
— Rear Window

Putting Richo on mute

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Jun 2, 2022 - 11.50pm

One of the real downers from Labor's election victory is that inevitably it means three years of enhanced prominence for **Graham Richardson's** latest utterances.

In any sensible democracy, controversial former politicians (or as News Corp likes to refer them, columnists and panel show hosts) should come with a mute button.



Graham Richardson . . . perhaps he could communicate through the medium of dance. **Steven Siewert**

Richo will be all over the news, telling us all about what the new government is doing, or should be doing. But at a more formal level his new boss, **Michael Photios**, appears to have achieved what few have even attempted, in gagging the former Labor powerbroker.

Two months ago Photios' lobbying firm, PremierNational, trumpeted its appointment [<https://premiernational.com.au/pn-brief/graham-richardson-special-counsel>] of Richo as special counsel, in a side hustle to his regular job at Sky News.

He's on the firm's website, complete with an unstaged picture, [<https://premiernational.com.au/graham-richardson>] which entirely by chance caught him wearing what looks like either his Order of Australia medal [<https://www.afr.com/rear-window/richo-the-zurich-philanthropist-20200608-p550hg>] or a very large lollipop. PremierNational's website reproduces an April article in *The Australian* which notes that "Richo is wasting no time, and is believed to have also arranged to meet directly with [Anthony] Albanese and his deputy **Richard Marles** while in town this week".

Richo all over the Labor leadership. What could go wrong? His hiring looks particularly inspired since the May 21 election. At least it would be inspired if Richo could do any lobbying.

Not active on register

According to Open Politics [<https://openpolitics.com.au/>], the website on financial disclosures run by former Howard government staffer **Sean Johnson**, PremierNational hasn't [<https://twitter.com/openpoliticsAU/status/1529673543969275906>] listed Richo on the federal lobbyists register [<https://lobbyists.ag.gov.au/organisation/54b7a23f-6ae0-eb11-814d-0050569d617d/profile>].

In Sydney, the firm added Richo to the NSW lobbyists register on May 24, but said he was not active.

To be clear, it is illegal for lobbyists who are not registered, or who are registered on the NSW register but are not active, to speak to any member of the government or to public servants about any of their clients. PremierNational has an extensive client list that is currently out of bounds as Richo talking points.

It's a curious position, paying someone not to lobby for you.

While the law allowed him to lobby Albo and Marles forever when they were in opposition, now they are in power it's forbidden, without registration.

What reason is there for this gagging of PremierNational's special counsel, other than a previously unrecorded streak of modesty?

One reading is that no one wants to talk to Richo. In 2019, when he celebrated his 70th birthday at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, Albo, **Bob Carr**, **Stephen Conroy** and Queensland Premier **Anastacia Palaszczuk** were all part of the dutiful Labor throng, but it had the feeling of a farewell.

His admission (later retracted) that he voted Liberal in the 2018 election, and the OA that the **Scott Morrison** government awarded him in 2020, have not sat well with Labor circles.

There's one subject Richo will be free to press on the new government: his loathing for the Independent Commission Against Corruption, matched by his resolute opposition to any federal corruption body.

"This ICAC thing has got out of hand," he said last October after then-premier Gladys Berejiklian's fall from grace.

"We don't need ICAC – we have police to investigate alleged wrongdoing," he wrote in The Oz [<https://twitter.com/SkyNewsRicho/status/1451049001898283015>].

We'll be hearing a lot more like that. As for PremierNational's clients, their representation will need to be more on the lines of Marcel Marceau. Picture Richo communicating through the medium of dance.

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