

National NSW [Jones investigation](#)

## OPINION

# *I asked Alan Jones about his sexuality and alleged abuse of power. This was his response*

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A quarter of a century ago I wrote a story for *Good Weekend* magazine with the headline: “Who’s afraid of Alan Jones?”

The answer was almost everyone.

Of the nearly 100 people I interviewed, only a handful were prepared to be quoted by name. The rest were too scared of retribution.

“He could destroy my company,” one chief executive told me. “If I want to be employed again in Sydney,” said another, “I have to be really careful.”

“You could end up losing your job or being sued. He has a ridiculous amount of power,” said a third. And this from a fourth: “You can’t take him on because you’ll only cop another bucket [on radio] the next morning.”



Police outside Alan Jones' Circular Quay home on Monday. KATE GERAGHTY

Today, at 83, Alan Jones is a hugely diminished figure from the man I profiled in the waning years of the 20th century. Today, in addition to a raft of health problems, Jones has been arrested over allegations he indecently assaulted, groped or inappropriately touched multiple young men.

In 1998, however, as host of Sydney's top-rating breakfast radio program on 2UE, he seemed almost invincible. Five days a week, Jones commanded the attention of as many as 600,000 Australians by blending an unpredictable mix of right-wing authoritarianism with populist outrage. His targets were big banks, government bureaucracy, environmentalists, welfare recipients, the ABC, Aboriginal activists, the judicial system and select politicians.

He was the emperor of the airwaves, a demagogue forever running hot on law-and-order issues, while also articulating the concerns of ordinary Australians, a group he referred to collectively as "Struggle Street".

Each week, politicians, police commissioners, bank chiefs and bureaucrats shuddered with apprehension at the thought they might be next in line for an on-air haranguing. He was unstoppable, possessed of an almost freakish energy that he employed to prosecute the causes he believed in, and the companies he was discreetly paid to promote. (And, yes, this was the cash-for-comments scandal about to break in Sydney in the late 1990s.)

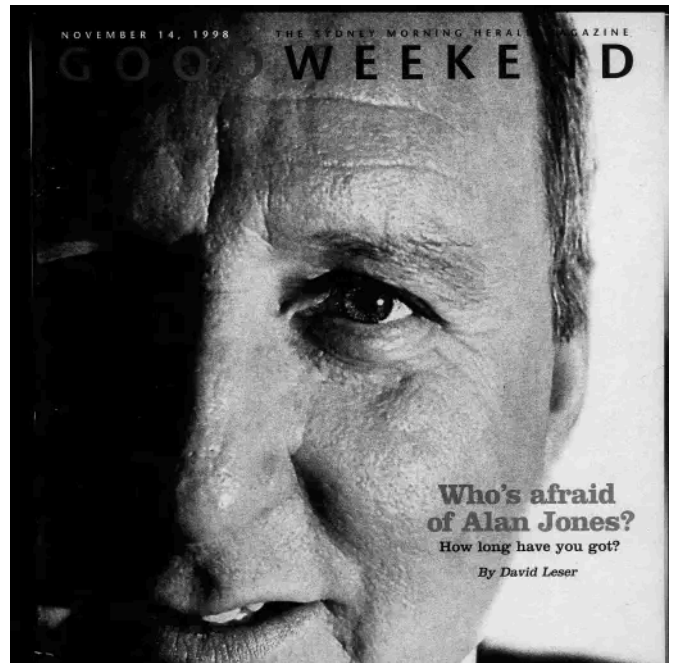
"His brain is a f---ing industry," his manager, the late Harry M. Miller, told me, while trying to describe the "river of words" that was Jones, a man as comfortable talking about the last race at Caulfield as discoursing on the Bard.

There was nothing – and no one – that seemed to faze him. At one private dinner party on Sydney's waterfront one evening, he saw fit to lecture then-prime minister John Howard on law

and order, protectionism and the Asian economies.

“DON’T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?” he was often heard yelling. “I AM ALAN JONES.”

And that was my challenge: to discover who Alan Jones was. At best, he was a brilliant, electrifying figure, capable of great generosity to those he liked, and, yes, sometimes they were troubled, young male athletes. At his worst, he was an intimidating, aggressive presence and almost certainly the most sued person in the Australian media at that time. During the 4½ hours I sat with him in the firelit den of his three-storey inner-city warehouse, I tried a number of times to get him to open up about both his sexuality and alleged abuse of power. I did so partly because during my research I’d heard numerous stories, beginning with his days as a teacher at Brisbane Grammar and The King’s School in Sydney, where he’d had spectacular collisions with parents, students and other teachers.



The November 1998 Good Weekend cover portrays Alan Jones for a profile by David Leser. FAIRFAX

Jones played favourites and in the case of King’s also liked to give certain students private tuition, an impulse that caused great consternation among his fellow teachers. One housemaster even climbed a tree on consecutive nights with a camera, hoping to capture incriminating evidence.

“What an absurdity,” Jones told me when I put that to him at the time. “That’s nonsense stuff.” Except it wasn’t.

In subsequent years, Jones continued to be the subject of stage-door whispers over his sexuality, and not just because he’d been arrested in 1988 in a London toilet on charges of indecency. (The charges were later dropped and costs were awarded to Jones.)

Jones’ treatment of some of his staff, particularly women, gave rise to accusations of misogyny that would later reach fever pitch with his attacks on Australia’s first female prime minister, Julia Gillard, and New Zealand’s third female prime minister, Jacinda Ardern.

In 2011, Jones said Gillard (together with then-Greens leader Bob Brown) should be shoved in a “chaff bag” and hauled out to sea. In 2019, he launched an on-air tirade against Ardern, suggesting Australia’s then-prime minister Scott Morrison [“shove a sock down \[her\] throat”](#).

Who was this man who ruled the airwaves, who preached the virtues of courtesy and civility, but who could then subject others to towering rages and invective? “I AM NOT SHOUTING,” he was heard shouting at employees.





Alan Jones photographed at his Sydney home in March 2011. WADE LAUBE

In all my weeks of investigating Jones' life and career, I never learnt of one enduring, intimate relationship he might have enjoyed. As far as I could determine, this helped explain his anger, his divisiveness and the furious schedule he maintained, one that only allowed him three hours of sleep a night.

In my naivety, or hubris, or both, I wanted to explore this with him because I believed that, notwithstanding the difficulties in doing so, if you couldn't own your sexuality, if you couldn't live – as much as possible – a truly authentic life, you might end up on a path towards self-destruction. (Which is not to say that being comfortable with one's own sexuality precludes a person from being an abuser.)

But when I tried to raise the matter with him, he invoked the nuclear warships principle.

"I think that one's private life is a bit like nuclear warships," he said. "I mean, you don't sort of tell people, do you, whether they're loaded with nuclear weapons or not?"

I suggested to Jones that in light of his propensity to help young men in need, the English language needed more words for love. I suggested that Greek was more expansive on this question and that perhaps he, like many Australian men, suffered from the constraints of English. (Yes, I know, I tied myself up in knots.)

"I think that what you seem to be suggesting," he replied, "is that there is a tendency ... when people assist to believe that there is some motive for that assistance. But you can't really ever get into the business of lying awake at night worrying about the motives that people attribute to you."

Me: "I take that point and I mean this with all due respect, but ever since the London toilet incident you've been dogged ... with all sorts of scuttlebutt about your sexuality. Can I just ask you to put on the record now ..."

Jones: “You’re going to ask me a nuclear warship question.”

Me: “I’m going to ask you are you gay or not?”

Jones: “I’ve never confirmed or denied anything ... And I don’t believe people should be asked to in relation to their private lives.”

Me: “Well, I understand why you would consider my question a violation of that right to privacy or an imposition ...”

Jones: “Absolutely.”

Me: “But can I put to you ...”, and then I surmised that this was an example of “Pulcinella’s secret”, the term sometimes used for an open secret that everyone knows about. Did that concern him?



Broadcaster Alan Jones at his home in December 2023. NINE

“No, how could it?” he replied. “There are many things that are said about a lot of people, and you’ve got to get on with your life and you’ve got to be convinced of the validity of what you do.”

A quarter of a century later, with Jones’ arrest in Sydney, the question is not whether he is gay or not, it’s whether he’s broken the law and, in the process, profoundly damaged the lives of a number of his alleged victims.

Back in 1988, his arrest in London seemed to be a life-altering moment.

“I’ve never said this before,” he told me, “but I spent most of my life being a victor, and that was one period in my life when I was the victim. It’s a silly thing to say, but I think in many ways I’m most probably, I hope, a better person.

“I think I’m more tolerant, less judgmental, because I think things can be said about people and done to people which can be very damaging to them, and I think it’s good to stand back and think again.”

**David Leser is an author and journalist. He is a regular contributor to and former staff writer with *Good Weekend*.**

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