

**Questions to Mark Westfield, Editor, The Examiner:**

1. In addition to the March 8 note to readers, are there any other comments you'd like to make about how the letter was published with the claims unchecked and what you've done in response?
2. It has been pointed out to us that you previously worked as the campaign manager/media adviser for Liberal Warringah election candidate Katherine Deves, and according to Niki Savva's book *Bulldozed*, described Deves as a "great candidate". What is your response to suggestions that your past support for Deves and her views may have influenced your decision to publish Olivia Nettlefold's letter in a prominent position with a big headline, without checking the accuracy of the claims made in it?

**Response from Mark Westfield:**

As I said in the note, The Examiner - as I imagine most mastheads - publish readers' letters in good faith.

Unless the letter contains obviously false or exaggerated claims, we will give them a run.

We respect readers' views, publish a wide variety of opinions and observations to reflect the diversity of views in the community.

This particular letter related to what appeared to be a personal experience in a female change room.

After council emailed me to say they had no RECORD (my caps) of any complaint, I emailed the writer asking for more details.

She sent this reply: "It did happen, how would the council know is my question to you? Just because people decide to take matters into their own hands and not involve everyone? The aquatic Centre staff aren't going to admit it are they?"

Regardless of this I decided to take down the web version of the letter.

This is the first time anything like this has happened to me (and to the newspaper in the memory of current staff here).

I can't check every claim in every letter and it's naive to think a masthead with limited resources can.

I imagine in the case of personal experiences like this, if I rang the writer and asked "Is this true?", they would invariably say "yes".

Clearly I will be more vigilant in future in letters touching on sensitive issues like this one (allegedly involving a trans person) and set a higher bar for publication, ie, choose in most cases not to run them.

I did recommend Kath Deves as a good candidate. She's a lawyer, articulate - in any language a good candidate. She tried to focus on local issues during the last federal election campaign on my advice and her own instincts too. Despite her efforts to keep the discussion on issues such as a women's shelter in the electorate, support for small business, a 3-tiered child care system, she was constantly questioned by elements of the media about those views expressed months earlier in a deleted Twitter feed. My main role in the campaign was to try to keep her focused on local issues, which she tried to do. She wasn't helped either by the Liberal Party's failure to hold a number of pre-selections in NSW, including in Warringah, and became a "captain's pick". Her preference was to have been pre-selected.