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Campbell Newman

Rupert Murdoch scolded tabloid for unfavourable coverage of Campbell Newman, book reveals

News Corp boss criticised editorial director of the Courier Mail and said former Queensland premier should have sacked thousands more public servants, according to new book



Campbell Newman and Anastacia Palaszczuk take part in a leaders' debate in Brisbane on 30 January 2015 in the lead up to the state election. Photograph: Dan Peled/AAP

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Rupert Murdoch thought [Campbell Newman](#) should have sacked thousands more public servants than he did and scolded the editorial director of the Courier Mail for unfavourable coverage of the Liberal National Party government, according to an authorised biography of the former Queensland premier.

The book details an April 2013 meeting of News Corp Australia editors at which Murdoch criticised the coverage in the Courier Mail of the [Queensland](#) government's plan to sack 14,000 public servants.

David Fagan, who was the editorial director of News Corp's Queensland operations at the time, is described as having "increasingly clashed" with Newman and his administration.

"A number of News Corporation insiders have said that Murdoch made it clear he wasn't happy with the Courier Mail's coverage of the LNP government, and he let Fagan know about it at that April editor's meeting [in 2013]," the book says.

"Fagan was defensive and told his boss the paper's coverage was a reflection of the Government's culling of 14,000 public servants. Murdoch reportedly leaned in and pointedly told Fagan the premier should've sacked thousands more of them."

It then says Fagan was dismissed a few months later.

Newman is highly critical of the media in the book, having dubbed the media a "pack of bastards" and believes journalists were out to get him from the beginning of his campaign to be premier of Queensland.

Related: [Campbell Newman says Tim Carmody appointment is his biggest regret](#)

The book contains a lengthy attack on the Queensland media with Newman seeming very bitter about his term spent as premier, going from one of [the largest majorities in Australia's history](#) to [losing his seat and government](#), and the two election campaigns which bookended it.

It also describes the toll his time as premier took on his family, particularly his wife, Lisa, who felt so under pressure that she thought of seeking professional help but was terrified an appointment with a psychiatrist or psychologist would end up as a news story.

Can Do – Campbell Newman and the Challenge of Reform is written by Gavin King, a former Cairns journalist and one-term [Liberal National party](#) MP. It details Newman leaving a press conference in north Queensland in the last days of the campaign saying "that's the last time I'll ever have to talk to that pack of bastards".

"The journalists I encountered were obsessed with the politics of politics, the internal machinations, the personalities. There were always treating politics like sports, always looking for the next 'gotcha' headline or TV sound bite," Newman says in the book.

"The general public wouldn't have a clue what policies and outcomes were being delivered because the journos were only covering what's happening in the beltway."

The book is littered with references to the media, mostly focused on the Queensland media gallery, who are referred to as lazy and biased, and part of an attack campaign "unprecedented" in Australia's history. He also says they applied a "blood thirst scrutiny" to Newman and the LNP .

Lisa, who was interviewed for the book, reveals Newman only told her he was considering running for premier four weeks after he had started discussing it with his advisers. Lisa, who reflects on Newman's time as lord mayor as one of

the happiest times in their marriage, was upset by it.

The 2012 campaign was particularly difficult with the media focusing on the business connections of Lisa's father, Frank Monsour, and brother Seb Monsour.

"Once the [Labor party](#) started having a go at me it was almost like everyone in the general public felt like it was a free-for-all," Lisa said. "People would scream and yell at me, they'd come up and abuse me, abuse our teenage girls. I felt traumatised. I didn't want to leave the house. I felt like I hadn't signed up to this. We were just devastated."

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Lisa Newman

Newman never forgave the media for the coverage in the 2012 campaign and then-adviser now federal senator James McGrath speculates that they were out to get him for some sort of payback from his time as lord mayor. He does not detail exactly what the payback would be for.

"They have got a nerve to ridicule people like me who tried actually get things done. And they have always ridiculed and sneered. They have never actually given any benefit of the doubt or been prepared to see the big picture," Newman says in the book.

"Their position on every story is that we are idiots, or we're corrupt, or we are doing this out of self-interest. They have no way of divorcing themselves from their inherently negative bias."

Newman makes an exception for newspaper editors who he said "get it" which was evident in editorials.

Newman says the "narcissism and shallowness of social media" combined with the leftwing "commentariat" means politics is treated like a reality television show.

Related: [Campbell Newman says media partly to blame for his Queensland election loss](#)

Newman names the deputy premier, Jackie Trad, and Labor adviser Eamonn Fitzpatrick as the source of leaks about Lisa's family to media, however, does not offer any evidence to back up these claims. He also singles out journalists from the Courier Mail, the Australian, Channel Seven and Channel Nine for criticism.

Newman's view of the media is backed up by various people in the book, including his former chief of staff Ben Myers.

"Through laziness and some inherent bias the media didn't do its job. The Labor party was working angles very hard and the media just took the stories at face value and ran with them," he says.

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