



Radio Transcript

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TRANSCRIPTION

ROSS SOLLY: Okay, so the ANU Chancellor, Julie Bishop, has joined us in the studio this morning.

Julie Bishop, thank you for coming in this morning.

JULIE BISHOP: Good morning, Ross. It's been some time since I've been in this studio – probably about ten years, but good to be back.

ROSS SOLLY: Yeah, well, hopefully this will be as enjoyable as maybe the last time was – I'm not sure, though.

JULIE BISHOP: I'm trying to recall the – it was an international event, and I was doing the rounds of radio and TV as Foreign Minister, but I do recall sitting right here, and I'm not sure whether you were the interviewer or not. I'm sorry for not remembering.

ROSS SOLLY: No, well, obviously it wasn't one of my more memorable interviews then.

Can I ask you straight up, Julie Bishop, why is it, do you think, so many people want you to resign?

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I don't believe they do.

ROSS SOLLY: There's a lot of people that have been saying that they think the only path forward is for you to step aside.

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I disagree, and I won't be stepping aside. I have the backing of my council. I'm working very closely with the interim Vice-Chancellor, the deans, the general managers. I've been on campus over the last two weeks. I mean, I'm on campus a lot, but over the last two weeks specifically. And I'm getting a lot of very positive feedback. But, more importantly, I have an obligation to see this transition through on behalf of the ANU, and I intend to do that.

ROSS SOLLY: How much responsibility, then, do you take for the situation that the ANU finds itself in now? I'm talking about the level of malcontent there is out there the level of in-fighting, the level of disappointing there is out there. How much responsibility do you take for that?

JULIE BISHOP: Ross, we needed to undertake financial repair. We needed to get our budget back into balance. We needed to control expenditure. We needed to undertake change proposals for the reorganisation of our operations and our organisation more generally. We are not the only university –

ROSS SOLLY: No.

JULIE BISHOP: We are not the only organisation. I mean, let's face it, Ross, you know that the ABC is going through a major restructure that means a loss of jobs, it means axing programs. Change is hard –

ROSS SOLLY: But we're not calling for our chair to step aside. We're not calling for heads to roll. Because, you know, I think some might disagree, but the lines of communication are open and generally there's an open dialogue going. How much responsibility do you take for the claims that there hasn't been that dialogue and that there is a lot of very, very unhappy people at the ANU?

JULIE BISHOP: Change is difficult, and I understand people's concerns, and I've heard a lot of feedback over the course of the Renew ANU. But I'm the Chair of the Board, as you say. I have a council, I chair council meetings and I have specific obligations and duties and roles under the ANU Act, and I'm fulfilling them. I have faith in our executive team, in our leadership team under the interim Vice-Chancellor to address a whole range of issues that have arisen as a result of the change proposals. And if you were at the town hall yesterday – and I know the ABC covered it – if you were at the town hall yesterday there was a very positive mood about the announcements we were able to make.

ROSS SOLLY: It was a very different mood to one week ago.

JULIE BISHOP: I agree. I agree. Very different.

ROSS SOLLY: And, again, I'll circle back to this question: how much responsibility – I mean, you've been in politics. I mean, eventually it's got to come from the top.

JULIE BISHOP: Exactly. I am the Chancellor. I'm the Chair of the Board.

ROSS SOLLY: So if people are unhappy, if there's a very bad feeling on the campus, ultimately are you responsible for that?

JULIE BISHOP: I am responsible for the operations of the council. I'm responsible for the task that we gave, the strategy that we gave to the then Vice-Chancellor, and I certainly stand by that. So I know the union are continuing to call for my head. I had a very, very pleasant meeting with Lachlan Clohesy. He won't be happy that I'm saying that, but I get on very well with Lachlan.

ROSS SOLLY: He was still calling for you to go yesterday.

JULIE BISHOP: Yes, I said that to him. I said yesterday that there was no need for that, but he said it's, you know, part of what they have to do.

ROSS SOLLY: But are you not reading the room here?

JULIE BISHOP: No, I'm reading the room.

ROSS SOLLY: Because he wants you to go. David Pocock says you should go.

JULIE BISHOP: Now –

ROSS SOLLY: We'll come back to –

JULIE BISHOP: Please come back to David Pocock.

ROSS SOLLY: I will come back to David Pocock.

JULIE BISHOP: – because I'm very interested in his shift in language after I filed my right of reply in the Senate.

ROSS SOLLY: And I will – there's a few questions I want you to ask, because your response to the Senate was very, very interesting regarding David Pocock. But Lachlan Clohesy wants you to go. The union wants you to go. The student union wants you to go. David Pocock wants you to go. The Labor Party MLAs here – not MLAs – well, MLAs, in fact, but also the MPs here in Canberra all say there needs to be a change of leadership. That's a pretty significant list already of people who think that the best path forward for the ANU is a path without you on it.

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I disagree. I believe I have an obligation to see this transition through to the end. My term ends at the end of 2026. I have the backing of council and I intend to see it through. I met with Katy Gallagher, Alicia Payne and Andrew Leigh and David Smith. I've met with them and we agree that the interim Vice-Chancellor is on the right path. We have now concluded most of what was called Renew ANU. We have five change proposals still. They're not decisions, they're still proposals. And as you will have heard yesterday from our interim Vice-Chancellor, we're almost there. And we've almost completed without involuntary redundancies, and I can see bright light at the end of the tunnel, and I intend to see it through.

ROSS SOLLY: So just – and I'm sorry to keep harping on this, but do you take any responsibility then for –

JULIE BISHOP: Of course. I said, I'm the Chair of the Board. I'm the Chancellor, of course.

ROSS SOLLY: So you take responsibility?

JULIE BISHOP: Of course. That's what I said. I'm the chair.

ROSS SOLLY: I know.

JULIE BISHOP: And you said it stops at the top. So I'm agreeing with you. But I'm seeing this transition through, Ross –

ROSS SOLLY: Can I ask you just on that –

JULIE BISHOP: – and it's not up to the union to remove the Chair. It's up to the council, and the council supports me.

ROSS SOLLY: If Genevieve Bell chose to stay on, could she have?

JULIE BISHOP: That would be a matter for Genevieve. She tendered her resignation, and council accepted it.

ROSS SOLLY: Would you have been able to continue working with Genevieve Bell?

JULIE BISHOP: I am able to work with whomever the council chooses to have as Vice-Chancellor. I'm a very agreeable person. I will work with whomever council chooses as the Vice-Chancellor. Council has now selected the interim Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rebekah Brown. I get on very well with her.

ROSS SOLLY: Would you have been able to – I mean, would you have liked Genevieve Bell to stay on? I mean, she'd started this process. It's obviously a long process. Would you have liked her to continue on?

JULIE BISHOP: I believe we'd reached a stage where the change proposals had almost been completed and we were embarking on the second phase. And so Genevieve probably thought that it was time for her to tender her resignation –

ROSS SOLLY: Did you tell her it was time to go?

JULIE BISHOP: I'm not going into conversations I had with Genevieve about that.

ROSS SOLLY: No, no –

JULIE BISHOP: She tendered her resignation and we accepted it.

ROSS SOLLY: I know, but did you tell her that it was time to go? Because that's what I've heard, that you told her –

JULIE BISHOP: And who told you that?

ROSS SOLLY: I'm not going to reveal my sources.

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I'm not going to reveal private conversations, then.

ROSS SOLLY: I mean, it's an easy thing to, I mean, if you want to say no because it's obviously a fairly important point here. If you didn't, you'd say no, wouldn't you?

JULIE BISHOP: I keep private conversations private. And Genevieve tendered her resignation and council accepted her resignation.

ROSS SOLLY: On the David Pocock role in all of this, your response to the Senate was fascinating. I've read the whole thing.

JULIE BISHOP: That's only part A. There's another part.

ROSS SOLLY: Which you haven't actually sent in yet, I don't think.

JULIE BISHOP: No, I've asked the Senate committee to guarantee that it would remain private because for me to actually name names and go into the details of witnesses to the allegations that were raised in the Senate inquiry would necessarily breach confidences. So, I want an assurance that my response to the allegations made against me would be kept in confidence, and I've not yet received that undertaking from the committee.

ROSS SOLLY: It's quite obvious from your submission, though – part A – that you're far from impressed with the behaviour of Senator David Pocock.

JULIE BISHOP: I'm deeply concerned – in fact, dismayed – at the way that Senate inquiry unfolded. And there was a lot of unnecessary hurt and emotion and a breach of confidences and support for people who clearly should have had the opportunity to have their testimony begin of in private. I have to say, I've been on committees, parliamentary committees, throughout my 20-year career. I've never seen anything like that, to have a witness's very emotional testimony taken in public without any thought of those who were watching it, those who were sitting in the room, let alone the witness herself. I found it quite distressing.

ROSS SOLLY: But it may well have been a surprise, though for –

JULIE BISHOP: No, I believe not because Senator Pocock made it quite clear that he had a document which he said contained a workplace grievance that I am to assume is levelled against me. But to this day I have not been notified of a workplace grievance against me.

ROSS SOLLY: Really?

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely have not been notified.

ROSS SOLLY: So, at this Senate committee, you were basically accused of being a bully. That's what they said. You're a bully.

JULIE BISHOP: That was part of the testimony. I mean, there was some terrible allegations levelled at me, and it was the first time I'd ever heard them. And I went back to ANU after this testimony had been aired in public and I asked if there was a workplace grievance, why have I not been notified if it's against me. And I was informed that when the grievance was lodged back in March it was so lacking in specificity and details and particulars and evidence and witnesses that it didn't reach the threshold to trigger the notification of a respondent. To this day, I have not been notified that I am the subject of a workplace grievance. But in any event, having the evidence taken that way, that testimony taken in that way has completely compromised the workplace grievance process that I understand is underway at ANU.

ROSS SOLLY: Some might say – at a quarter to 9 – that one of the reasons you're most upset is because it was your reputation being trashed and it was there for everybody to see, and there you had a witness that was incredibly emotional, basically laying at your feet the situation that she found herself in.

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I absolutely reject each and every allegation that was made against me. And it seems to come down to one council meeting. There were 16 people present in that room when these allegations apparently arise. As I said, I'm yet to see the document that Senator Pocock has. I actually met with Senator Pocock in his office on the 22nd of July.

ROSS SOLLY: So, this is prior to the Senate hearing?

JULIE BISHOP: Prior to the Senate hearing but after he claims that he'd received this workplace document. And he said he received a document on the 15th of June. He confirmed that it was the workplace grievance. He said he sent it on to Minister Clare. I had no idea, and to this idea I don't know what's in that document, but I went to see him in Parliament House on the 22nd of July and I talked to him about his concerns about the financial sustainability of ANU, the change proposals. He had concerns about communications and management style. He did not raise one issue about me, my leadership, my role as Chancellor. He certainly didn't raise any allegations against me. He didn't say, "Oh, by the way, somebody's going to give evidence against you in the Senate hearing." Nothing.

ROSS SOLLY: Was it his responsibility to do so?

JULIE BISHOP: Well, wouldn't you have done that to someone if you knew that there was about to be explosive allegations made when I wouldn't be present? I mean, no natural justice, no procedural fairness, no right of reply month's later? I just found it –

ROSS SOLLY: Maybe he wanted to protect the witness.

JULIE BISHOP: Maybe he wanted to ambush me, because protecting the witness would be, surely, to have her evidence, her testimony, taken in camera so that her distress wouldn't have played out in public. I found it – and a number of people have said to me they found it – deeply distressing, and there's still no warning on any Senate website that there's –

ROSS SOLLY: It's still there. You can still see it, yeah.

JULIE BISHOP: Yeah, that there's very distressing testimony given. I just feel that no thought was given to a safe workplace, not only for the witnesses but for the people viewing it. And it wasn't about my reputation – I had an opportunity to give a right of reply weeks later – I was concerned about the reputation

of the Australian National University. To suggest that I as Chancellor would in any way harm any person at the ANU or anywhere is just so distressing. I absolutely reject it.

ROSS SOLLY: So, do you think Senator Pocock was deliberately trying to ambush you?

JULIE BISHOP: I have no idea. I can't imagine why he didn't mention it to me. I would have if I'd been in his position and a Chancellor came to see me and I had in my possession a document that made such dramatic allegations. Of course I would say, "By the way, these allegations are about to be made." But not a word.

ROSS SOLLY: And what about the – in your letter you talked about why the committee didn't go in camera. Are you satisfied with their response to that, that they said that, you know, this was a public inquiry and that they – I mean, basically justifying the fact that they didn't go in camera when they could have done?

JULIE BISHOP: I just think fairness to everybody would have meant taking the evidence in camera. They do it all the time. I recall being – chairing a number of committees, and as soon as a witness raised allegations against someone or raised any sort of allegations that would require a right of reply, I would immediately suggest that the matter be held in camera, hear the evidence and then if you want to make it public you make it public after. But you give consideration to the ramifications of it. In this case, it was a very distressed witness. I would take – it was a workplace grievance. I mean, to ventilate a workplace grievance – and employee against an employer – in an open Senate inquiry is against the workplace laws of this country.

ROSS SOLLY: At the heart of all of this the evidence that day is the allegation that you're a bully. Are you a bully?

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely not. Anybody who knows me – Ross, I've been in public life for 20 years. I've been subjected to very high levels of public scrutiny, as appropriate as a member of parliament. I've been a cabinet minister, I've been a party leader, I've held public roles. And I've never had the hint of anything like that ever levelled against me. It came as an absolute shock to me and to anybody who's ever worked for me and with me. And I've chaired every single council meeting. I chair them with the greatest respect to everybody present. I chair them in a professional way. I uphold the highest standards of conduct. I'm obliged to do that, but it also aligns with my own personal and professional standards.

ROSS SOLLY: I know you've said that it's not about your reputation, but you can't be happy with the way you're reputation has been trashed at the moment?

JULIE BISHOP: Would you be if these allegations were levelled against you? Of course not. It's distressing. And I have categorically rejected them, but I can't in all good conscience expose more harm and distress to the ANU staff and the ANU community who were witnesses to the council meeting in question.

ROSS SOLLY: Have you reached out to Liz Allen and had a conversation with her since she gave that evidence?

JULIE BISHOP: I've been told that it would not be appropriate given the nature of the allegations. I would be perfectly happy to –

ROSS SOLLY: Because obviously here's a woman who has obviously distressed and talking about –

JULIE BISHOP: And at the appropriate time I will certainly be available to talk with her. I thought we had a terrific relationship. I thought I got on exceedingly well with her.

ROSS SOLLY: Have you made personal inquiries – without going to her directly – just to check on her welfare to make sure –

JULIE BISHOP: Yes, that's done on a regular basis.

ROSS SOLLY: So you're doing that regularly?

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely, yes.

ROSS SOLLY: Okay.

JULIE BISHOP: And when it's appropriate, of course I will. But while there's a workplace grievance that's underway that I'm yet to be notified whether or not I'm a respondent to it, I'm advised that it would not be appropriate.

ROSS SOLLY: I'm just going to read you this quick text: "Julie Bishop, you're not in parliament now. Are you capable of listening to ordinary people? I don't detect one ounce of sympathy for those whose jobs, careers and studies have been threatened."

JULIE BISHOP: That's not the case at all. I've been talking with many people at ANU. I've received a lot of feedback, I've met with the university leadership group. I've met with students. I've met with the union. I've met with the deans, and I know that there's a lot of distress and concern. I understand that. And change programs and change is very challenging for many people. And, of course, I have great sympathy, great empathy and great concern for the impact that it's had. And you would have heard interim Vice-Chancellor Rebekah Brown say yesterday how she takes responsibility to ensure that going forward we are able to make the change in a way that does not – does not – cause harm. And of course that distresses me greatly. There is some good news out there.

ROSS SOLLY: There is some good news yesterday.

JULIE BISHOP: Yeah.

ROSS SOLLY: I know that the School of Music gets a lot of attention because it is so loved here in Canberra.

JULIE BISHOP: Indeed.

ROSS SOLLY: And you would know that being someone who spent a lot of time in Canberra.

JULIE BISHOP: Yes.

ROSS SOLLY: Can you give them any light at the end of the tunnel? Because at the moment they're still feeling under attack.

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely. The School of Music has undergone so many changes since 2012. There have been a number of restructures and a number of attempts to make it financially sustainable. It currently is not. But what we have done is there's a change proposal to embed the School of Music into a broader cultural contemporary space –

ROSS SOLLY: Which the School of Music doesn't want to do. The students want to do it.

JULIE BISHOP: Hang on, I'll come back to the performance part. And the performance part, the individual tuition, that is the very expensive part of it. We're working closely with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra – and I've written to Minister Tony Burke about this last week – that we're working with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra so that we'll be able to have a kind of joint arrangement so that individual tuition in partnership with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra can continue. All students who are currently at the School of Music will complete their tuition in the way they signed up for. But going forward it's going to be a partnership with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, and I'm really excited about that because I know the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and the School of Music are very important parts of the Canberra community.

ROSS SOLLY: Julie Bishop, we nearly have to leave it there because we've got a very important Raiders match tomorrow night here in Canberra which I need to preview, but I want to put this to you –

JULIE BISHOP: Let's get our priorities right.

ROSS SOLLY: Well, that's right. But I want to put one last question to you.

JULIE BISHOP: Yes.

ROSS SOLLY: If, in the final analysis, the message that comes through clearly from people is that the only path forward for the ANU to return to its glory days or to be the university that everyone is so proud of, that path will have to mean you stepping aside, would you do it?

JULIE BISHOP: The ANU is a great institution, and chancellors come and go. And the ANU will continue to be one of the most remarkable universities in the world. And it's my role to ensure that we get back on the path of becoming number one.

ROSS SOLLY: But you wouldn't consider stepping aside for the best – in the best interests of the university?

JULIE BISHOP: That's up to my council. That is up to my council.

ROSS SOLLY: But personally, you still believe you're the best person for the job?

JULIE BISHOP: Yes, I do. I believe I have an obligation to see this through, and I will.

ROSS SOLLY: All right. Julie Bishop it's been great chatting with you this morning. I don't know if it was as good as TEN years ago; I don't know whether –

JULIE BISHOP: It's different. It's different, Ross.

ROSS SOLLY: I don't know whether you'll remember this interview, but I appreciate you coming in and chatting.

JULIE BISHOP: I'll remember this one, for sure.

ROSS SOLLY: Thanks, Julie.

JULIE BISHOP: Thanks, Ross.

ROSS SOLLY: That's Julie Bishop, the Chancellor of the ANU on ABC Canberra.**ROSS SOLLY:** Okay, so the ANU Chancellor, Julie Bishop, has joined us in the studio this morning.

Julie Bishop, thank you for coming in this morning.

JULIE BISHOP: Good morning, Ross. It's been some time since I've been in this studio – probably about ten years, but good to be back.

ROSS SOLLY: Yeah, well, hopefully this will be as enjoyable as maybe the last time was – I'm not sure, though.

JULIE BISHOP: I'm trying to recall the – it was an international event, and I was doing the rounds of radio and TV as Foreign Minister, but I do recall sitting right here, and I'm not sure whether you were the interviewer or not. I'm sorry for not remembering.

ROSS SOLLY: No, well, obviously it wasn't one of my more memorable interviews then.

Can I ask you straight up, Julie Bishop, why is it, do you think, so many people want you to resign?

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I don't believe they do.

ROSS SOLLY: There's a lot of people that have been saying that they think the only path forward is for you to step aside.

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I disagree, and I won't be stepping aside. I have the backing of my council. I'm working very closely with the interim Vice-Chancellor, the deans, the general managers. I've been on campus over the last two weeks. I mean, I'm on campus a lot, but over the last two weeks specifically. And I'm getting a lot of very positive feedback. But, more importantly, I have an obligation to see this transition through on behalf of the ANU, and I intend to do that.

ROSS SOLLY: How much responsibility, then, do you take for the situation that the ANU finds itself in now? I'm talking about the level of malcontent there is out there the level of in-fighting, the level of disappointing there is out there. How much responsibility do you take for that?

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JULIE BISHOP: We are not the only organisation. I mean, let's face it, Ross, you know that the ABC is going through a major restructure that means a loss of jobs, it means axing programs. Change is hard –

ROSS SOLLY: But we're not calling for our chair to step aside. We're not calling for heads to roll. Because, you know, I think some might disagree, but the lines of communication are open and generally there's an open dialogue going. How much responsibility do you take for the claims that there hasn't been that dialogue and that there is a lot of very, very unhappy people at the ANU?

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ROSS SOLLY: But are you not reading the room here?

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ROSS SOLLY: So just – and I'm sorry to keep harping on this, but do you take any responsibility then for –

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ROSS SOLLY: So you take responsibility?

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ROSS SOLLY: I know.

JULIE BISHOP: And you said it stops at the top. So I'm agreeing with you. But I'm seeing this transition through, Ross –

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JULIE BISHOP: – and it's not up to the union to remove the Chair. It's up to the council, and the council supports me.

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JULIE BISHOP: No, I've asked the Senate committee to guarantee that it would remain private because for me to actually name names and go into the details of witnesses to the allegations that were raised in the Senate inquiry would necessarily breach confidences. So, I want an assurance that my response to the allegations made against me would be kept in confidence, and I've not yet received that undertaking from the committee.

ROSS SOLLY: It's quite obvious from your submission, though – part A – that you're far from impressed with the behaviour of Senator David Pocock.

JULIE BISHOP: I'm deeply concerned – in fact, dismayed – at the way that Senate inquiry unfolded. And there was a lot of unnecessary hurt and emotion and a breach of confidences and support for people who clearly should have had the opportunity to have their testimony begin in private. I have to say, I've been on committees, parliamentary committees, throughout my 20-year career. I've never seen anything like that, to have a witness's very emotional testimony taken in public without any thought of those who were watching it, those who were sitting in the room, let alone the witness herself. I found it quite distressing.

ROSS SOLLY: But it may well have been a surprise, though for –

JULIE BISHOP: No, I believe not because Senator Pocock made it quite clear that he had a document which he said contained a workplace grievance that I am to assume is levelled against me. But to this day

I have not been notified of a workplace grievance against me.

ROSS SOLLY: Really?

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely have not been notified.

ROSS SOLLY: So, at this Senate committee, you were basically accused of being a bully. That's what they said. You're a bully.

JULIE BISHOP: That was part of the testimony. I mean, there was some terrible allegations levelled at me, and it was the first time I'd ever heard them. And I went back to ANU after this testimony had been aired in public and I asked if there was a workplace grievance, why have I not been notified if it's against me. And I was informed that when the grievance was lodged back in March it was so lacking in specificity and details and particulars and evidence and witnesses that it didn't reach the threshold to trigger the notification of a respondent. To this day, I have not been notified that I am the subject of a workplace grievance. But in any event, having the evidence taken that way, that testimony taken in that way has completely compromised the workplace grievance process that I understand is underway at ANU.

ROSS SOLLY: Some might say – at a quarter to 9 – that one of the reasons you're most upset is because it was your reputation being trashed and it was there for everybody to see, and there you had a witness that was incredibly emotional, basically laying at your feet the situation that she found herself in.

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I absolutely reject each and every allegation that was made against me. And it seems to come down to one council meeting. There were 16 people present in that room when these allegations apparently arise. As I said, I'm yet to see the document that Senator Pocock has. I actually met with Senator Pocock in his office on the 22nd of July.

ROSS SOLLY: So, this is prior to the Senate hearing?

JULIE BISHOP: Prior to the Senate hearing but after he claims that he'd received this workplace document. And he said he received a document on the 15th of June. He confirmed that it was the workplace grievance. He said he sent it on to Minister Clare. I had no idea, and to this idea I don't know what's in that document, but I went to see him in Parliament House on the 22nd of July and I talked to him about his concerns about the financial sustainability of ANU, the change proposals. He had concerns about communications and management style. He did not raise one issue about me, my leadership, my role as Chancellor. He certainly didn't raise any allegations against me. He didn't say, "Oh, by the way, somebody's going to give evidence against you in the Senate hearing." Nothing.

ROSS SOLLY: Was it his responsibility to do so?

JULIE BISHOP: Well, wouldn't you have done that to someone if you knew that there was about to be explosive allegations made when I wouldn't be present? I mean, no natural justice, no procedural fairness, no right of reply month's later? I just found it –

ROSS SOLLY: Maybe he wanted to protect the witness.

JULIE BISHOP: Maybe he wanted to ambush me, because protecting the witness would be, surely, to have her evidence, her testimony, taken in camera so that her distress wouldn't have played out in public. I found it – and a number of people have said to me they found it – deeply distressing, and there's still no warning on any Senate website that there's –

ROSS SOLLY: It's still there. You can still see it, yeah.

JULIE BISHOP: Yeah, that there's very distressing testimony given. I just feel that no thought was given to a safe workplace, not only for the witnesses but for the people viewing it. And it wasn't about my reputation – I had an opportunity to give a right of reply weeks later – I was concerned about the reputation of the Australian National University. To suggest that I as Chancellor would in any way harm any person at the ANU or anywhere is just so distressing. I absolutely reject it.

ROSS SOLLY: So, do you think Senator Pocock was deliberately trying to ambush you?

JULIE BISHOP: I have no idea. I can't imagine why he didn't mention it to me. I would have if I'd been in his position and a Chancellor came to see me and I had in my possession a document that made such dramatic allegations. Of course I would say, "By the way, these allegations are about to be made." But not a word.

ROSS SOLLY: And what about the – in your letter you talked about why the committee didn't go in camera. Are you satisfied with their response to that, that they said that, you know, this was a public inquiry and that they – I mean, basically justifying the fact that they didn't go in camera when they could have done?

JULIE BISHOP: I just think fairness to everybody would have meant taking the evidence in camera. They do it all the time. I recall being – chairing a number of committees, and as soon as a witness raised allegations against someone or raised any sort of allegations that would require a right of reply, I would immediately suggest that the matter be held in camera, hear the evidence and then if you want to make it public you make it public after. But you give consideration to the ramifications of it. In this case, it was a very distressed witness. I would take – it was a workplace grievance. I mean, to ventilate a workplace grievance – and employee against an employer – in an open Senate inquiry is against the workplace laws of this country.

ROSS SOLLY: At the heart of all of this the evidence that day is the allegation that you're a bully. Are you a bully?

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely not. Anybody who knows me – Ross, I've been in public life for 20 years. I've been subjected to very high levels of public scrutiny, as appropriate as a member of parliament. I've been a cabinet minister, I've been a party leader, I've held public roles. And I've never had the hint of anything like that ever levelled against me. It came as an absolute shock to me and to anybody who's ever worked for me and with me. And I've chaired every single council meeting. I chair them with the greatest respect to everybody present. I chair them in a professional way. I uphold the highest standards of conduct. I'm obliged to do that, but it also aligns with my own personal and professional standards.

ROSS SOLLY: I know you've said that it's not about your reputation, but you can't be happy with the way you're reputation has been trashed at the moment?

JULIE BISHOP: Would you be if these allegations were levelled against you? Of course not. It's distressing. And I have categorically rejected them, but I can't in all good conscience expose more harm and distress to the ANU staff and the ANU community who were witnesses to the council meeting in question.

ROSS SOLLY: Have you reached out to Liz Allen and had a conversation with her since she gave that evidence?

JULIE BISHOP: I've been told that it would not be appropriate given the nature of the allegations. I would be perfectly happy to –

ROSS SOLLY: Because obviously here's a woman who has obviously distressed and talking about –

JULIE BISHOP: And at the appropriate time I will certainly be available to talk with her. I thought we had a terrific relationship. I thought I got on exceedingly well with her.

ROSS SOLLY: Have you made personal inquiries – without going to her directly – just to check on her welfare to make sure –

JULIE BISHOP: Yes, that's done on a regular basis.

ROSS SOLLY: So you're doing that regularly?

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely, yes.

ROSS SOLLY: Okay.

JULIE BISHOP: And when it's appropriate, of course I will. But while there's a workplace grievance that's underway that I'm yet to be notified whether or not I'm a respondent to it, I'm advised that it would not be appropriate.

ROSS SOLLY: I'm just going to read you this quick text: "Julie Bishop, you're not in parliament now. Are you capable of listening to ordinary people? I don't detect one ounce of sympathy for those whose jobs, careers and studies have been threatened."

JULIE BISHOP: That's not the case at all. I've been talking with many people at ANU. I've received a lot of feedback, I've met with the university leadership group. I've met with students. I've met with the union. I've met with the deans, and I know that there's a lot of distress and concern. I understand that. And change programs and change is very challenging for many people. And, of course, I have great sympathy, great empathy and great concern for the impact that it's had. And you would have heard interim Vice-Chancellor Rebekah Brown say yesterday how she takes responsibility to ensure that going forward we are able to make the change in a way that does not – does not – cause harm. And of course that distresses me greatly. There is some good news out there.

ROSS SOLLY: There is some good news yesterday.

JULIE BISHOP: Yeah.

ROSS SOLLY: I know that the School of Music gets a lot of attention because it is so loved here in Canberra.

JULIE BISHOP: Indeed.

ROSS SOLLY: And you would know that being someone who spent a lot of time in Canberra.

JULIE BISHOP: Yes.

ROSS SOLLY: Can you give them any light at the end of the tunnel? Because at the moment they're still feeling under attack.

JULIE BISHOP: Absolutely. The School of Music has undergone so many changes since 2012. There have been a number of restructures and a number of attempts to make it financially sustainable. It currently is not. But what we have done is there's a change proposal to embed the School of Music into a broader cultural contemporary space –

ROSS SOLLY: Which the School of Music doesn't want to do. The students want to do it.

JULIE BISHOP: Hang on, I'll come back to the performance part. And the performance part, the individual tuition, that is the very expensive part of it. We're working closely with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra – and I've written to Minister Tony Burke about this last week – that we're working with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra so that we'll be able to have a kind of joint arrangement so that individual tuition in partnership with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra can continue. All students who are currently at the School of Music will complete their tuition in the way they signed up for. But going forward it's going to be a partnership with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, and I'm really excited about that because I know the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and the School of Music are very important parts of the Canberra community.

ROSS SOLLY: Julie Bishop, we nearly have to leave it there because we've got a very important Raiders match tomorrow night here in Canberra which I need to preview, but I want to put this to you –

JULIE BISHOP: Let's get our priorities right.

ROSS SOLLY: Well, that's right. But I want to put one last question to you.

JULIE BISHOP: Yes.

ROSS SOLLY: If, in the final analysis, the message that comes through clearly from people is that the only path forward for the ANU to return to its glory days or to be the university that everyone is so proud of, that path will have to mean you stepping aside, would you do it?

JULIE BISHOP: The ANU is a great institution, and chancellors come and go. And the ANU will continue to be one of the most remarkable universities in the world. And it's my role to ensure that we get back on the path of becoming number one.

ROSS SOLLY: But you wouldn't consider stepping aside for the best – in the best interests of the university?

JULIE BISHOP: That's up to my council. That is up to my council.

ROSS SOLLY: But personally, you still believe you're the best person for the job?

JULIE BISHOP: Yes, I do. I believe I have an obligation to see this through, and I will.

ROSS SOLLY: All right. Julie Bishop it's been great chatting with you this morning. I don't know if it was as good as TEN years ago; I don't know whether –

JULIE BISHOP: It's different. It's different, Ross.

ROSS SOLLY: I don't know whether you'll remember this interview, but I appreciate you coming in and chatting.

JULIE BISHOP: I'll remember this one, for sure.

ROSS SOLLY: Thanks, Julie.

JULIE BISHOP: Thanks, Ross.

ROSS SOLLY: That's Julie Bishop, the Chancellor of the ANU on ABC Canberra.

END