



# THE EVOLUTION OF A LIE

## Chapter 9

The UOW Lie – A closer look at Corinne Cortese's story  
and Robyn Weekes, the cooperative Director EEDU UOW.

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Chapter 9

*The UOW Lie – A closer look at Corinne Cortese’s story and  
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I

*Corinne Cortese*

Corinne Cortese’s complaints against Scott were recorded in three different ways, created for different purposes: the signed Record of Interview dated 4 November 2005 created for the purpose of ensuring that his application for permanent appointment at UOW was denied; the transcript of her interview with Ken Taylor for the purpose of trying to shore up the collapsed case of Lee Nicholls’ complaints on behalf of Emma Nicholls in a report for the PSC; and the signed statement produced from that transcript intended to be relied on in a hearing of any charges in the Anglican Church Disciplinary Tribunal.

*A summary of the conduct that she complained about, as appears in the Record of Interview: that –*

During second semester of her final year in **1999** when he was the seminar leader:

- Scott looked at her in seminars, among 15 or so other students who said to her that Scott “has the hots for you”, in this version, or that she was “teacher’s favourite” in her second version for Ken Taylor;
- he complimented her on her looks in the seminars (not only did this drop out of her second and third versions it was contradicted by her in her interview); and
- he complimented her, once, on her looks and her ability to do an Honours year while in his office when they were briefly there while she helped him to collect the class assignments.

At a UOW doctoral symposium in **2002**, in front of other attendees numbering 50-80:

- Scot complimented her on her looks and said he was glad she was doing academic work (at Macquarie University); and
- he tried to make eye contact with her during lunch and the afternoon session.

**Two weeks after** that meeting in **2002**:

- Scott sent her an anonymous email to her Macquarie university email address from an anonymous Hotmail account. She opened the email, even though it’s account description was ‘*writetomeifyourlucky*’. She did not keep copies of the emails, and yet, contradictorily, says both that she does not remember what they said and then says what they said. She told Robyn Weekes at UOW in 2005 and to Ken Taylor in 2008 that the anonymous writer confessed that he loved her and wanted her to go away with him. It was signed ‘an admirer’. Extraordinarily, she replied to this email, and engaged in an exchange of emails until she said she did not want to continue and then the emails stopped.

At a UOW doctoral symposium in **2004**, in front of other attendees:

- Scott said to her a sentence: '*You can please me anytime*' in the middle of a conversation about her taking on some tutoring.

**Generally**, that she felt '*uncomfortable*' in Scott's presence.

**In summary**, only one incident complained of took place face-to-face without other witnesses being present, and then only for a very short period of time, in Scott's office with the door open (as she reluctantly admitted to Ken Taylor after prompting), while she 'backed around' the room and then escaped unscathed and unmolested. But this is the basis, along with the emails, for her claim to feel uncomfortable in Scott's presence. Except that she was never in his presence unaccompanied by any number from about 15 up to 80 people.

*About Corinne Cortese:*

Corinne Cortese was about 21-22 years old when she first encountered Scott Dobbs at UOW in the final semester of her undergraduate degree, the second half of 1999. They had never met before that. They rarely met after that. Although she was invited by Scott to do an Honours year for that degree, as his supervisor had asked him to do, she declined and went to work with a major accounting firm in Sydney. She left that firm and went to work at Macquarie University, North Ryde as an Associate Lecturer. She came back to Wollongong in 2003 because her mother was ill, and took casual tutoring until her PhD scholarship was confirmed. This occurred in 2004 and from then until June 2006 she was at UOW undertaking her full-time PhD research and thesis preparation. This and her thesis she completed before being employed in the position of Lecturer at UOW from mid-2006. She has continued to be employed in the UOW Faculty of Business where she is now a Senior Lecturer.

*What contact was there between Scott and Corinne?*

Scott Dobbs left UOW at the end of 2005. It is not alleged that there has been any contact between them after he left and there was no contact between them after 2004, so there was a period of just 5 years during which Corinne had the opportunity to have contact with Scott at all, let alone of a nature that would warrant a complaint of sexual harassment to the UOW EEDU.

But from this period there needs to be deducted those 3 years when Corinne Cortese was living and working in Sydney after completing her undergraduate degree. During that time, Scott continued living with his wife and family in Wollongong. As Helen Irvine told the investigator Ken Taylor, Mabelle used to turn up at his UOW office at about 5.00pm to collect him and drive him home. Helen regarded this as indicative of Mabelle's suspicious nature but she could cite no evidence for that. However, Mabelle needed Scott's help with the 6 children and several home-stay students and in this way she was able to override Scott's natural workaholic tendencies. It also makes it unlikely that Scott could conduct a clandestine affair with Corinne at that distance and with such family and work obligations and Corinne does not say that he did.

*What else we do and do not know about Corinne Cortese and her complaint:*

We do know that she did not make any complaint contemporaneously with any of the alleged incidents. This is acknowledged in the Record of Interview signed on 4 November 2005.

She could have complained to the UOW EEDU regarding Scott in the seminars in second

semester 1999 when she was an undergraduate at UOW and the cryptic comment he is said to have made in 2004 when she was a PhD student. If his behaviour in seminars disturbed her, the sensible thing to do was to have asked his supervisor to transfer her to another group with a different seminar leader. That she did not do this, considering her age and the fact she was in final year and familiar with university procedures, is one of those surprising things that casts more shadow of doubt over the credibility of her complaint.

She would not have had an avenue of complaint at Macquarie University about the emails, not just because Scott was neither a student or lecturer there but also because, after an exchange of 4 or 5, the emails ceased when she asked the writer to stop. It is still fine to make a respectful declaration of love. Also, while she continued to answer them they were by inference welcome to her. It would not have become harassment until they continued well after she had indicated that she wanted them to stop and stopped replying to them. Even then, designating them as spam would have stopped them even appearing among her emails. It would have been so easy.

We do not know to whom she made her complaint between the conversation in 2004 and when she went with Mary Kaidonis to give the details to Robyn Weekes, Director of the University's EEDU on 3 November 2005, well over a year later. It appears that there was nothing official, but, as she says contradictorily in her interview with Ken Taylor, firstly, that she asked Dr. Jane Edward to hide her from any chance encounters with Scott in the Faculty, and yet, secondly, that she had had no 'further' incidents involving Scott, since that last conversation in 2004.

It is slightly hilarious to imagine her with Dr. Jane Edward as guardian angel ducking into an empty classroom as Scott passes by in the corridor, all unknowing, or hiding around a corner while he arrives in the Library, or checking that the staff room was free from his presence before getting a cup of coffee, alert all the time for the contamination of him entering the room for the same purpose. All because of some laughable emails, some looks and very few, very brief conversations, with years of no contact at all separating each incident, even on her own account of what happened.

*We do know that Mary Kaidonis is looking for the dirt on Scott when Corinne makes her complaint for the first time:*

But what we do know, according to Corinne in her interview with Ken Taylor, is that Mary Kaidonis was looking for something '*for or against*' Scott's application for permanent employment and that Jane Edward and Mary Kaidonis were '*very close*' and '*Jane would know*' about how the complaint came to be made. This is a trifle disingenuous – Mary Kaidonis was not really looking for anything to support Scott's application. What we have is a triangle of two female academics and one Director of the EEDU, and involving one female PhD student who was being supervised by Mary Kaidonis, working in tandem to cobble together something to stop Scott Dobbs continuing to work at UOW. This fact alone indicates that there was a real fear that without this complaint, he stood a very good chance of having his application for permanent employment accepted. Scott's work was clearly exemplary, even Helen Irvine tells Ken Taylor that he was a gifted lecturer, and he exhibited a strong commitment to preserving the reputation of the faculty not by cover-ups but by taking a stand against the prevailing culture of attempted bribery and soft marking for overseas students.

We also know what she says is her motivation for making the complaint at this late stage. The Record of Interview, presumably drafted by Robyn Weekes, says this:

*'There has been a significant time lag since the behaviour occurred. Corinne has come forward at this time with Mary's support in the knowledge that Dr. Dobbs is seeking*

***confirmation of his employment at UOW.*** (Emphasis added.)

At that stage, she was but 6 months short of obtaining acceptance of her PhD thesis and she was not employed in the faculty except for casual tutoring. However, in July 2006 she commenced employment at UOW as a Lecturer where Scott had been employed, which enabled her to continue living in the Wollongong area to support her mother in her illness.

## II

*Robyn Weekes*

*What we do and do not know about Robyn Weekes:*

We do not know why Robyn Weekes accepted the complaint of the emails from an anonymous Hotmail account because this alleged incident took place when Corinne was employed at Macquarie University, it is not alleged that the UOW email service was utilised in any way and it was not alleged that it occurred between a member of UOW academic staff and another member of staff, nor a current nor prospective student. Therefore, it did not fall under the jurisdiction of the UOW Code of Conduct.

We do not know why she accepted any of the complaints, which did not offend State or Federal Anti-Discrimination law because the terms of the complaint needed to satisfy the definitions of sexual harassment contained in the Human Rights Acts of both NSW and the Commonwealth. In this they failed the 'reasonable person' test –that is, that it was '*unwelcome sexual conduct which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and /or intimidated where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances*'.

We do not know why Robyn sidelined the UOW proper processes for dealing with such complaints. Deliberately, she deprived Scott Dobbs of knowledge of the existence of the complaints, the knowledge of who had complained and what were the terms of the complaints and, contrary to the principles of natural justice, she denied him the opportunity to defend himself. Instead she was complicit in a scheme along with Mary Kaidonis and Corinne Cortese to ensure Scott's application was declined by designating the complaints as 'informal' and to ensure that the Record of Interview reached the committee for consideration behind Scott's back.

Scott was as much entitled to protection of his rights as anyone else. Robyn Weekes made a wrong judgment about the credibility of the complaints, a wrong judgment about her jurisdiction and about the application of law and the university Code. For a director of the UOW Unit devoted to protecting staff and students from all forms of discrimination and other abuses of human rights this is a black stain indeed on her career at UOW.

## III

*Variations in the terms of the complaint by Corinne Cortese.*

As said earlier, Corinne Cortese's complaints against Scott were recorded in three different ways: the signed Record of Interview dated 4 November 2005, the transcript of her interview with Ken Taylor, the investigator engaged by Phillip Gerber of the PSU, and the signed statement produced from that transcript. Even a cursory reading discloses that there are significant differences between the Record of Interview and the transcript of her interview with Ken Taylor from which her signed statement was drafted.

The first record, the Record of Interview, documented her personal discussion with Robyn Weekes in the presence of senior academic Mary Kaidonis and supported by her on 3 November

2005. Scott was unaware of its' existence until it was included in a huge bundle of documents that was delivered to Scott along with Ken Taylor's report and the signed statements. It was among copies of documents from Philip Gerber's file but how it got there is a matter of conjecture. As we will see, in her interview with Ken Taylor Corinne Cortese seemed to be unaware of it and certainly did not have a copy herself.

It was later, in 2007 that she gave the interview to Ken Taylor and this interview was tape-recorded and the transcript made available to Scott by direction of the Anglican Church's disciplinary tribunal in one of its' preliminary procedural hearings. This is the second form.

The third form appears in her statement prepared from the interview, which she signed as a true and correct record a month later. A copy of this was 'served' on Scott as part of the PSU process.

The interview with Ken Taylor and the statement signed a month later were supposed to reflect the terms of the original complaint. However, these complaints changed over the intervening 2 years, not only as to the actual content but also by reduction in number, some being lost, forever in one case, or until blatant prompting by the investigator caused Corinne to retrieve them from whatever mental recesses they had been consigned to. A few variations might be attributable to the lapse of time, but other variations suggest that she had no real recollection, which, if indeed she had been 'offended, humiliated and/or intimidated' is at the very least surprising and which is a further cloud on the credibility of the complaints, as it suggests that that she was nothing of the sort because the complaints were fabricated.

#### IV

*Corinne has no recollection of making a complaint against Scott.*

One of the most surprising things about Corinne's interview with Ken Taylor 2 years after the interview with Robyn Weekes is that she does not remember making a complaint against Scott, although it was in relation to this that the interview had been arranged. She dithers about it until Ken Taylor suggests that she has '*remembered*' making a report '*by deduction*' from her making a report about some other man. At another part of her interview she refers to making a complaint about '*some boy who was making a nuisance of himself*'. Clearly that was a different complaint.

In her 'spilling-the-beans' mood at the interview with Ken Taylor she has more to say, confirming that her main memory is of complaining about another person, not Scott, and only vaguely that she might have said something about Scott at the same time.

CC '*No. No actually Robyn Weekes has my report about Scott as well. Someone must have reported that. Did I report that?*'

KT '*So you reported him as well?*'

CC '*Maybe when I reported the other guy, I might have said something to her about Scott as well.*' .....

KT '*.... Alright, so you, you, by deduction you're recalling that you made a formal report.*'

CC '*I must have, I must have. I know I definitely did about another person.*'

KT '*'Cause I asked you specifically about whether you'd reported that to anyone.*'

CC '*Yeah. I didn't at the time. This happened some time later. This happened like about a year ago. This wasn't at the time it happened.*'

(The interview took place on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007, so 'about a year ago' means mid-2006,



which was well after Dr. Dobbs left the university and 6 – 7 months after she signed the Record of Interview.)

*KT 'And there was no fresh incident that (unintelligible)?'*

*CC 'No, no, no. No, no, no. This was about somebody else and it would have come up at the same time. I think what may have happened, I'll try to recall the sequence of events, but when Scott's promotion or part probation tenure was coming up, they may have been trying to decide whether or not to, like gather evidence for or against, and this student already had a sexual harassment case against him um, try and recall the sequence, and then the ...'*

The comment about '*this student*' who '*already*' had a sexual harassment case against him may be a reference to Lee Tran or Trang aka Anika Rose, who is discussed later in the next chapter. In another part of the interview she refers to a complaint by an 'Asian' student. What she seems to be saying is that as she was making a complaint about a 'boy' (no-one could describe middle-aged Scott, husband and father of 6 as a 'boy'), and as some other student already had a sexual harassment case against Scott (but how would she know?) she might as well have made a complaint, not that she can remember doing so. She seems to be suggesting that although her complaint is very thin on the ground, there was already a more serious complaint against Scott by another student and her complaint was only intended to supplement the more serious complaint.

But that cannot be true in the light of the sentence in the Record of Interview that she has come forward knowing that Scott is applying for permanent employment, and authorizing Robyn Weekes to give the Record of Interview to the Chair of the Probations Committee, John Patterson. And if there had been a sexual harassment case against Scott by another student, then her complaint would not have been needed, especially as it would have added so little. Unless of course the other student's complaint was also trivial and lacking important elements, just like Corinne's.

And the fact remains that when Scott's personnel file was obtained there was no record of any other complaint from a 'Chinese' or 'Asian' student or from any student of any ethnicity, and he had never heard of it. Nor for that matter was the Record of Interview signed by Corinne Cortese in the file either.

Her amnesia about making a report about 'it' to Robyn Weekes and her alterations and omissions of the incidents when she pulls herself together in the interview (aided and abetted by Ken Taylor) is further evidence that she was not offended, humiliated and/or intimidated as a matter of fact. This is clear without even taking into account the sheer unreasonableness of such a reaction to the very slight complaints that were cobbled together out of the minimal contact that she had had with Scott over quite a lengthy period of time.

It is a more rational conclusion that when she discloses to Ken Taylor that there was a push by Mary Kaidonis to get something on Scott to stop his application for permanent employment from succeeding, this is an admission that she knew all too well that she was the only complainant and she was involved in a conspiracy to deprive Scott of his academic career.

## V

### *Corinne Cortese's complaints concerning the second semester 1999.*

#### *Scott's behaviour towards her in the seminars:*

In the Record of Interview her complaint about Scott's behaviour in class was that he was '*singling her out for special attention*'. That is all she had to say about Scott's behaviour. There is no sexual interpretation by her of his attention. With this Scott would, in part, agree: he says she

was always prepared, she could be relied upon to give the right answer to seminar problems and he would turn to her to do this when another student had displayed their abysmal ignorance and lack of preparation. This was not sexual in intent nor so in any reasonable interpretation. Therefore, this did not satisfy the definitions of sexual harassment.

However, to Ken Taylor she created a whole new story, with Ken Taylor's enthusiastic prompting. As a side issue, Ken Taylor's inappropriate and incompetent interviewing technique leading to inaccurate and biased reporting was a major problem that is discussed in later chapters.

On this point, she starts off in the interview by saying: *'And I suppose he favoured me, um, in class ....'* However, Ken Taylor cannot leave this alone and presses her for a better description. And we get Ken Taylor, acting unprofessionally, suggesting what he wants her to say in evidence, with which Corinne Cortese is quick to agree although nothing she has said makes it appropriate.

Corinne starts by saying that Scott *'sort of has this way, he sort of gazes, he was, he just used to gaze at me like some sort of, like a, I'd imagine a teenage boy looking at a girl he was in love with, that sort of like "Oh this is really ..."'*

We will never know what *'this'* *'really'* *'is'* because Ken interrupts her with his suggestion: *'Swooning'*. Corinne repeats and agrees with the word, although it does not seem fit in with what she was saying. Note that Corinne states that the interpretation of his *'gaze'* was what she would *imagine* it to be. Now, her imaginative interpretation is not the criterion of assessing whether this is sexual harassment. Certainly, looking constantly at another person in an overtly sexual fashion can be this (otherwise called *'ogling'*), but it is a big leap from *'singling her out'* among the class of 15 or 16 people to imagining an interpretation of adolescent infatuation in Scott's gaze. If she really thought that, she could be accused of some infatuated singling out herself, or just an over-active imagination supporting an obsessive personality that believes, against the evidence, that she is irresistibly loved by Scott (a bit like Emma Nicholls really, which will be discussed in later chapters).

In the Record of Interview Corinne refers to the reaction of fellow students to Scott singling her out thus: they *'commented to her that "Scott has the hots for you."* That is the entire complaint. So, it was not Corinne who interpreted Scott's behaviour as having a sexual element but fellow students. Had this allegation been scrutinized it would have been rejected because it is Corinne's response, to be *'offended, humiliated and/or intimidated'* which is significant, not the interpretation of her classmates.

By the time of Ken Taylor's interview this has changed significantly to this: *'other students used to tease me saying I was teachers' favourite and all that sort of thing.'* This does not support the sexualised interpretation that Corinne *'imagined'* in her new version of adolescent infatuation, rather it supports the conclusion that it was just that – the product of a fervid imagination. The *'reasonable'* men and women of the class provide the balance. *'Teacher's favourite'* suggests more in the line of being someone who is well-prepared and top of the class, not a sexual favourite. Her response was to stop answering questions in class. Which would support this as the interpretation that she made at the time, not the Romeo and Juliet scenario she imagined for Ken Taylor's benefit.

Ken asks how the gazing made her feel to which she replies, *'a bit strange'* and *'embarrassed'*. Neither of these subjective responses are included in any definition of *'offended, humiliated and/or intimidated'* and therefore did not satisfy the definition of sexual harassment.

In the Record of Interview Corinne also says that *'He frequently made comments to her about "how beautiful and talented she was"'* during the seminars, in front of the class. This would certainly be embarrassing and, if true, would cause a student to try to swap classes or go and see the supervisor to complain and change seminars. This did not happen. Perhaps she wasn't embarrassed by this but reveled in the attention. Perhaps it didn't happen.



By the time of her interview with Ken Taylor, this had disappeared altogether. Instead, all she refers to in the way of compliments during that semester is on one occasion when she went to Scott's office, when she says the compliment was accompanied by an offer for her to do an Honours year in her undergraduate degree. Also, the only comment she makes in the interview about what Scott said during seminars (apart from content relevant to the subject) was that he kept talking about his wife and family.

*Inconsistencies between Corinne Cortese's first account to Robyn Weekes about the seminars in 1999 and her later account to Ken Taylor, investigator.*

What the Record of Interview dated 3 November 2005 says that Corinne Cortese complained of is this, and note that the following is the full account of these allegations and no other details are given:

*'She was aware that he was singling her out for special attention. The attention was noticed by the other students who commented to her that "Scott has the hots for you."*  
*'She noted the occasion when he invited her to his room to assist him in collecting the assignments for the whole class.'*  
*'He frequently made comments to her about 'how beautiful and talented she was.'*

As she did not see her outside that weekly class (but once when she went to his office) it has to be assumed that the alleged 'frequently made comments' were made in the class.

However, what she says to the investigator Ken Taylor in her interview in 28 August 2007, is the following, demonstrating some significant differences. He establishes that her first contact with Scott was when she was a student in his seminar class when she was in her third and final year of her undergraduate degree, in the subject Auditing.

*KT '.... So what was the extent of your involvement with him?'*  
*CC 'Well initially he was just, it was a class of us, I suppose fifteen or sixteen of us and he was the like quiet (sic) leader tutor.'*  
*KT 'Right.'*  
*CC 'And I suppose he favoured me, um, in class, like there was, other students use to tease me saying I was teachers' favourite and all that sort of thing. But there was never any friendship. I didn't know him apart from that.'*

The investigator established that the semester lasted thirteen weeks, and asked:

*KT 'Thirteen weeks. So that's the extent of your connection with him?'*  
*CC 'Yes.'*

It transpires that this is the *only* time, a period of 13 weekly seminars, when Corinne Cortese had any contact with Scott while she was an undergraduate at UOW. When pressed, she goes on to say that he *'asked me to do an Honours degree'* and said that he would be interested in being a supervisor, but she told Scott that she had already accepted a position with KPMG (a major accounting firm) and so she was not interested in an Honours degree at that stage.

Later in the interview the investigator goes back for another bite at the *'favoured in class'* cherry, and Corinne Cortese rewards his persistence with some more details which she seems to be finding difficult to articulate until he helps her out:

*KT '... But, um the, you said the students were teasing you about him favouring you ...'*

CC 'Yep.'

KT '*... how did that manifest in tutorials?*

CC '*Oh, just that he, he sort of has this way, he sort of gazes, he was, he just used to gaze at me like some sort of, like a, I'd imagine a teenage boy looking at a girl he was in love with, that sort of like "Oh this is really ..."*'

KT '*Swooning.*'

CC '*Yeah that swooning sort of look, yeah.*'

KT '*And that was in the tutorials in the company of what ...?*

CC '*Yeah, fourteen, fifteen, yeah.*'

KT '*And how did that make you feel?*

CC '*Oh a bit strange. I always felt so embarrassed, especially once the others started to notice and, gosh, so I never answered any questions I sort of kept myself quiet.*'

Again, being 'embarrassed' does not satisfy the definition of sexual harassment.

The investigator fished hard for some more, based, as he admits, on information provided by Helen Irvine, who was in no way a direct witness, such as –

KT '*Did anything else happen there (during the 13 weeks of tutorials), apart from him saying flattering things to you?*

CC '*No. And suggesting I do an Honours degree. No nothing.*'

KT '*And nothing happened?*

CC '*No.*'

The investigator has to move to a more direct question because Corinne Cortese has obviously forgotten the script – thus:

KT '*Did he ever ask you to his office?*

CC '*Oh, yes sorry (for forgetting to volunteer what had been agreed?). He asked me to his office to help him pick up some signs.*' (In her signed statement this word is amended in handwriting to 'assignments' with makes rather more sense.)

KT '*Did anything happen there?*

CC '*No. That's when he asked me about Honours. And I did feel a bit uncomfortable, but I kind of like backed straight out and went back to class.*'

Feeling 'a bit uncomfortable' does not satisfy the definition of sexual harassment.

Later in the interview it transpires that there was only one occasion of a compliment, which was in Dr. Dobbs' office when he offered to supervise an Honours degree, and not in front of the class, thus:

KT '*Did he touch you in any way?*

CC '*No.*'

KT '*And didn't say anything that caused you concern?*

CC '*No, apart from, you know the flattering sort of comments. But, I mean, I don't think they were flattering, but that was what they were intended to be.*'

KT '*Like what sort of comments?*

CC '*"Oh you're so pretty" and "You're so talented" and blah blah blah, those sort of things.*'

KT '*So he made these sort of comments in the room at that time that you're talking about?*

CC 'Yep, yep, yep.'

The investigator again has to ask her a question aimed at prompting her 'memory':

KT *'But was anything about his behaviour that wasn't quite right. Like for instance, did he close the door behind him when you went into his office?'*

CC *'The door, he pulled it, he didn't close it but he pulled it to close and I sort of backed away into the other side of the room, like oh well that's going to be a sign (unintelligible) sort of thing.'*

KT *'Is that the first time you had a feeling like that?'*

CC *'Yeah it was. And luckily it was towards the end of semester. ...'*

And so, all the complaints about Scott's behaviour in class are wiped out by this one admission.

She is clear in her signed Record of Interview for the University, as well as in this interview and a later signed statement for the Professional Standards Unit of the Anglican Church Sydney diocese that she had absolutely no contact with Scott anywhere else on the campus or outside the university and when they were in the same place during that semester, nothing happened. There was no personal conversation, other than, on this one occasion only, when Scott suggested that she was a good enough student to do a higher degree.

There is no confirmation of the allegation that there were *'frequent comments to her about "how beautiful and talented she was"'* as alleged in that first account; only that on the one occasion when she was helping him collect assignments from his room he once complimented her and said she should do an Honours degree and offered to be a supervisor.

In her description of the complaint to the diocesan interviewer there is no account of comments by her fellow-students that *'Scott has the hots for you'* as alleged in the first account. In the second account to Ken Taylor, she states only that her fellow-students said she was *'teacher's favourite'* and such. Such an appellation is usually applied by the less clever and less-well prepared students to the cleverer and better prepared students who answer the tutor's questions and, dare one say it, show off a bit how clever they are. And, according to her interview with the diocesan interviewer, she stopped answering questions in the seminar, so it would seem she was responding to the same interpretation of that jibe. As Scott made no attempt to contact her outside the seminar class it should have been apparent to her that such a comment, if it was ever made, that *'Scott has the hots for you'* was manifestly false.

There is no confirmation that *'she felt uncomfortable around Dr. Dobbs'* as a general proposition, because she never was *'around'* Scott: she only saw him in the seminar class where he was at the front of the room of 15 -16 students, with one exception. It was only on that one occasion almost at the end of the semester, when, she says, she helped Scott collect assignments from his office that she says she *'backed into the far side of the room'* when they entered the office, and, in another part of the interview, she says she *'quickly backed out of the office'* because she had some perception that his pulling the door to without closing it signaled some sexual intent towards her. Scott's office at that time was shared with other PhD students, it was small and cramped and it was filled with furniture – three desks with chairs and two bookcases - to the extent that the door would not open fully. The wonder is how she managed to skirt around Scott, the assignments and his desk and other office furniture while she was backing about. To back to *'the far side of the room'* would have brought her up against one desk with its chair in front of it under the window with, abutting it, Scott's desk at right angles, pulled out into the room so he could sit behind it. All this alleged backing round is just an absurdity. Had it occurred she would have looked very foolish besides courting barked shins.

However, of significance is her agreement with the question from the investigator that the occasion in Scott's office was the *first* occasion when she '*felt like that*'.

There is no confirmation that one of the reasons she pursued employment at KPMG and Macquarie University was her discomfort around Scott.

All that remains is the allegation that Scott '*singled her out for special attention*' by which it transpires that he looked at her in the seminars and adopting Mr. Taylor's suggested description because she could not describe it articulately herself, that it was a '*swooning*' look. It appears she was interpreting Scott looking at her in the weekly seminars as indicating that he was in love with her perhaps encouraged in this interpretation by the other students describing her as teacher's pet (if they did).

There never was any account of any special conversation with her or compliments in front of the class.

So, as I asked earlier, what is it about this woman who, apparently, believes she is so immensely attractive that even merely standing in front of her in a weekly seminar class with 15 to 16 other students will cause a seminar leader to swoon over her and become besotted with her like a teenage boy? Why she would interpret it in that way seems an even stronger indication that she had an unrealistic sense of her own seductiveness.

Is it a case of 'you wish'?

No wonder she did not make a complaint at the time. What indeed could she complain of in the absence of any other contact with Scott Dobbs at all? Would she not have laid herself open to the conclusion that she was a deluded fantasist? If we are expected to believe this complaint, would that not still be a reasonable conclusion?

## VI

*Corinne Cortese to Ken Taylor about meeting at the doctoral symposium in 2002.*

Corinne Cortese complained that in 2002, while she was employed at Macquarie University, she ran into Scott on the UOW campus at a one-day doctoral symposium held there. In her complaint, she told Mr. Taylor that on that one day Scott Dobbs (once) complimented her and congratulated her on undertaking postgraduate studies and that on the same day they sat down for lunch among about 50-80 other people. She stated that he was trying to make eye contact with her all afternoon and '*sort of like, yeah, trying to sort of flirt with me and that sort of behaviour.*' However, there is no account of any further conversation or even moves to be near her.

Again, what is it about this by then 24-year-old woman who gets uptight about an alleged 'flirtation' carried out at a distance solely by way of intermittent eye contact, especially where there was no evidence of anything, even on her own account, other than a pleasant compliment in the one very brief conversation that she says did occur that day. Nor was there any conversation to ask her out for a coffee or whatever to further a personal relationship.

## VII

*The fantastic story of the anonymous emails.*

When one gets to her story about answering an anonymous email, one must wonder even more about this woman. Is it possible that she is as ego-driven, gullible and foolish as she represents by her conduct?

Mr. Taylor established that there had been no contact between her and Scott since she was

in his tutorial class in second semester up to November 1999 and the brief conversation at the doctoral symposium in 2001, nor after that until the next allegation, a week or so later. As she had told Scott towards the end of the last semester the name of the firm where she had accepted employment it would have been easy for him to initiate contact with her there had he wished to pursue any relationship. There is no suggestion that he did so. Because of the lack of contact of any nature the next allegation is just plain ludicrous and even Mr. Taylor expressed doubts about it.

*Corinne Cortese to Ken Taylor about the anonymous emails.*

Shortly after that meeting at the doctoral consortium (still in 2001 and later in the interview she says it was a week after) she alleges that Scott Dobbs was the author of several *anonymous* emails from a coded Hotmail account that did not display the name of the sender, called 'write to me if you're lucky'. Apparently, she received these over a short period of time while she was still employed at Macquarie University, until, on her account, she seems to have belatedly exhibited some commonsense in ceasing to answer them. According to her signed statement for the PSU as well as her signed record of interview for UOW she did not keep the emails and so her account of what they contained is necessarily unsupported by objective evidence. She says in her interview with the diocesan investigator that she does not remember what the emails said, and then launches into a long account of what she says they said. If not reported from her memory, then it is an inescapable conclusion that the content is reported from her fantasizing. However, just taking the existence of the emails and what she says they said on face value at first instance, there are still some extraordinary features about the story.

Her account of what she says the emails said in her interview with the investigator for the diocese, and in her signed statement, makes one wonder who was the person who was pulling her leg, and how gullible she was and ripe to be mocked and made a fool of by these emails if indeed they existed. She says that she received an email from this anonymous coded Hotmail account signed 'a secret admirer.' Not only does she open it (!) but she answers it, and is led along the garden path by someone asking her to run away with them while they abandon a loveless marriage and their children for her sake. What is so extraordinary is that this woman apparently believes without a tremor of doubt that she is so irresistibly attractive that a man would abandon his wife and children for her sake, even though that man has not identified himself and does not have any relationship with her. Is she suffering from what I call a 'Helen of Troy' complex?

There are three possibilities concerning these anonymous emails:

- a) Someone, possibly a colleague where she was then working did it as a prank; or
- a) Scott Dobbs wrote them; or
- b) Corinne made them up.

Of these b) must be the least likely. To suggest that any man would ask a woman to run away with him when he has not even bothered to contact her outside one work-necessitated meeting over a period of 2 years is ludicrous. To further suggest that he did so in email correspondence where he had made no attempt to engage her affections, or even tell her his name is beyond belief.

Although possibility a) has its attractions – one can imagine a group of Corinne's colleagues gathered sniggering around the computer monitor playing her like a fish – possibility c) is much more likely. The account Corinne gave at the interview with Robyn Weekes on 3 November 2005 is different in many ways from that which she gave to Ken Taylor.

Nor did she complain to anyone, such as Macquarie University IT Department to put an



end to the emails or to use their expertise to find out more about the source of them. Nor did she send the first one straight to spam, whether before or after reading it, which would have been the actions of an intelligent person.

And the fact that she is an intelligent person would be even more support for option c) being most likely, a strong case that the emails incident was fabricated by her.

## VIII

*Ken Taylor expresses doubt about  
Corinne Cortese's account of the anonymous emails.*

Even Ken Taylor expressed doubts about her account of the emails. Those doubts were not very convincingly tackled by Corinne Cortese thus:

Having established that there was absolutely no contact between her and Scott between the end of semester November 1999 and the brief conversation at the one-day doctoral consortium in July 2002, and from that until the first of the alleged anonymous emails arrived a week later, he goes on -

*KT 'Because Helen Irvine alluded to that as well and it just seemed like a big jump and I, I presume something must have happened in the interim?'*

*CC 'No.'*

*KT 'No?'*

*CC 'No. It's just like he's got this fixation and just escalated - I don't know - in his own mind. He, he was very extreme. I don't know whether you know him personally ...'*

*KT 'No.'*

*CC '... But he's very extreme, he's very emotive, like he's very you know he's - no halves with Scott. He just launches right in type of thing, so I mean, I don't know if that's just his nature, but ...'*

*A 'fixation' with Corinne Cortese?*

It is difficult to discern anything in his behaviour pattern involving virtually no contact with her that was not in the presence of anything between about 15 and 80 people, punctuated by long periods of no contact that could indicate a 'fixation' with Corinne Cortese. Would a reasonable person consider that this was evidence of a fixation with her? Surely not. That this woman would present those facts as indicative of a fixation with her speaks volumes about her capacity for self-deception, let alone her deception of Ken Taylor, and through him, the deception of members of any tribunal that might be involved in considering her evidence.

Despite this lack of contact, she says he sent an anonymous email and it transpired that he was asking her to go away with him, while he abandoned wife and children, to make a new start. Certainly this in itself would be evidence of an exceptionally 'extreme' personality. But apart from this, all the evidence to that point is that he is almost unknown to her and she is almost unknown to him.

And after this example of 'extreme' behaviour, there is no other contact until, depending on which account you accept as being true, or at least not totally false, they met at the 2004 doctoral consortium and he said a strange thing, and they had a conversation in early 2005 when he offered her a tutoring job over the Summer session. (I think it is safe to say that offering a person a tutoring job is not grounds for a complaint of sexual harassment).

And nor is there contact, whether by accident or design, between those alleged events when from 2003 they were both on the same campus in the same School of the same Faculty.



Where is the evidence of an extreme personality, apart from her highly dubious and inconsistent accounts of the contents of the anonymous emails, which are being queried? But even there, when she had declined the request to run away and, after she had continued an exchange of emails, she finally asked 'him' to stop emailing the emails did stop. Not really evidence of an extreme personality, which would be more likely to be more persistent.

If he was an extreme personality, where are the examples of such behaviour in other circumstances than this one circumstance, and when would she have had the opportunity to find out about it? This seems more likely to be a desperate attempt at justification of the lack of substance of this complaint; to try to shore it up against a rational consideration finding it falling well short of credibility.

This is particularly true because neither the PSU nor UOW had any jurisdiction to deal with Corinne Cortese's complaint about the emails, which, if she really regarded it as serious, should have been made within the appropriate time limit to the Human Rights Commission of NSW. There it would have received scrutiny from persons who did not have either of the agendas of UOW and the PSU but by application of the law.

## IX

### *The complaints about the incidents after the anonymous emails.*

She was a student at UOW from some time in 2003, although not before, but she was not a student of Scott Dobbs when these later alleged incidents took place. There is nothing complained of until the brief strange conversation alleged to have taken place in 2004. And nothing complained of after that except in the Record of Interview.

#### *Corinne Cortese to Robyn Weekes about the conversation at the doctoral consortium in 2004*

However, in her signed record of interview for UOW she says that there was another brief conversation (only one) with Scott in 2004 at the doctoral symposium in July.

Her account of this 2004 meeting is a strange one: the only thing that she says about this is that she complains of one short sentence she says Scott uttered to her. When during the day? Whereabouts – when the participants were gathering, or at lunch, perhaps while seated together during the presentations? In the course of what conversation? She is silent on all these things. The sentence that she alleges was said is: “*You can please me anytime.*” She does not even say anything about her interpretation of what that could possibly mean, or give the context of it. She attributes an interpretation to a person named as David Aylward who, she says, said to her: “*What was that all about – how creepy.*” Was this man part of the group engaged in the conversation in which this arose? Who can tell other than Corinne Cortese who is silent on this also? And nor was David Aylward called to confirm, or deny, what is attributed to him and to expand the context of the conversation.

#### *Corinne Cortese to Ken Taylor about any incidents after the anonymous emails*

In her interview with Ken Taylor, in response to his question about whether she had any further contact with Dr. Dobbs after the emails, she has nothing to add, and talks of other things. Is it possible that she had forgotten that she included this in her slight complaint in 2004 and comment made in 2005 that she would not work with him?

She tells Ken Taylor that she left Macquarie University in 2003 when her mother was unwell and she took casual work at UOW in the same Faculty as Scott until her PhD scholarship commenced in 2004. Therefore, despite her apparent vagueness about those dates, it is clear that she had been on-campus in one capacity or another – casual employee and/or full-time PhD

student since 2003 – concurrently with Scott who was both a full-time student and employed as a tutor during his PhD studies and after completion of his degree employed as a lecturer on contract which was due to expire mid-2006.

It was of course important to include something more recent in the Record of Interview for UOW purposes to try to 'fill in the gap' between July 2002 and November 2004 – almost 2½ years during which she cannot say she had anything to complain about even though she was on campus from 2003. It was necessary to pretend that there was something else in her interview because it was going to be used with her knowledge and active agreement to deprive Scott of his job.

She did not complain about any of these things at the time they were alleged to have happened. Indeed, what happened? Nothing happened, even on her own account. And of course, the complaints after 1999 in 2001 were about events that were alleged to have taken place when she was not a student of his at UOW but employed at Macquarie University, and outside the jurisdiction of UOW let alone outside the jurisdiction of FAC or the Sydney Anglican Church.

She has nothing to say to Ken Taylor about any further interviews with or approaches from Scott over those years until he left the university.

She makes a great play of saying she asked Jane Andrew not to let her be in the same room alone with Scott Dobbs (as if Jane Andrew would have any control over this), and in her interview with Robyn Weekes (although not in her interview with Ken Taylor) she says that if she saw him she just walked away, but there is no account of him even wishing or asking to be in the same room as her or accosting her in the corridors. There is no account of attempted conversations or unwelcome encounters in the photocopy room, staff common room or Library – absolutely nothing. No story of a lucky escape from unwanted attentions, nothing about any attentions at all from Scott Dobbs.

Could it be that he really was not interested in her at all? And could that be another or an additional explanation for her giving an interview to Ken Taylor some 18 months later – an interview that she was under no obligation to give - she was not a member of any Christian church let alone FAC and her 'story' had nothing to do with the church. Could it be that she suffered the common reaction of a woman scorned or at least ignored – hellfire fury?

*Corinne Cortese to Robyn Weekes on her refusal of an offer from Scott Dobbs of tutoring over Summer session 2004/5*

The Record of Interview states that she refused an offer from Scott of tutoring in Summer Session over 2004/5 *'even though she could have done with the money and experience. She is adamant "I will not work in Finance with Scott even if it is detrimental to my career."* The Record goes on to note: *'Ms. Cortese has agreed that these notes may be provided to Professor Patterson as chair of the Academic Probations Committee.'*

Of course, this is not repeated to Ken Taylor, indicating as it does a clear conspiracy to deprive Scott of his appointment to a permanent job.

And so, the Committee cut off Scott's opportunities for a career as an academic. Apparently, they favoured a young woman who at that stage had not even finished her higher degree, who had turned down the opportunity to obtain tutoring experience and who was far junior in all these ways to Scott. And they did this having sighted and presumably discussed behind closed doors a document, the contents of which were never disclosed to Scott for his comments, and which contained 'complaints' that were tenuous at best; complaints which had never been complained about at the time they were alleged to have taken place, when documentary evidence, and witnesses would have been available to confirm, or to fail to confirm, the account from Corinne Cortese.

X

*Conclusion*

It is not unreasonable to conclude that the bare bones of a complaint which need not even disclose sexual harassment was all that was needed in the Record of Interview. This was because Mary Kaidonis had secured Robyn Weekes' cooperation with the scheme to falsely accuse Scott of something to cause his application for permanent employment to fail, so the actual terms of the complaint would not be subject to her scrutiny. She may even have drafted the terms herself. In addition, Robyn Weekes' failure to follow UOW protocols for dealing with such complaints enabled her and Mary Kaidonis to ensure that Scott never saw it, was never told about it, and therefore he was never given the opportunity to defend himself.

The same applied to its' use in the deliberations of the APC because although, in Scott's absence, Mary Kaidonis could address the committee at length against Scott's appointment, the document and the actual terms of the complaint were not subjected to any scrutiny.

Altogether these factors meant that it was not necessary for Corinne to stretch her imagination. It was simply enough to put her signature to whatever simple statement had been concocted. It was never contemplated that it would be resurrected and scrutinized after serving its original purpose.

Unfortunately, Helen Irvine took over and, enthusiastically and uncritically, introduced it into FAC. Corinne Cortese now found herself being interviewed about these sparse incidents which were being applied for an entirely different purpose, for which they were not designed to stand up. To involve herself in this indicates that her malice against Scott was very great – perhaps for *not* falling for her charms - which would go at least part of the way towards explaining her involvement in the original scheme. In addition, Helen Irvine was one of her PhD supervisors and Mary Kaidonis was the other. She really was the 'ham' (in so many ways) between these two women.

So, the pressure was on Corinne to make up some more 'detail' for Ken Taylor's interview. Which she did, but without much skill, fortunately.

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***Postscript***

The legal test for sexual harassment 'has three essential elements:

- 1) the behaviour must be **unwelcome**;
  - 2) it must be of a **sexual nature**;
  - 3) it must be such that a **reasonable** person would anticipate in the circumstances that the person who was harassed would be **offended, humiliated and/or intimidated**.
- Whether the behaviour is **unwelcome** is a *subjective* test. How the conduct in question was perceived and experienced by the recipient is important rather than the intention behind it. Whether the behaviour was **offensive, humiliating or intimidating** is an *objective* test. That is, whether a reasonable person would have anticipated that the behaviour would have this effect.'

Explanatory publication by the Human Rights Commission.

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