you why would someone invent a rape allegation like this?

LEHRMANN: It was it was made up to save a job really. I was called in on Tuesday, she saw me packing up my boxes for a period of time and thought oh gee, I might lose my job here, um, and not until then the Thursday that follow that, that then towards the end of that week was there any hint of a sexual assault so I think, I think a white lie has, has had a Snowball Effect, um, she's come into contact with people who, you know, I, I believe don't have her best interests at heart and you know the Snowballs got bigger and bigger and she's just had to get go along with it.

MARKSON: So, you're saying that's why there was two years in between that night in question and, and the interviewer Brittany Higgins coming forward.

LEHRMANN: Absolutely, and that's a significant amount of time and particularly for me not knowing nothing about it until the 15th of February 2021.

MARKSON: During the criminal trial, you're Barrister Stephen Whybrow asked questions of Brittany Higgins about text messages that she had exchanged while she was leaving Parliament House after the alleged incident. Can you tell me a bit more about these questions, these text messages, who were they with and what did you learn about them?

LEHRMANN: Yeah, look we, we, um, as I've said about this entire saga, there's many rabbit holes and um, Steve did put to her um, some exchanges with a Parliament House security guard which we found we raised an eyebrow at um as one would because they were texting in the sort of the, the next morning after or in that 24-hour period, um, Miss Higgins gave some responses to those under cross-examination um, in which she said that you know, they'd go for coffee um, you know, often, um, her and this security guard um, and I think it was, it's, it's interesting though, as with some of the other matters, matters here is when we made further inquiries, the text messages between her and the security guard do not exist on either of their phones, so I mean...

MARKSON: So, evidence of the text messages do exist?

LEHRMANN: We can, we, we were able to see that they were texting, but the contents of those messages have been removed.

MARKSON: So, both sides had deleted them.

LEHRMANN: That's correct.

MARKSON: And you were unable to obtain CCTV footage from the Parliament House corridor outside of Linda Reynolds office from that night in question after you entered. Do you think it's possible that someone else did enter Linda Reynolds office?

LEHRMANN: Look um, all I know is that, um, Miss Higgins was in the office for a much longer period um, was awake as it's been adduced in evidence, was, was awake at about 8 A.M the next morning um, texting, um another friend of hers, um, and she didn't end up leaving until around about 10 30 so um, it is interesting to note that, that, yeah, that, that, footage is not there about who, who else may have been entering.

MARKSON: Look, a lot of people have been critical about the fact that Brittany Higgins had to stand up there in court and face cross-examination but that you chose not to do that. Why didn't you stand up and defend yourself particularly, when you gave that Channel 7 interview on Spotlight the first time and you said that was the first time you've been able to put your side of the story forward, but why not do it in court.

LEHRMANN: Well, because for over three hours, I sat down with the AFP voluntarily, they, and provided my phone, very, very, willingly gave them all of my passwords, straight up first time access, I was hiding nothing so that happened, um, secondly, this is, this is the problem with the narrative that's being run Sherry is that, um, it is not the, it is not the system whereby it's my job, um, it's that, it's my job to do that like I don't have to prove anything, it's the Crown's case to prove, now we had an unusual situation here where the media had already convicted me or large parts of the media had already convicted me, um, and I would, I then, um, retreated and I focused on following the rules, respecting the investigation, uh, and shutting my mouth and that, you know, and relying on the material that we had to use in

court, um, rather than, rather than, you know, shoving things through the media and you know, I took the view that it is best to, to wait for a result and things happened as they've happened, as everybody knows, uh, and, um, then I've decided to start speaking out because that's my, that's, that is how it should have happened.

MARKSON: Shane Drumgold has been involved in 18 other cases during his time as DPP. Do you think there should be a review into these other cases, and do you think there has been this attitude because of the MeToo movement to push cases to trial that should never have ended up there.

LEHRMANN: Absolutely, cases are going to trial that shouldn't be going to trial, uh, secondly, the ACT government's response, umm with respect to Mr Drumgold's former cases that, that when he was either director or um, just a prosecutor, um, has been woefully inadequate um, we, we do need to be looking into his previous cases, I mean, he, his statement in response to the Sofronoff inquiry shows us that he is not objective and he has personal motives in terms of running cases, so when did, when did that mindset begin, as a prosecutor for Mr Drumgold?

MARKSON: Do you feel like you're a victim of the MeToo movement?

LEHRMANN: Well, uh, in some way, I think that that this never about me, I think this was this was just a, a case to advance, to advance a broader movement like this no one cares about me, uh, it's uh, they've had their poster child, they've got, they've got the villains and they've got the case, um, so, tick, tick, tick, let's go, let's advance the movement here in Australia.

MARKSON: It reminds me of something Brittany Higgins said in that Channel 10 uh, pre-interview, she said that she's the least interesting part of her own story and it's about the Liberal Party and about Linda Reynolds and, and what you just said in a way reminds me of that.

LEHRMANN: Yeah, well what an interesting turn of events that's turned out to be so.

MARKSON: Do you think ultimately this payment to Brittany Higgins was in effect, and this is what many politicians have said publicly, was in effect a payment from the Labor government for helping to bring down the former coalition government.

LEHRMANN: Look, ahh, umm, from a higher level looking down that would appear that way Sharri and it's, that's very scary.

MARKSON: Your Barrister the last night said that to some people, you will forever be known as the man who raped Brittany Higgins. Is that something you fear?

LEHRMANN: Um well, I don't fear it I mean, I, I'm getting on with my life with my head held high, I didn't do anything wrong I'm an innocent man but the way that this was kicked off through the media umm, is incredibly unfortunate and it's created um, you know a real, real sort of tribal warfare in effect like I've, I've been heartened to have supporters myself but then, you know, there are people who think I am a rapist so and I think that's just how it's going to be, I think either it's 50/50, probably a bit more that think I'm a rapist and that's just life.

MARKSON: Bruce Lehrmann, thank you very much for your time today and for sitting down to answer these questions.

LEHRMANN: Thanks very much for having me, Sharri.

MARKSON: And we have reached out to Brittany Higgins for comment during the trial. She did deny making up the allegation of rape, she said I'm not a monster, I'd never do something like that. If she does have a response after seeing this interview, we will bring you that response on tomorrow night's program.