tell-all blows up sandpapergate



> Someone is lying. I want to know the truth. The fans want to know the truth
>
> Former Test captain Michael Clarke

Ex-Aussie captain Michael Clarke has criticised Pat Cummins' lack of response. Picture: 2DayFM

and David Warner were too harshly treated by Cricket Australia, it did not change the fact Cummins did not know about sandpaper nor was he an architect.

"There is currently an hysteria unfounded in reality," he said.

"When you go through it all calmly and in detail, Pat's eight-year-long position and 68-minute Q&A stands up.

"There is no serious case he was an architect of ball tampering or knew sandpaper was going on the field.

"It's also true that the players who were suspended paid far too high a price. Year-long bans for ball tampering that players in other countries did and were suspended for just a few games. They have always been right to feel aggrieved by that."

Former Australian quick Mitchell Johnson meanwhile has reignited his feud with Cummins, declaring in his newspaper column that he can't see how the Test captain, and his former World Cup teammate, will survive the public pressure on his position.

And Ian Healy, who has been a vocal critic of Usman Khawaja and is the uncle-in-law to fast bowler Mitchell Starc, said Cummins could salvage the captaincy but must speak publicly again to respond to Bancroft's accusations if he was to shore up his leadership of the Test team.

Fellow current stars who were part of the infamous 2018 tour, Smith, Starc and Nathan Lyon, did not train on Thursday, but Smith – who is deeply affected by the events of eight years ago and has little interest in weighing in again – is expected to pad up for NSW on Sunday.

It's understood non-disclosure agreements would be waived by CA to allow ex-staff members to participate in the independent forum announced by chief executive Todd Greenberg and interim chair David Boon on Wednesday.

This is significant in opening a genuine platform for players and staff to have their say.

It's been speculated Queensland-based bowling coach David Saker, accused by Cameron Bancroft as being central in the sandpaper plot, had signed an NDA following his departure from CA.

Clarke questioned the relevance of the independent forum now Bancroft had already blown up the issue.

"The public don't want any more bullshit," he said.

"The public want the complete truth to allow us to move on. The forum. We're going to do a forum. The forum is done now! Cam Bancroft just ended the forum."

Johnson wrote in his column for The West Australian that he believed Bancroft and described the pressure on Cummins as "immense".

"I believe Bancroft's account. It comes across as real and I could feel the words as he was saying them. He came across as himself and he has nothing to lose now. It also lines up with the most detailed accounts we've heard from other players," Johnson wrote.

"The pressure on Cummins is now immense. I think he will still try to stand by what he has said and his statement with all of the bowlers back in 2021.

"But I think the public pressure for Cummins to stand down as Test captain now will be too much.

"I just can't see how his captaincy and personal brand survives this. CA needs to do more than a safe-space forum. It's owed to the fans, and they've had enough, like many of us.

"The investigation failed at the one thing it was meant to do, end this eight years ago with the right outcome. We want the truth, we want answers. But we also wish we had moved on all that time ago."

Cummins said last week he would never talk publicly about the sandpaper affair again after his epic take-all-questions press conference, but Australian Test great Healy says Cummins must break this vow as soon as possible.



Usman Khawaja in Brisbane on Thursday. Picture: Liam Kidston

Khawaja backing Bangers tell-all

'There's no reason to lie'

Wei Heng Siah
Robert Craddock

> I'm glad he's gone out and said what he said
>
> Usman Khawaja

Usman Khawaja has thrown his support behind Cam Bancroft's dam-busting revelations and believes he was speaking the truth.

Bancroft rocked the cricket world when he released a 4000-word column on Thursday claiming every member of the 2018 Australia touring party to South Africa knew about the use of sandpaper on the cricket ball in the Port Elizabeth and Cape Town Tests.

This version supports similar claims made by Khawaja in his just-released autobiography, Sabr, but is at odds with the view of Test captain Pat Cummins who insisted last Friday that he did not know about the sandpaper plan.

"I'm really happy that Cam felt safe enough to go out there and tell the story that he told about what happened," Khawaja told media at Brisbane Airport on Thursday.

Asked whether Bancroft was telling the truth, Khawaja said: "There's no reason for Cameron to lie.

"Look, I'm proud of him. I've known Cam for a long time. He's a friend that I've talked to him a lot, and it's something that he's carried with him for a long time.

"I'm glad that he's gone out and said what he said.

"I've been talking to him the last couple of weeks and I think this is the first time he finally feels like he can move on from this, say what he has to, and it's part of his journey to finally find some peace as to what happened, tell the story, then move on.

"I fully support Cameron what he said, and I, as a friend, will always have his back."

Khawaja has cancelled several media appearances including a podcast with the The Grade Cricketers and another press conference that was scheduled for Cairns on Saturday to promote the T20 Gold Clash at Cazalys Stadium on Sunday, where he will be playing in the same team as Darren Lehmann, of whom he was critical in Sabr.

Bancroft was stopped by several television crews in Perth after his explosive column created worldwide headlines and admitted a weight had lifted from his shoulders.

"I've been carrying a lot of this stuff for a long period of time," Bancroft told Nine.

"I feel really freed and really happy to be able to do that. And obviously now there's a process in place which Cricket Australia have put in."

He also told Network Ten: "I never meant to point fingers or implicate others. I just wanted for my own piece to tell the truth."

Chill pill for Alzheimer's

A drug aimed at reducing Alzheimer's symptoms has shown promising results, the biotech company it says.

Australian firm Actinogen released the results of phase 2 trials of Emestedastat, a drug that blocks production of the stress hormone cortisol in key areas of the brain, on Thursday.

The trial involved 247 patients in Australia and the US with mild to moderate symptoms, taking a daily pill over a 36-week course.

While it slowed the progression of the disease by 30 per cent in those over the median age of 75 – half the trial group – it did not record a statistically significant benefit in the overall group.

Actinogen chief Steven Gourlay said a $10.8m federal tax incentive put them in a stronger cash position amid the trial.

Farmer wants a buyer and lands $33.26m

Greg Stolz

A former Farmer Wants a Wife reality TV show couple have sold a North West Queensland cattle station for more than $33m.

Frank and Tenille Atherton, who met on season seven of the show in 2011 before marrying two years later, sold Zara Station near Hughenden under the hammer at auction on Wednesday.



Tenille (nee Jolly) and Frank Atherton.

The 21,327ha property was knocked down for $33.26m to the Cloncurry-based Lorraine Pastoral Company. More than 2000 head of cattle were included in the deal.

The wider Atherton family also sold the 18,701ha Strathelen and Rellum Park grazing property near Torrens Creek for $9.625m at the auction in Townsville.

Selling agent Luke Westaway, of Stockplace Marketing, said the Athertons were looking to downsize. They still hold the 13,000ha Redcliffe cattle station near Hughenden where they live.

Mr Westaway said the Australian cattle market was buoyant and demand for premium properties was strong, with 75 people attending Tuesday's auction.

The auction was conducted by Gold Coast-based auctioneer Phil Black, who has sold more than $150m worth of cattle properties in the past two years including May Downs near Mt Isa for $47.5m.

Mr Black's motto is "have gavel will travel".