



Davis fix a fake

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SEAN Hannity has his own show. It is broadcast worldwide and full of his opinion. His style is unashamedly confrontational. He condemns those he disagrees with and canonises those he supports.

Ted Koppel was an anchorman for *Nightline* for 25 years, a managing editor of the Discovery Channel and a news analyst for BBC World. Koppel has lived a life in news and has nothing but contempt for Sean Hannity.

Koppel thinks the Hannity model is dangerous and he summed it up in one sentence.

“You have attracted people who have determined that ideology is more important than fact.”

Fake News is more than a hashtag. It is a dangerous development in the way we talk to each other about society. The communication style relies on distraction.

The point of Fake News is to spread doubt and distrust. To disrupt. It is based on the misunderstanding that ideology is more important than fact.

Donald Trump turned this tactic into an art form. His “Lock Her Up” rally cry excited constituents, but now that he is in office he is not even remotely interested in arresting Hillary Clinton. The Fake News of her criminality did the job. His audience was entertained and distracted. There was no evidence.

In Australia we have our own experts in disinformation. Locally we have political protagonists who prefer to peddle conspiracy rather than participate in an honest dis-

cussion.

On March 21 in the Upper House of the Victorian Parliament, the Honourable David Davis started talking about the Geelong Citizens’ Jury. Under the protection of parliamentary privilege Davis took the opportunity to question the jury, the process and the integrity of the moderators.

“In the early phase of that citizens’ jury it was very clear that the very good citizens who were part of that jury — how they were chosen was always a great question — were being led by the nose to predetermined outcomes.”

That’s a big opening statement.

In one sentence he suggested there was some kind of corruption of process and secrecy about how the jury was determined. He provided no facts to back this up and continued down this path.

“It was also clear that the model that was laid out by the citizens’ jury was something that required a great deal of manipulation by those facilitators who were part of the process.”

As I understand it, Davis did not attend the jury process, so how does he know facilitators were manipulating the process? Where is the evidence? He didn’t say.

But the suggestion remains on the public record. You can do this under privilege.

You don’t have to provide evidence to support your ideological position.

He continued: “It was pretty clear that there was a fix in this to make sure that the citizens’ jury came back with a recommendation against a directly elected mayor. After plenty of manipulation, it

did.”

OK. How and what are we talking about? What is the “fix” and what is the “manipulation”?

The members of the jury have no way to respond to these accusations. They are not afforded the same legal protection as the hon-

ourable members of Parliament.

The conspiracy theory that the State Government is trying to undermine the success of local government in Geelong does nothing to promote trust in Geelong or build our economy. If there is no evidence to support the proposition then it is fake news. A political distraction based in ideology instead of fact.

If the state Liberals honestly believe the jury process was “manipulated” why are they not calling for an inquiry? Is our democracy important or is it just an opportunity to score some points in parliament?

If Davis is right, Geelong residents are suffering a grave injustice. Will Andrew Katos and the state Liberal Party be prepared to fight an election based on a platform of “justice for Geelong”? Will they promise an inquiry into the corruption of our democracy? It’s easy to drop hand grenades and walk away, but if this is the limit of state political debate our local democracy is doomed.