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## IT nerd and former cheerleader is charged with incitement for organising a week of anti-vax protests that turned Melbourne into a battleground

- Harrison Mclean, 24, arrested at home on Saturday during latest day of riots
- Charged with incitement and banned from promoting more illegal events
- Mclean was behind the protests that saw thousands clash with police

By [NIC WHITE FOR DAILY MAIL AUSTRALIA](#)

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The chief architect of **Melbourne's** week of destructive anti-vaccine protests has been charged with incitement.

Harrison Mclean, 24, was arrested at his home on Saturday morning while his followers clashed with police on a seventh day of violence.

The Monash University graduate runs the 'Melbourne Freedom Rally' group on encrypted messaging app Telegram used to mobilise anti-vax protesters.



Harrison Mclean, 24, the chief architect of Melbourne's week of destructive anti-vaccine protests, has been charged with incitement. He is seen here at Tuesday's rally

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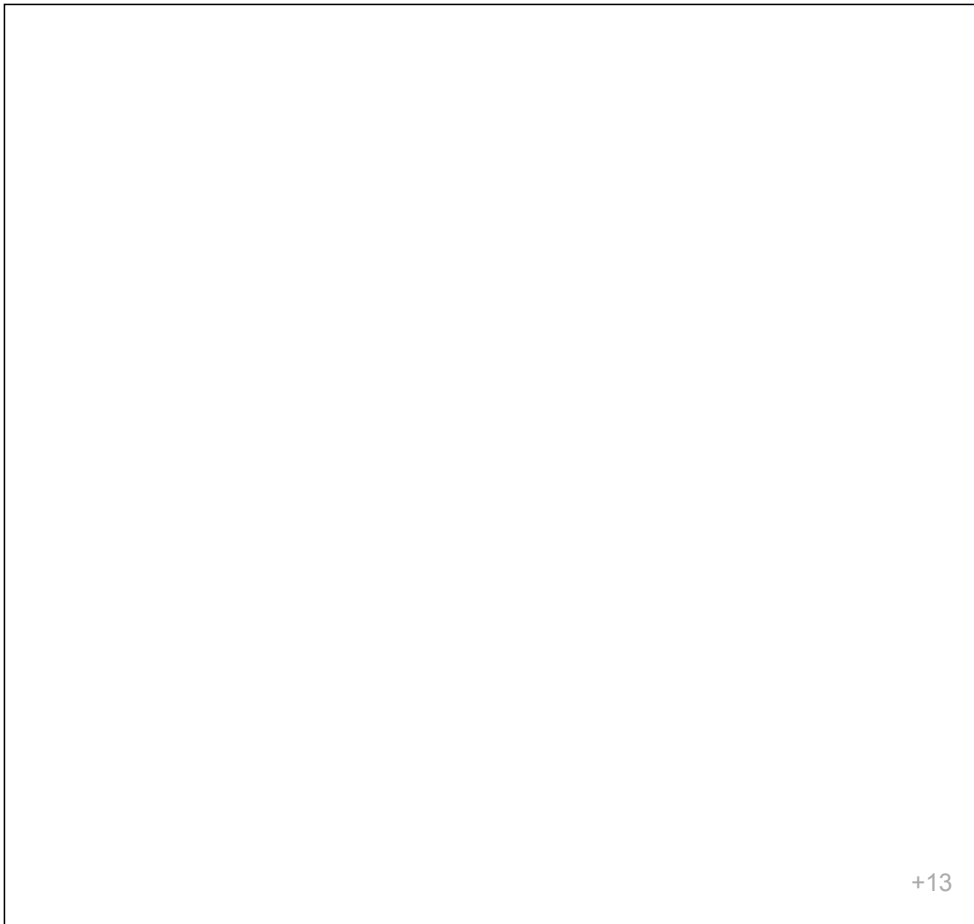
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**Mclean, a Monash University graduate and former cheerleader, runs the 'Melbourne Freedom Rally' Telegram channel used to mobilise riots that turned the city into a battleground**

Mclean, who also posts as 'Dominic D', used the channel, boasting more than 13,000 members, to promote and organise rallies against lockdowns and Covid vaccine mandates.

'I have accepted bail conditions for release, which include following chief health officer directions, and refraining from promoting Freedom Events that contravene CHO directions,' he wrote on Telegram early on Sunday.

'After advocating for the freedom of all Victorians, incitement charges have been laid against me in relation to the events that took place at the World Wide Rally for Freedom 4.0 in Melbourne on September 18.

'My legal battle now begins to continue the fight for freedom in Victoria, against the Andrews Regime.'

There is no record of Mclean encouraging violence of any kind in his promotion of the protests, but the rallies didn't take long to spiral out of control.

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Rallies earlier in the week were very successful with thousands flooding the streets, many dressed in high-vis though only a small fraction were actual construction workers

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By Saturday, just 200 protesters showed up on St Kilda Beach (pictured), by which point Mclean was already under arrest

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McLean was charged over the first rally on September 18 where 10 cops were injured and there were ugly scenes of alleged police brutality.

That anti-lockdown protest was planned for at least four months and heavily promoted on his network of Telegram channels.

Mclean and his followers seized on a vaccine mandate for the construction industry to spawn another protest outside the CFMEU office on Monday.

Follow-up rallies, all promoted and organised on Mclean's Telegram groups, continued every day until Saturday.

Thousands marched around the Melbourne CBD in the early protests but ran out of steam due to poor communication and increased police presence by Thursday, with just 200 showing up to St Kilda Beach on Saturday.

Mclean later on Sunday defended accepting the bail conditions that severely curtail his protest activities against followers who called him a 'sellout'.

'The bail conditions were reasonable for the circumstances, and there is nothing to be gained from sending time in jail,' he told one.

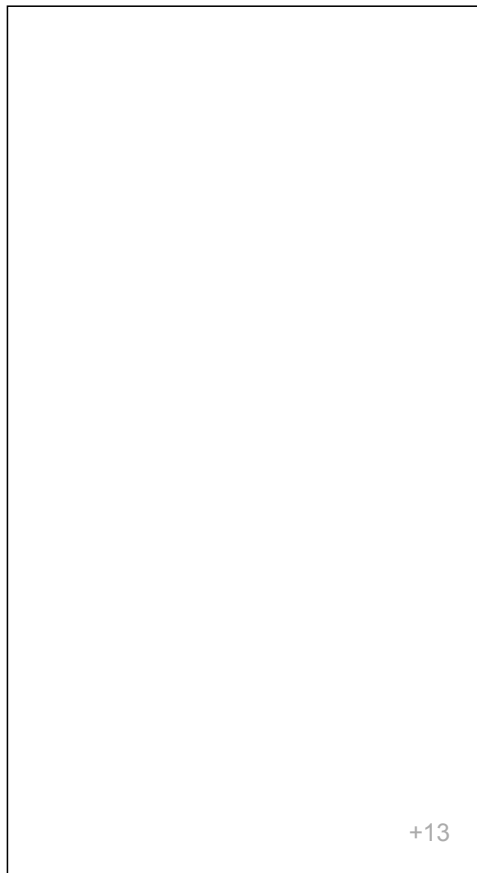
'There is a lot that can be done while outside that is not directly rally related.'

Another asked Mclean if he was worried about the CFMEU coming after him for hijacking the vaccine mandate issue to organise protests.

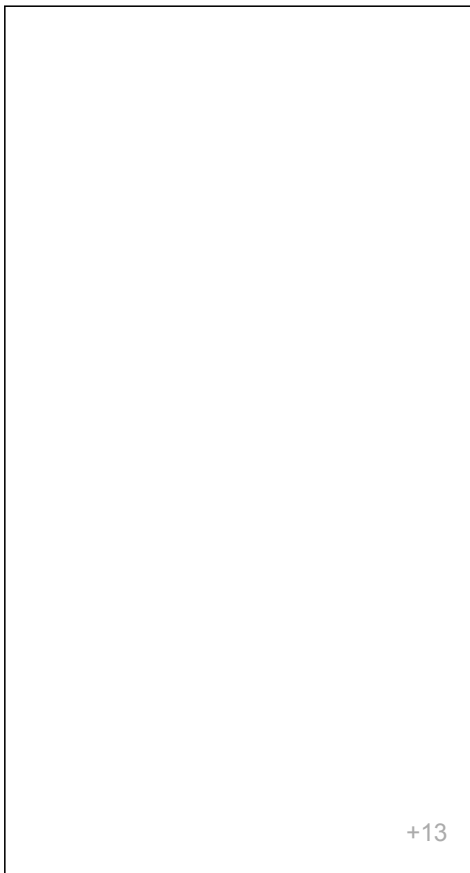
'Well I guess that's what occurs when I do what [Victorian CFMEU boss] John Setka refused to do and actually march the membership on parliament,' he replied.

Mclean was replying under his real-name Telegram handle as opposed to his Dominic D alias, which he admitted was now blown.

'Now that the genie is out of the bottle, my personal name can be more present,' he said.



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Photos on social media paint a picture of an outgoing student active in Monash's social scene and the campus Science Society

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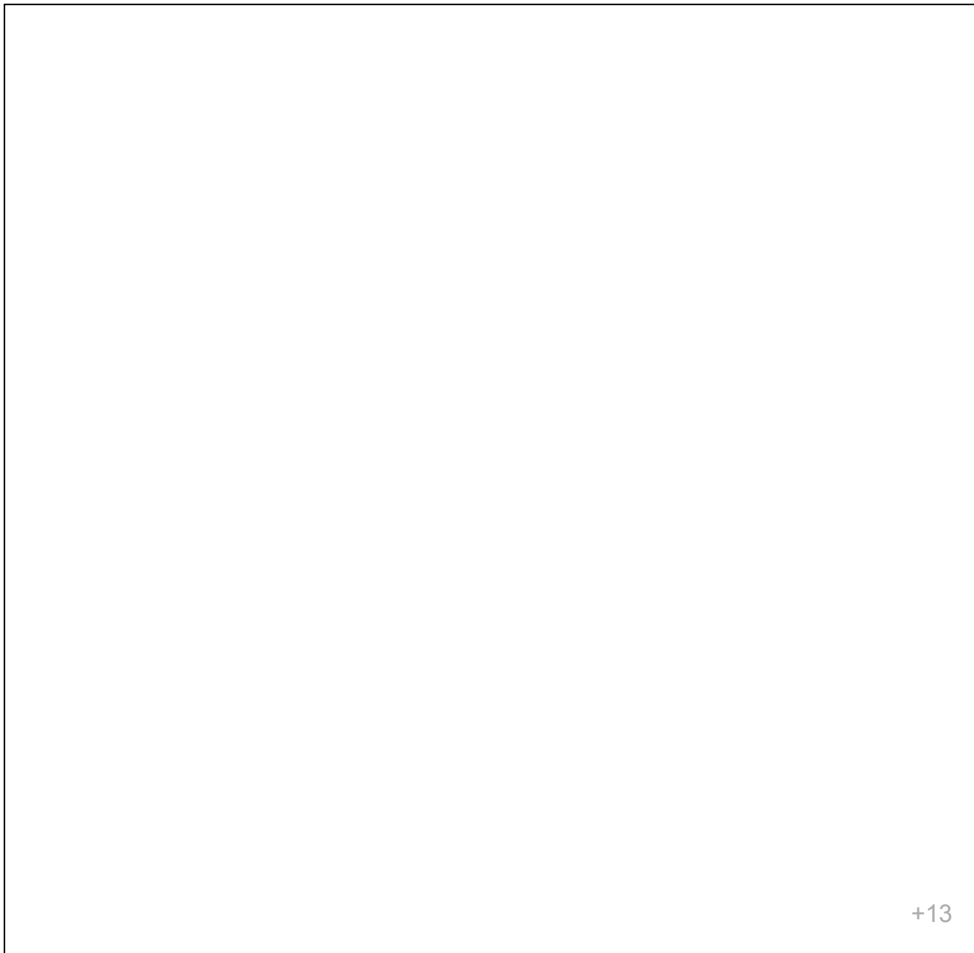
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### **Mr Mclean headed on an overseas trip through Europe and the US with his blonde-haired girlfriend at the beginning of his final year of university**

McLean admitted defeat through the Telegram channel after Friday's dismal turnout, but still hailed the week of riots as a success.

'In the long way to reclaim our rights, we will inevitably suffer losses. Today was one of those days where we were outnumbered and unsuccessful in coming together,' he wrote.

'Don't lose hope and don't forget the victories of this week where thousands upon thousands of everyday Victorians spilled into the streets and highways to the endless sound of car horns and trucks cheering us on.

'Don't ever forget that we made history that day... You don't have to win every battle to win the war. Truth always wins in the end.'

McLean used a separate page to post official updates and share flyers for the protests, which were shared across social media.

In another group he maintained, 13,000 hardcore supporters schemed, posted photos and videos, and cheered on the violence.

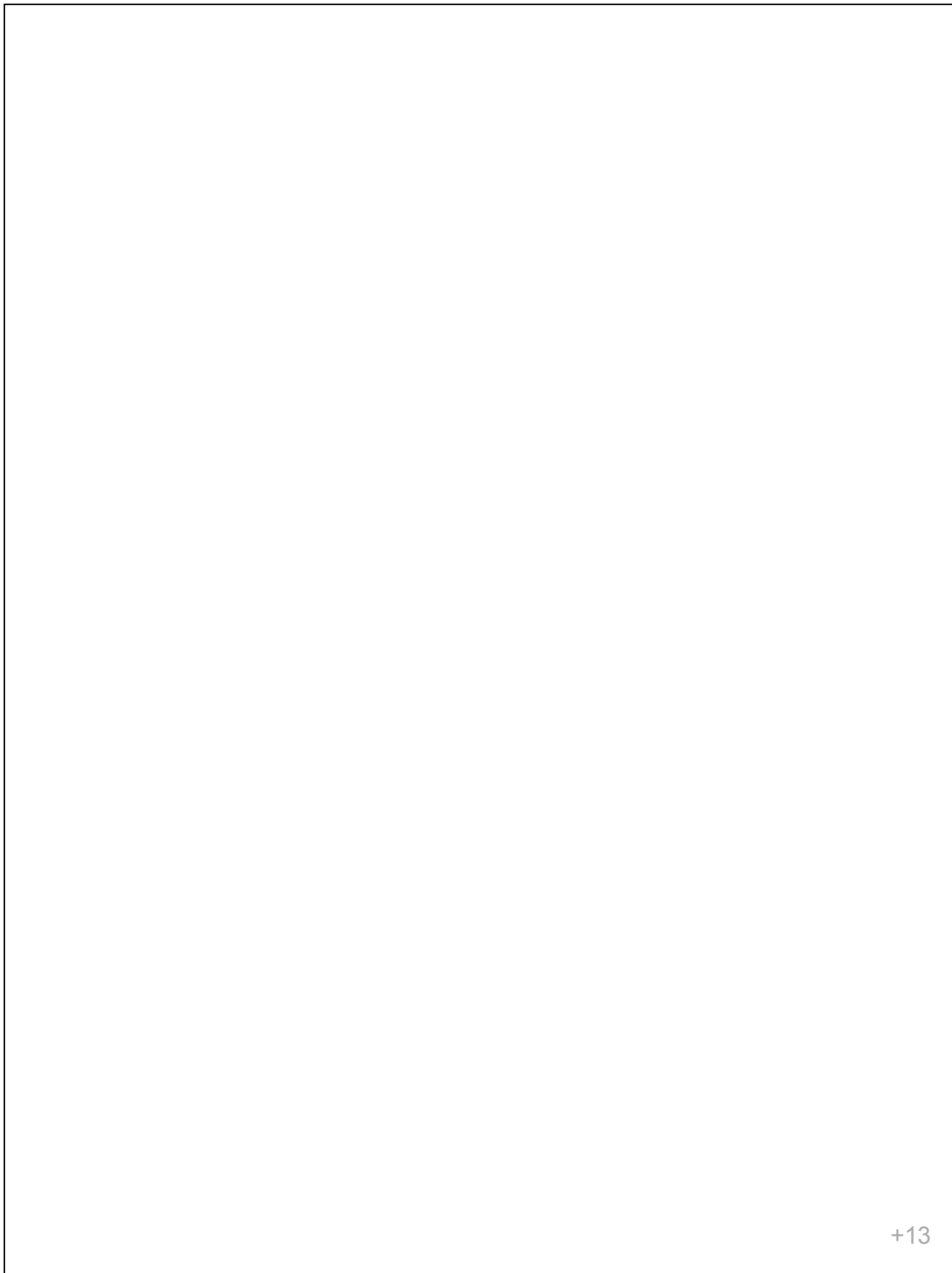
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After the 2020 lockdown ended he became a key organiser and drove a shift in rhetoric to general themes of 'freedom' that attracted legions of new followers

Harrison McLean is a key organiser of the freedom rallies



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Kourtney Kardashian wow in VERY different outfits as they kick off filming new Hulu reality show in Malibu

The protests claimed to be predominantly tradies and construction workers outraged at being forced to get a Covid jab to work, but the vast majority were mobilised by the Telegram group and wore suspiciously new high-vis.

Instead they appeared to be a mix of disgruntled tradies and union members, Melburnians sick of lockdown, conspiracy theorists of all flavours, ultra-libertarian 'freedom' activists, and far-right rabble-rousers.

At a glance, the pale IT expert seems like the last person you'd expect to be pulling the strings of this rag-tag horde of hi-vis wearing demonstrators.

McLean graduated from the \$9,000-a-year St Joseph's College in Melbourne before studying computer science at Monash University from 2015-19.

Photos on social media paint a picture of an outgoing student active in Monash's social scene Science Society.

Typical undergraduate activities like fancy dress parties, formal dinners, and relaxed campus life feature in his Facebook tags.

McLean was also a competitive cheerleader, winning a tournament in June 2017 and posing with a teammate with their trophy for a celebratory photo.

Later he headed on an overseas trip through Europe and the US with his blonde-haired girlfriend at the beginning of his final year.

▶ Daniel Craig makes a rare public appearance with his daughter Ella, 29, at the No Time To Die premiere and after party - while his wife Rachel Weisz stays in New York for filming

▶ Arnold Schwarzenegger soldiers through bike ride with walking boot... five years after mystery injury to SAME leg that may have come from overworking it

▶ Chrissy Teigen mourns 'son we almost had' Jack one year after pregnancy loss as she pays tribute with never before seen photo from hospital room with John Legend

Protest erupts in Melbourne after construction sites are shut down



▶ The Girl in the Golden Gown: Kate is resplendent in a custom Jenny Packham dress as she joins William, Charles and Camilla at No Time To Die premiere

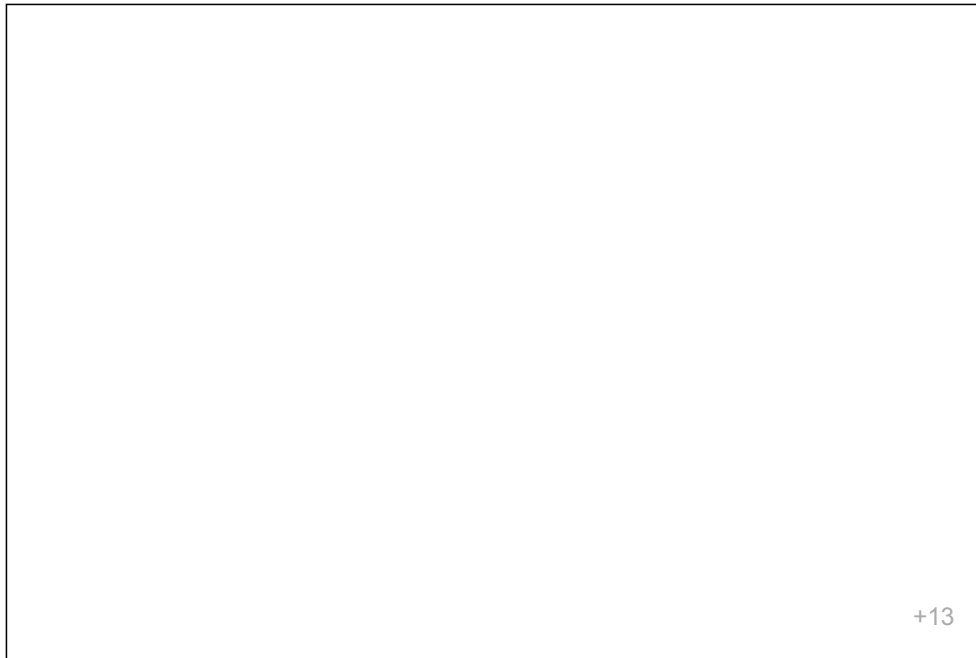
▶ Phoebe Waller-Bridge puts on a sparkling display in an elegant black jumpsuit as the Bond co-writer leaves the No Time To Die after party in Mayfair

▶ Carol Vorderman, 60, flaunts her stunning curves in skintight leather-look leggings as she shows her support for the Welsh rugby team



▶ Winnie Harlow puts on a fashionable display in a white high neck jumper tucked into jeans - and layers up with a chic raincoat to brave London weather

▶ Former Married At First Sight star Ines Basic poses topless as she teases X-rated content on adult subscription-based website OnlyFans



### Thousands of construction workers are pictured protesting on the West Gate Bridge on Tuesday afternoon as the demonstration moved out of Melbourne's central business district

Before graduating, he co-founded social media platform WeYouMe, which uses blockchain technology to encrypt data.

'Harrison has a passion for designing voluntary systems of interaction to empower humankind, accelerate technological improvement, and protect the intrinsic rights of life, liberty and security of property,' the company's website reads.

Mr Mclean first started attending anti-lockdown rallies last July at the height of Melbourne's deadly second wave of Covid.

After the lockdown ended he became a key organiser and drove a shift in rhetoric to general themes of 'freedom' that attracted legions of new followers.

He was filmed speaking at so-called 'freedom' rallies in December and January and on Australia Day, wearing an untucked shirt and sunglasses.

By March his movement had more than 2,000 members and has added 7,000 more by the time the CFMEU was attacked, as Victoria was thrown back into lockdown.

Another 4,000 joined the group as the week progressed, reaching a high of 13,000 by Sunday morning after Mclean had abandoned further rallies.

### Police fire rubber bullets at protestors in Melbourne



Watch the full video

▶ **'Hello Mr Bond!':** Geri Horner beams a wide smile as she snatches a selfie opportunity with Daniel Craig at the No Time To Die premiere

▶ **Pierce Brosnan, 68,** shares rare photo of wife of 20 years Keely in a swimsuit as he pens love note for her 58th birthday: 'My beautiful, luscious love'

▶ **'You look jolly lovely!':** Daniel Craig is wowed by Duchess of Cambridge in her custom Jenny Packham gown at premiere of No Time To Die

▶ **Harrison Ford looks dapper** in a classic white shirt as he goes to watch Lily Allen perform in 2:22 A Ghost Story in London's West End

▶ **Cardi B showcases** her ample assets in a red maxi dress with a fiery feather mane as she leads the glamour at Thierry Mugler exhibition in Paris

▶ **Miranda Kerr thinks** it's 'incredible' that she and ex Orlando Bloom 'get along' with each other's partners... as she gushes over connecting with his fiancée Katy Perry

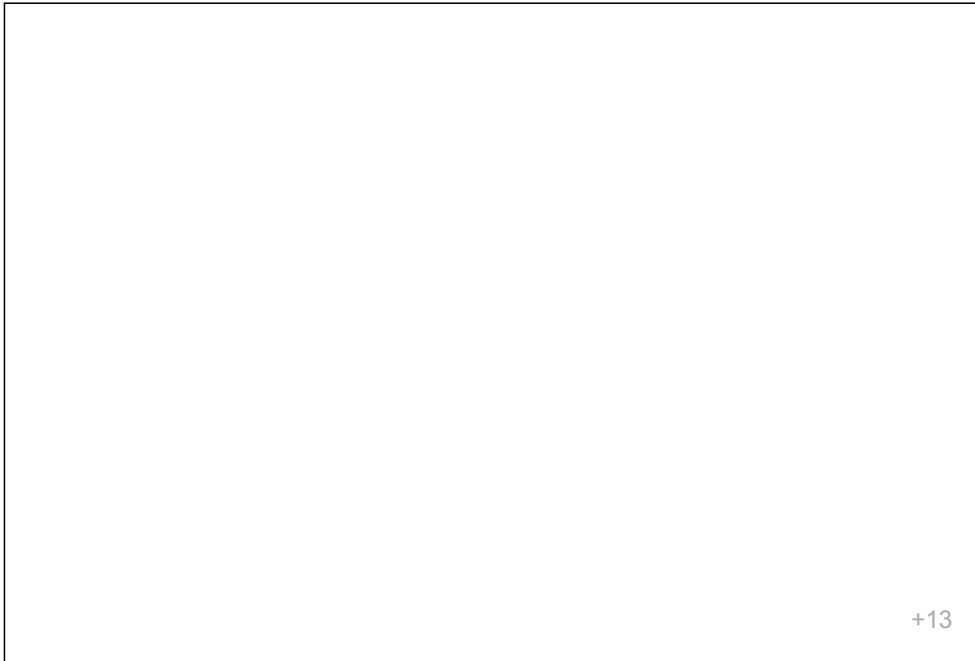
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▶ **Lucky Blue Smith** hugs wife Nara Pellman's baby bump as they announce they are expecting their SECOND child together

▶ **'After the last one, I** thought that was it': Daniel Craig reveals he decided to reprise James Bond role for fifth time after taking 'a bit of a rest'

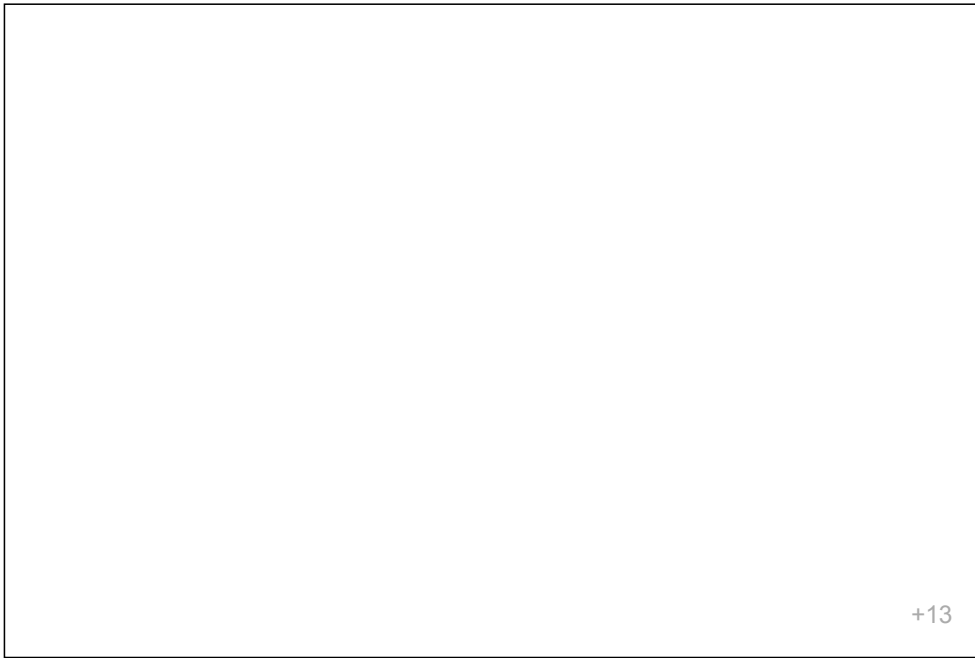
▶ **Chrissy Teigen hits** back at comedian Heather McDonald for criticizing her post about 'perfection'... on one year anniversary of losing son: 'Maybe I'm a little sensitive today'





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**Hundreds gather at St Kilda for the 'Millions March for Freedom' rally as protests in Melbourne reach its sixth day**



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**Tensions have been high all week in Melbourne's CBD, with residents protesting mandatory vaccinations for building sector workers (pictured)**

At a rally in March he proclaimed his movement was 'done with the cabal which runs this country' and claimed the Covid pandemic didn't exist.

'We are going to purge this country of every single incumbent politician who does not support freedom,' he bellowed.

Protests were organised at least once a month and promoted with the same template of the rally details over a washed-out photo of the venue.

▶ [Gabrielle Union is the epitome of style in TWO different outfits as she trades in her stylish grey blazer for a belted yellow coat during Jimmy Kimmel appearance](#)

▶ [Margot Robbie conceals her signature blonde hair beneath a wavy auburn wig as she shoots scenes for upcoming film Babylon in Los Angeles](#)

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▶ [Friendly exes! Liev Schreiber poses with sons Sasha, 14, and Kai, 12, as he pays tribute to ex-partner Naomi Watts on her birthday](#)

▶ [Claire Danes bundles up in raincoat as she and dashing husband Hugh Dancy enjoy NYC stroll together](#)

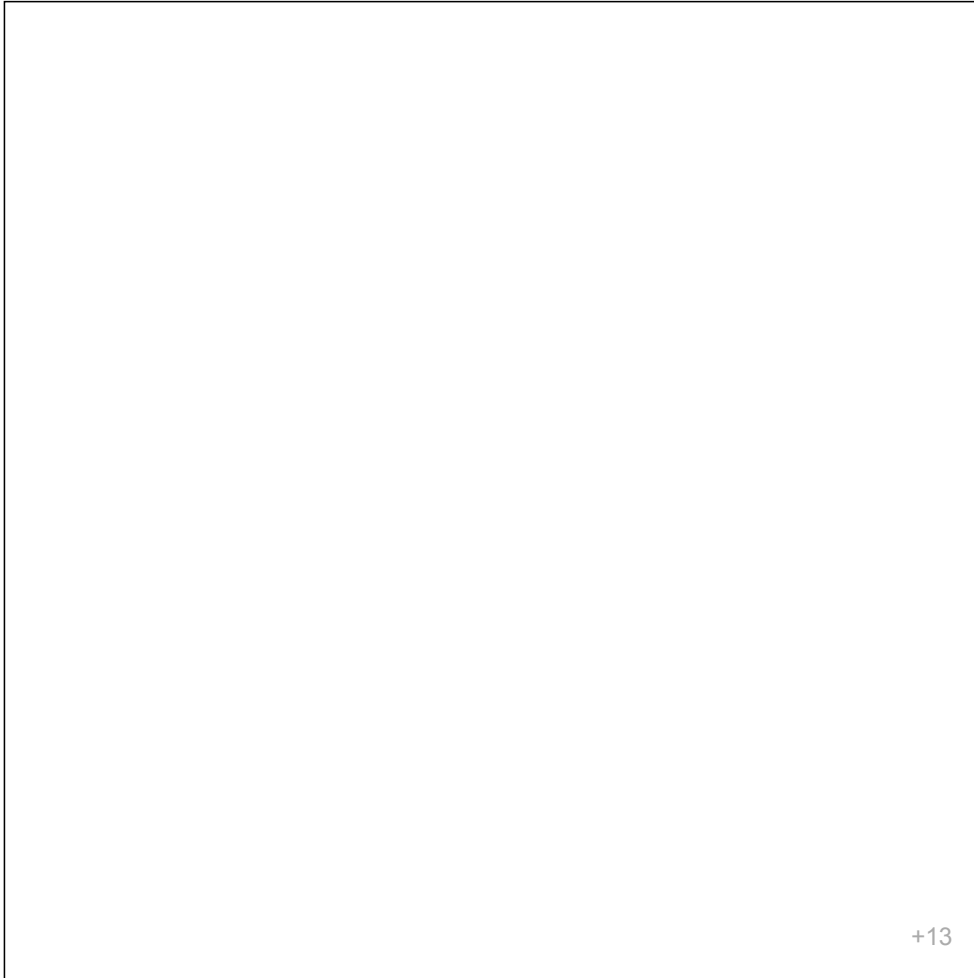
▶ [Iris Law turns heads in a sheer white corset and matching skirt as she arrives for the Christian Dior Paris Fashion Week show with Alexa Chung](#)

In May, he was part of a group of activists caught dining at Moda Kitchen and Bar in the inner-Melbourne suburb of Seddon during lockdown.

He was one of 15 diners, including protest leaders Monica Smit and Morgan Jonas sitting at a table enjoying glasses of wine.

'We were just finishing lunch when the business got a call the police were on the way. People who do business is such a low act in my mind. Let's all continue to support these types of businesses,' one of them posted on Telegram.

Mr Mclean then began to expand the movement across the country, creating Telegram pages and discussion groups in major cities along with a national 'Australia Freedom Rally'.



**Mr Mclean was also found to be part of a chat used by far-right group Proud Boys to vet new members**

Flyers for each demanded 'no more' lockdowns, mask mandates, vaccine mandates and passports, business closures, or 'medical apartheid'.

He also build a slick website for each city with identical branding and a page on every social media platform imaginable.

One of Mr Mclean's top allies and fellow group admin with the Telegram handle 'Kotik' celebrated the turnout during Tuesday's rally

'As someone who was here when this group was just a few randos and 20 people would come to a protest, I can verify that the movement is rapidly gaining momentum,' he wrote.

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▶ [No Time To Die: Kimberley Garner risks a wardrobe malfunction in a VERY daring white cut-out gown at the premiere of Daniel Craig's final Bond film](#)

▶ [Cardi B dazzles in a skintight gown with feather cloak before slipping into an edgy leather corset dress in Paris... WEEKS after welcoming second child](#)

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'This is the start of something big, without a doubt.'

During an interview with the **Guardian** in March, Mr Mclean claimed he was seeking to unite people on the basis of 'peaceful protests' and 'idea of freedom'.

'[The aim] is to empower people so that if they're not necessarily politically active before, then a political protest might be some way for them to sort of begin their process of engaging in this space, but I'm absolutely not trying to radicalise anybody,' he said.



#### Riot police are seen outside the Victoria's Parliament House during Tuesday's protest

The news outlet claimed Mr Mclean was part of a chat group used by far-right group Proud Boys to vet new members, although he declined to confirm whether he was a member of the organisation.

However, he did reveal some members were involved in his freedom movement and he had run into leaders of the Australian branch at some of his events.

The final protest on Saturday, which Mclean did not organise, saw hundreds of officers arrest a dozen demonstrators at the St Kilda foreshore in a rally that peaked up to 200 people.

Protesters gathered in the inner beachside suburb chanting slogans like 'together, united, we'll never be divided' and 'we are not afraid'.

Other participants in the crowd were heard shouting 'f\*\*k Dan Andrews' from megaphones.

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Needs help and treatment for her mental health