

**Statement from Patrick Elligett, Editor, The Age:**

Julie Szego has repeatedly and publicly disparaged *The Age* and the people who work for it. That is what prompted the decision to discontinue her regular column. Her suggestion that gender-identity politics played a part in that decision is baseless, no matter how many anonymous trolls amplify it online.

*The Age* is committed to covering gender issues in a way that few other outlets, including the ABC, have the stomach for. Any objective assessment of our reporting corroborates that fact.

The extremely lengthy piece you referred to in your questions was spiked months ago and the reasons were discussed with Julie at length at the time. It is not unusual for freelance submissions to be rejected. I won't reveal private criticism of authors and their work, but Julie has publicly stated that one of those reasons was the perception she had become too close to an activist community on gender issues. In my view, that disqualified her from writing news on the topic. I told her she could discuss gender issues in her column, labelled as opinion. Some of our staff news reporters write analysis or opinion on topics where they have developed expertise after years of research and extensive consultation with contacts. To my knowledge, Julie is no expert on gender transition.

The Age has no interest in being censorious on this issue or avoiding the difficult questions that come with it. We do, however, have a duty to defend the independence of our publication from the perception it could be shaped to suit personal agendas.

No one at *The Age* asked me not to run Julie's news story, or to discontinue her columns.