

Gadfly

Richard Ackland 25-31 July 2020

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/opinion/diary/2020/07/25/gadfly-knock-woodside/159559920010143>

Knock on Woodside

The deep state's spidery fingers are here, there and everywhere.

Bernard Collaery would be all too familiar with their reach. As part of his defence in the secret prosecution that the Commonwealth has brought against him for allegedly revealing the bugging of Timor-Leste's ministerial offices, his lawyers subpoenaed documents from Woodside, the oil and gas producer with a hefty stake in the Timor Sea's Greater Sunrise gas field.

It is commonly understood that the point of the bugging would ultimately be of assistance to Woodside in the maritime border negotiations.

Now Attorney-General **The Reverend Christian Porter** wants to get his hands on the subpoenaed documents to see if national security is at stake.

It's intriguing to think that Woodside might have state secrets that can't be revealed in a court case. This is yet another troubling element in a case littered with rocks, crevices and falling masonry.

It may be worth mentioning in passing that **Bunter Fishnets Downer**, who withdrew Australia from the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the law of the sea, was Foreign minister at the time that a spy agency under his control bugged the Timor-Leste cabinet offices. After leaving parliament in 2008, Downer took a paid consultancy with Woodside.

Not that we could assume that this would be a motive for Porter to issue a secrecy certificate on pieces of paper from Downer's old fossil fuel benefactor.

You'd think the AG has enough distractions on his plate at the moment, but the prosecution he approved has now clocked up more than \$2 million of costs for the Commonwealth – most of it spent on ensuring that the proceedings would be held behind closed shutters.

That's just a down payment. Collaery is appealing the secrecy ruling by Justice **David Mossop** of the ACT Supremes and to that end he is launching a crowdfunding campaign to defray the bills and keep body and soul together.