



m+ **EXCLUSIVE** How claims Isaac Heeney's fiancée was in the hotel lobby at 8am spread among AFL 'insiders' before the Sydney Swans hit back with a furious denial



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By [PAUL SHAPIRO](#), SENIOR NEWS REPORTER, AUSTRALIA

- How WhatsApp gossip has driven 'misinformation' campaign
- Swans now fighting back, forcefully rejecting one of the biggest rumours



- **Top criminal lawyer tells the Daily Mail why this case is so 'concerning'**
 - **READ MORE: [Isaac Heeney's fiancée ditches her engagement ring and makes a crisis phone call after fleeing to Noosa amid Sydney Swans hotel scandal](#)**
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The [Sydney Swans](#) have categorically denied Isaac Heeney's fiancée was seen in the Pullman lobby on the morning the hotel scandal broke, as the club continues to push back against what it describes as 'misinformation' circulating online.

Fresh claims, which have since been debunked, emerged via messaging apps on Saturday that Steffie Waters had arrived there the morning after the Swans' August 16 victory over Essendon.

The Mail also spoke to a person who was at the hotel shortly after 8am on August 17 and said they saw a woman resembling Waters alongside coach Dean Cox as he spoke with [the three lap dancers whose allegations sparked the club's turmoil](#).

It has since been established, however, that the woman they saw can't have been her.

'I got off at Jolimont [train station] and headed into the Pullman at 8.01am because I was freezing,' they told the Daily Mail.

'I saw the coaching staff [of] Sydney, and a blonde lady who I later [thought was] Heeney's fiancée, and they were conversing with three women who were evidently in the field of stripping.'





Steffie Waters, who is the most prominent and glamorous of the Sydney Swans WAGs, was exclusively photographed by the Daily Mail in Noosa, Queensland, on Friday afternoon



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Waters flew out to her sister's secluded mountain property on the outskirts of the Queensland tourist town last week while Heeney remains at the centre of a gathering storm



Victoria Police attended the Pullman East Melbourne hotel (pictured), where the Swans had been staying, following a report of an alleged sexual assault in the early hours

'Cox, although looking very concerned, was also being cooperative with the women and conversing with them.

'I had to go after about 10 minutes but it just seemed like a very concerning situation.'

Within hours, the news broke.

There had been chatter that Waters was in Melbourne at the time to attend the MCG game, which saw the Swans defeat the hapless Bombers by 36 points, securing them second spot on the ladder and guaranteeing a home qualifying final.

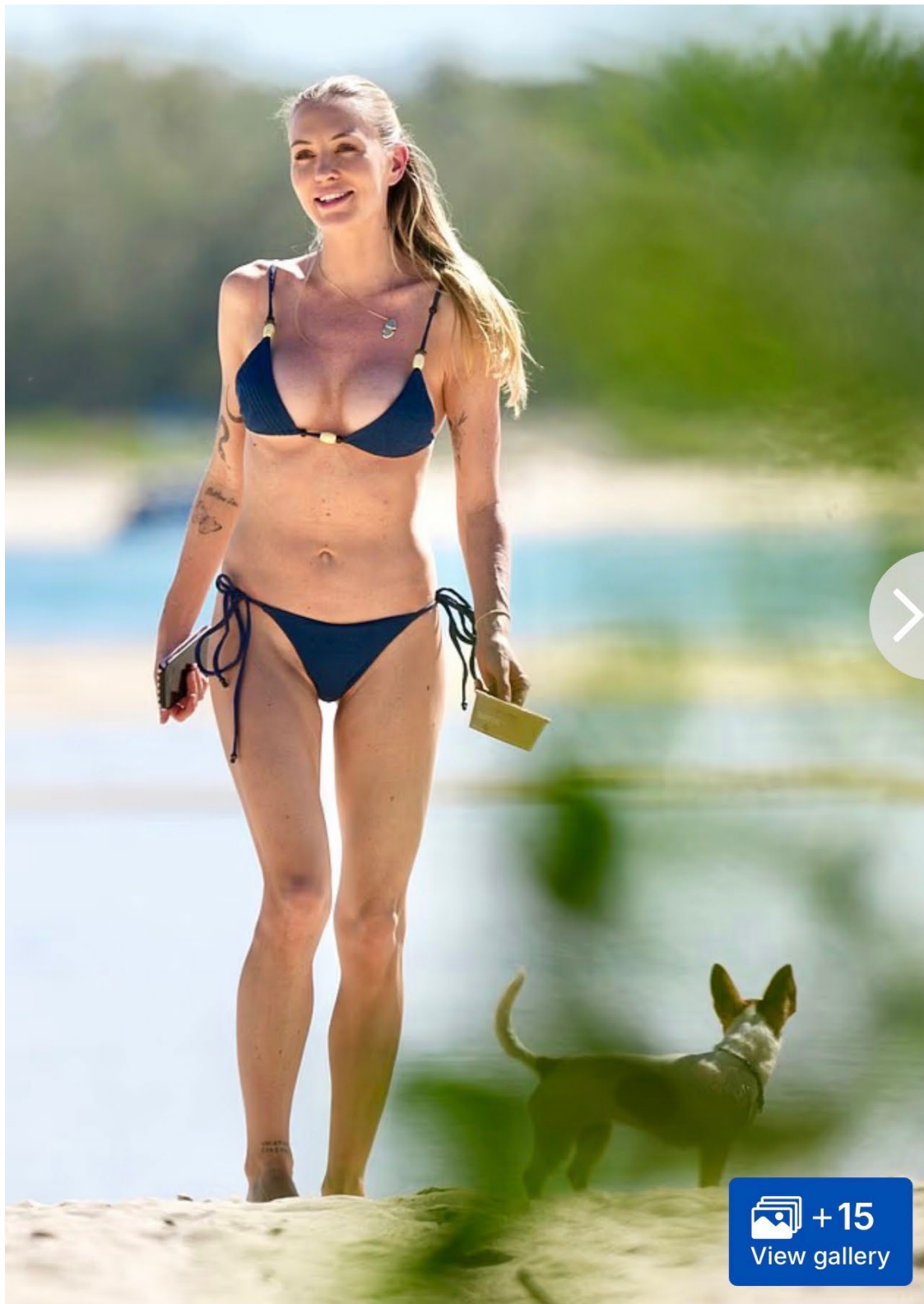
Claims that Waters arrived at the hotel while Cox was speaking with the three women have become one of the most talked-about rumours circulating among AFL 'insiders'.

However, the Swans have dismissed the report as false, placing it in the same category as other pieces of purported 'inside information' that have circulated online in recent days, including a [debunked image of a young woman with a facial injury](#) allegedly sustained in the hotel room.

That viral image was actually an unrelated photo from a UK tabloid months prior.

As false rumours of Waters' presence at the hotel gathered momentum over the weekend, the Mail put them directly to the Swans. A club spokesman unequivocally denied that Waters was at the Pullman.

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Waters retreated to a remote beach in a string bikini on Friday, after jetting out of Sydney



The Swans have denied that Heeney's fiancée, Steffie Waters, was at the Pullman hotel lobby. Heeney and Waters are still together, according to friends of the couple speaking anonymously

Waters has since fled Sydney for Noosa, Queensland, to escape the scandal.

The Daily Mail exclusively [pictured her there on Friday](#) without her engagement ring; however, friends of the couple insist they haven't broken up.

It caps a week from hell for the Swans, with rumour repeatedly outrunning reality as the club, the AFL and Victoria Police seek to determine what really unfolded in a hotel room in the raucous early hours of last Monday morning.

What cannot be disputed is that the decision to celebrate the MCG victory with a big night out has come at a heavy cost for Heeney and teammates Nick Blakey, Chad Warner, James Jordon and Riley Bice, who have all been stood down for the remainder of the 2026 season.

Waters is understood to be close friends with Jordon's partner Emily Twycross.

It has been reported that three women, believed to be strippers working for the Party Girls Melbourne agency, came back to the room before an allegation of a sexual assault was referred to Victoria Police.

No charges have been laid, and the Daily Mail does not suggest any of the players referred to are under investigation or involved in any wrongdoing.

The Swans moved quickly to suspend the players as they condemned their conduct.

'We are deeply sorry to everyone involved. We know that our behaviour has fallen well short of the standards expected of us and the values of our Club,' the Swans said in a statement on behalf of the five players.



The five Sydney players at the centre of the scandal, Isaac Heeney, Nick Blakey, Chad Warner, James Jordon and Riley Bice, have been stood down for the remainder of the 2026 season



Sydney Swans coach Dean Cox was seen in the Pullman lobby speaking with three women. There is no suggestion Cox acted improperly and he has flatly denied being in the hotel room

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'We know we have let down our partners and families, members, supporters, teammates, the AFLW team, corporate partners and everyone at the Club and in the wider community.

'We accept the Club sanction and apologise for the impact this has had on those involved. Our focus will now be on rebuilding trust with the Club and the community.'

However, the club has taken a more assertive stance in recent days, publicly rebuking what it describes as misinformation while maintaining that no players have been interviewed by police.

'The Sydney Swans can confirm that all investigations carried out by the Club have consistently indicated that the only representatives of the Club in the room central to the police investigation were the five players who have been stood down,' the Swans said in a statement.

'We have every reason to consider that reports to the contrary are simply false.

'We are respecting the process with the relevant authorities and will refrain from commenting on police matters.

'We would also like to take this opportunity to condemn some of the misinformation being reported and are now considering our legal position on those matters.'



© AFL Photos via Getty Images

Heeney (pictured at the MCG in September 2022) has not spoken publicly since the scandal broke but the Swans issued an apology on his behalf



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Top criminal lawyer George Balot, of Balot Reilly Criminal Lawyers, has urged the public to respect the presumption of innocence



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The Swans also 'categorically' confirmed 'no member of staff is involved in the investigation'.

'This includes being in the hotel room central to the police investigation,' they added.

'The Club reiterates that no player has been interviewed by police at this stage.'

In the meantime, top criminal lawyer George Balot, of Balot Reilly Criminal Lawyers, has urged the public to respect the presumption of innocence.

'It is important to emphasise that the Sydney players have, at this stage, not been charged with any criminal offence and are therefore entitled to the presumption of innocence,' Mr Balot told the Daily Mail.

In the meantime, top criminal lawyer George Balot, of Balot Reilly Criminal Lawyers, has urged the public to respect the presumption of innocence.

'It is important to emphasise that the Sydney players have, at this stage, not been charged with any criminal offence and are therefore entitled to the presumption of innocence,' Mr Balot told the Daily Mail.

'Criminal law cannot operate on assumptions, suppositions or conjecture. Allegations are not findings of fact, and suspicion is not proof.

'The relevant consideration for police and prosecutors is whether the available evidence provides a reasonable prospect of conviction and whether a prosecution is in the public interest.

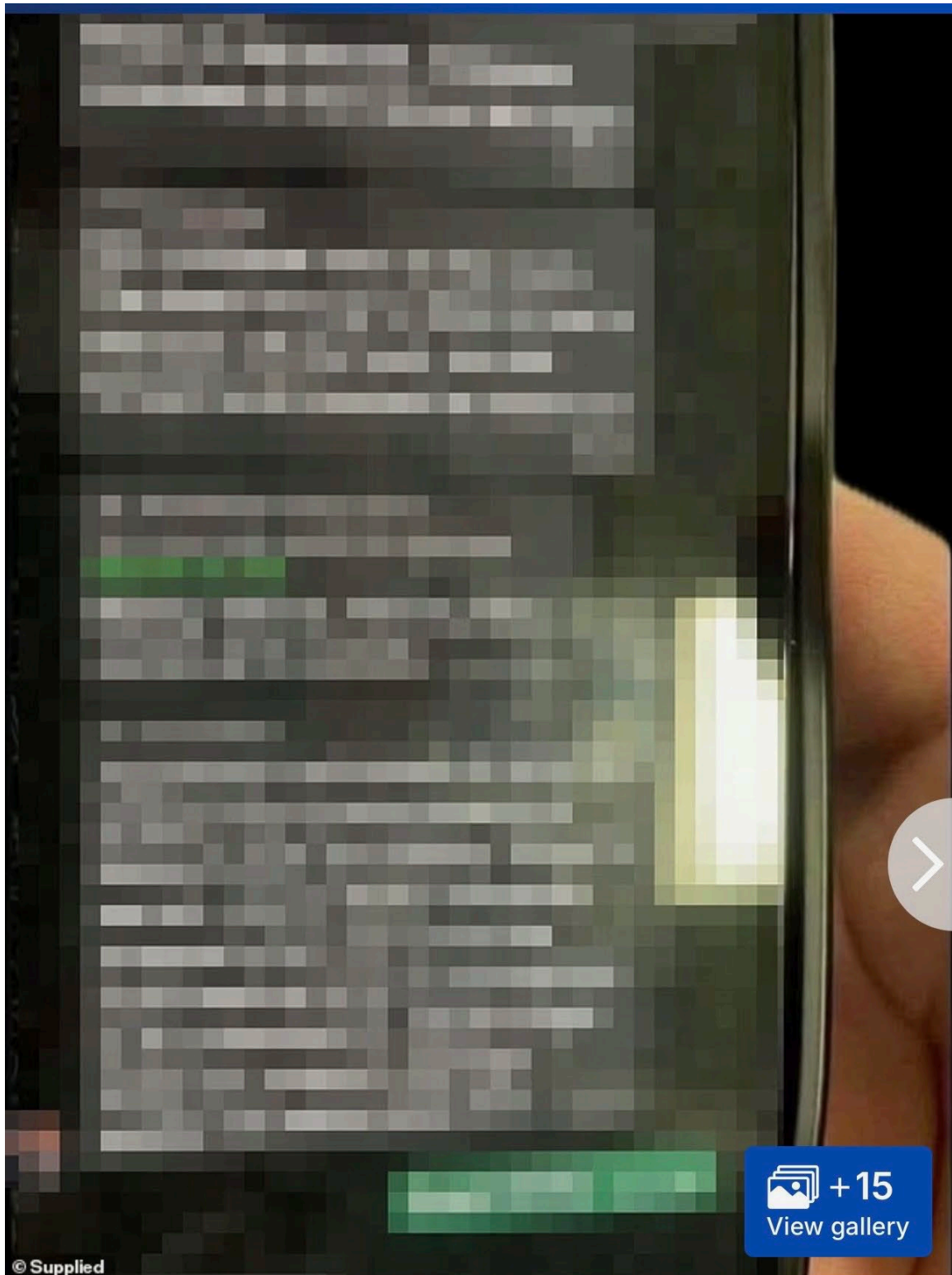
'The fact that charges have not presently been laid should not be interpreted as either an exoneration or a finding of guilt. The investigation and any eventual charging decision must be permitted to run its course.'

Mr Balot also said it is 'concerning when individuals appear to be convicted in the court of public opinion before they have even been charged, let alone before allegations have been tested in a criminal trial.

'Inflammatory commentary during an ongoing investigation can also risk prejudicing the integrity of the criminal justice process.

'Affording these players the presumption of innocence is not an endorsement of any alleged conduct. It is a fundamental principle of our criminal justice system.

'Ultimately, allegations should be determined by evidence and a fair criminal justice process, rather than assumption, speculation or public pressure.'



Unverified claims circulating on WhatsApp have been a driving force behind the 'misinformation' now being called out by the Swans. This viral message, which the Mail has blurred because its content has been debunked, was circulating at the start of last week

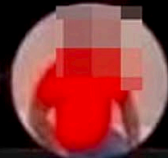
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Coaches + chief + 2's... >

How's this from my mate in Melbourne e

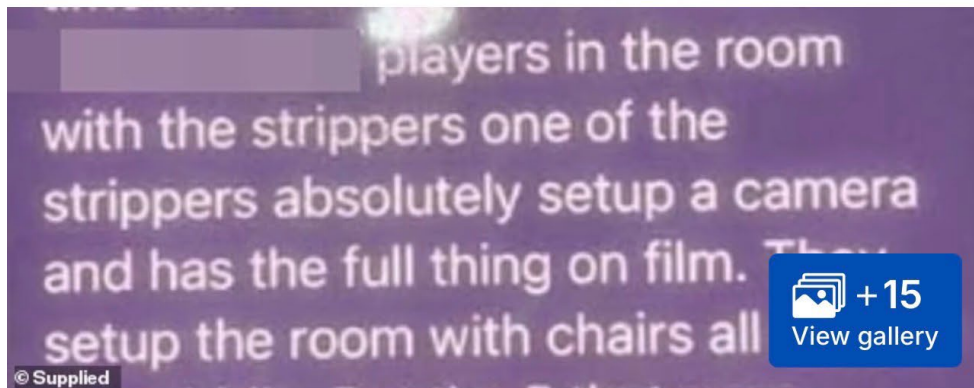
Im at the pullman in melbourne and 3 girls getting kicked out

And one of them said to the guy 'we have everything recorded

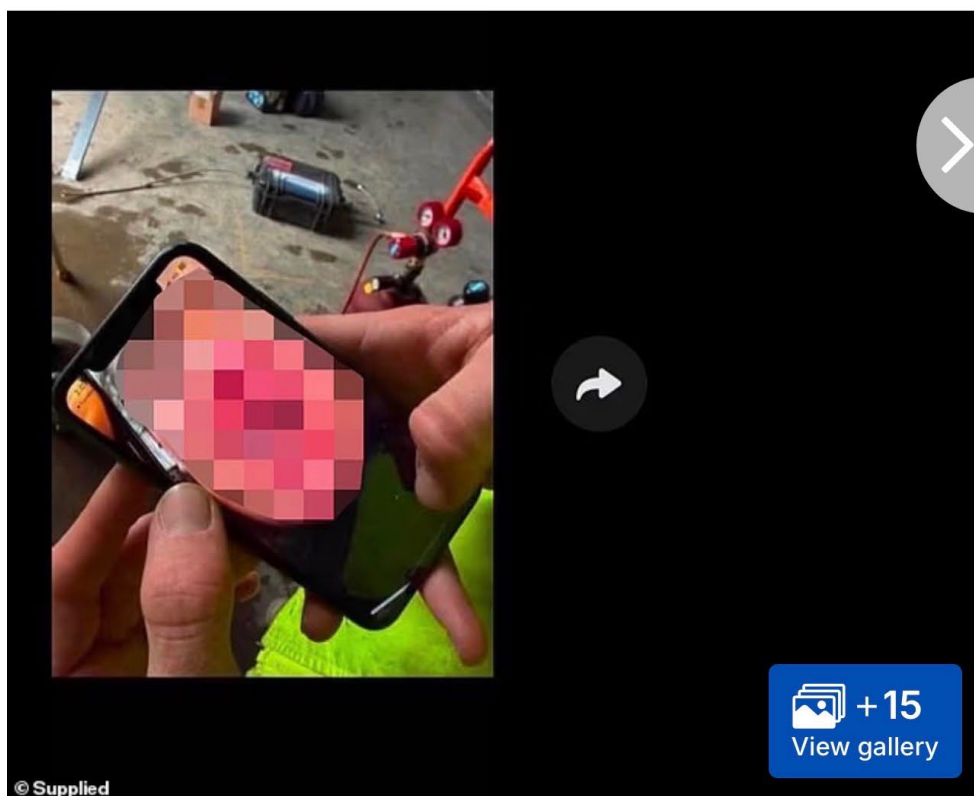


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This WhatsApp message, purportedly sent by someone who witnessed the drama unfold in the hotel lobby, alleged that one of the women was saying she'd 'recorded' inside the room



Subsequent WhatsApps alleged that a camera was set up and footage of the gathering exists



A photo circulating online, purporting to show a young woman with a facial injury allegedly sustained in the hotel room, has already been debunked as a fake

On Sunday, Victoria Police maintained it was still investigating a report of sexual assault, which allegedly occurred at the hotel in the early hours of

Monday, August 17.



'The exact circumstances of the matter are still being established and a number of people have been spoken to,' Victoria Police said in a statement.

'As the investigation remains active and ongoing, we will not be commenting further including providing information on the specific circumstances of the matter, movements of detectives and any statements or interviews taken.

'Where there is information that it is appropriate and beneficial to release then we will do so.'

Anyone with information about the matter is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit a confidential report at www.crimestoppersvic.com.au