

'Mummy and daddy bailouts' at St John's

Jake Mitchell

One of the most prominent public figures to come out of St John's College at Sydney University has lashed its hierarchy for allowing "boofheads" to continually "bail themselves out through their wealthy mummy and daddy".

"The problems are exacerbated by the fact that these louts will probably still land prominent jobs in law firms or medicine because of their family networks," the prominent alumnus said on the condition of anonymity.

Female students at the college are referred to as "Johnets" or "JETS", but insiders have reported that the term has taken on a new meaning – Just Excuse The Slag. The college council has had a maximum of three female members out of 18 fellows.

"If Julia Gillard wants to find the misogynists, she can find a lot of them at St John's College," said the prominent former John's man.

"The NSW government should move fast to legislate to give the minister the power to sack the college council, and to appoint administrators where appropriate, to severely retract appeal rights that the students use to try to bail themselves out through their wealthy mummy and daddy."

The roll of St John's alumni is littered with big shots, particularly in law, politics and business. But former John's man, renowned philosopher and mathematician James Franklin, said it could not claim credit.

"The reason John's has 'produced' many leaders is that it's had high-quality input, rather than it's having added value itself," said Dr Franklin, a Eureka Prize winner.

"John's hasn't so much drifted off course as never getting on course in the first place," he said. "It's always been somewhere between a wasted opportunity and a disgrace."

An ethics lecturer at the

Catholic-affiliated Notre Dame University in Sydney, Sandra Lynch, said the herd mentality had overcome all sense of justice at St John's.

"Coming from a Catholic university myself, I would expect care, compassion and justice from a Catholic institution, but instead there's a mob mentality and destructive behaviour," Dr Lynch said.

Along with Opposition Leader Tony Abbott and shadow treasurer Joe Hockey, former John's men include former Sydney mayor and state Labor minister Frank Sartor and former Liberal NSW opposition leader Peter Collins.

St John's has hosted High Court and Supreme Court judges, including Roddy Meagher, Sir Cyril

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Walsh and current NSW Supreme Court Justice Ian Harrison.

Richard O'Connor, one of the inaugural judges of the High Court, completed his undergraduate degree while at St John's in 1871, just three years before Francis Bede Freehill, one of Australia's first newspaper publishers, completed his.

Business leaders who attended St John's include Sir David Higgins, former chief executive of Lend Lease; Michael Hintze, chief executive of CQS Management and Daniel Gilbert, former NAB director.

None of the many distinguished former John's men contacted by the *Weekend Financial Review* defended the college.