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Turnbull atens ump ls

have not changed my mind on this issue," he said.

Mr Turnbull said negotiations with the Government would continue. He said people were getting ahead of themselves because the Government had yet to make an offer.

Final discussions are scheduled for tomorrow night, when the Government will make an offer. The shadow cabinet will consider it and the party room will have the final say.

"Our support for the bill will depend on the outcome of these negotiations," Mr Turnbull said.

Liberal Party convention dictates that a frontbencher who dissents from policy should step down. Mr Turnbull is expected to enforce this to try to establish discipline. At least five frontbenchers are among the dissidents.

Mr Turnbull's supporters are speculating the Nationals will be excluded from next week's party room meeting. The Nationals have declared that they will not support an emissions trading scheme, no matter what concessions the Government offers – and they have no say in the leadership. They are expected to be asked to stay away.

While both sides concede Mr Turnbull has the numbers should he recommend a deal, the rebels warn the split would be so big his leadership would be undermined. "If he gets it through and 20 senators cross the floor, can he survive? I doubt it," said one Liberal.

Another detractor said Mr Turnbull had made the emissions scheme a leadership issue by declaring he did not want to lead a party that was not serious about climate change. "There are no shades of grey in that, especially in a party that covers such a huge spectrum of opinion."

Senator Minchin, who opposes any deal, said yesterday he would abide by the party room decision. Should he cross the floor or even abstain, it would be a hammer blow to Mr Turnbull.

Senator Minchin said he was not targeting Mr Turnbull.

"This has never been about the leadership for me. This has been about the issue," he said.

On Thursday Senator Minchin used his Senate speech to rail against Labor's scheme. In a deliberate exercise, 12 Liberals

The doctor takes a wife – again



"I hate all the attention" ... Brynne Gordon and Geoffrey Edelsten at Bondi Beach. Photo: Sasha Woolley

He was the high-flyer who crashed, but Geoffrey Edelsten has never quite left the spotlight, writes **Damien Murphy**.

LUNCH is over at Bondi's Icebergs Dining Room and Bar and she's American and blonde, teetering on patent-leather heels and wearing a diaphanous dress, short and plunging. He wears black hair, black shoes, a white mattress-ticking cotton linen suit and the thousand-yard stare of hardened celebrity.

Icebergs is the stylish and expensive watering hole where being seen is part of the fare, but surely none of the clientele had seen anything like Geoffrey Edelsten starring in the latest instalment of his life as a movie.

In eight days he will marry Oklahoma-born Brynne Mariah Gordon, 26. At 66, it may be his last picture show.

Edelsten has swum in the



High profile ... Edelsten and first wife, Leanne, in 1985. Photo: Peter Moxham

fountain of youth for years. He wants to be forever young. His first wife, Leanne, was fresh out of Alice Springs and 19, two decades younger than he.

Brynne Gordon burst on to the Australian scene and nearly out of her dress in September at the Brownlow Medal count, when she walked down the blue carpet on Edelsten's arm. Journalists scurried to fill in her background, finding her MySpace entry oddly compelling: "You are

only as strong as the tables you dance on, the drinks you mix and the friends you roll with."

With the media treating her words as a life philosophy, Edelsten says they were removed from the website but he has sent a DVD invitation to his second wedding at Melbourne's Crown Casino to hundreds of friends, including Jeanne Pratt, Malcolm Turnbull, Karl Stefanovic, Lisa Wilkinson, that certainly enhances a table-dancing attitude to life.

Not only did Edelsten pay *Seinfeld's* Jason Alexander and *The Nanny's* Fran Drescher to narrate their love story but the couple re-enacted their meeting, proposal and courtship.

They were filmed staying at the Beverly Wiltshire Hotel and shopping in Rodeo Drive – two locations, along with Alexander's presence, that prompted memories of the film, *Pretty Woman*, the heart-warming story of a rich, work-obsessed and lonely man falling for a younger woman.

The Iceberg lunchers watched agog as Edelsten's party left the restaurant. Some might have recognised the GP who introduced corporate medicine to Australia. Others might have remembered him as the face of the Sydney Swans, or the high-flyer who went to jail and was barred from working as a doctor. All were clearly astounded by his bride-to-be.

"I hate all the attention," Edelsten says before obligingly going down to the Bondi sand to be photographed with his fiancée.

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Channels spared from rules on local content

Ari Sharp
COMMUNICATIONS
CORRESPONDENT

TV DIGITAL multichannels will not have to screen a minute of Australian programming, with the federal Communications Minister, Stephen Conroy, declaring that local content rules will not apply.

Senator Conroy told a gathering of screen producers that the "technical and economic" challenge of launching the new channels – so far Seven's 7Two, Nine's Go! and Ten's One HD – meant the requirements were inappropriate.

But, ultimately, he said, viewers would force the channels to screen Australian shows.

"It is content that drives take-up, and new channels have to offer attractive programs," Senator Conroy told the Screen Producers Association of Australia conference in Sydney yesterday. "That's why I firmly believe that Australian audiences will demand Australian content."

The three commercial broadcasters have launched digital multichannels this year but they show little Australian content.

With more than half of all homes having digital TV, the new channels are winning viewers. But

'Overseas programs are effectively dumped into this country.'

Des Monaghan, producer

the stations are some way off being profitable. Industry insiders fear the stations will invest significant amounts only to cannibalise existing audiences.

The veteran producer Des Monaghan said local content rules were important given the cheap product available overseas.

"Australian programming invariably enjoys a disproportionate share of ratings success," the Screen time executive director said. "The problem is that overseas program is effectively dumped into this country."

While significant new Australian production for the multichannels was unlikely, he said, the channels could be a part of a secondary market for local content.

The multichannel policy is a concession that local content rules will increasingly come under threat as free-to-air broadcasters compete against pay television and high-speed internet.

Senator Conroy said he had "no plans" to relax the rule for about 90 hours a year of new Australian drama on the main commercial

Torture claims cloud murder investigation

Six men arrested for shooting dead Australian mine worker Drew Grant, pictured, say they confessed after being beaten with rifle butts and threatened with shootings and electric shocks. The killing at Freeport's vast Grasberg mine in Papua New Guinea has been the subject of a



Heatwave sparks fire, health warnings

Sydney is facing the early onset of the bushfire season. A heavy build-up of fuel still lies in the forests around the city, despite an increase in hazard-reduction burning this year. The mercury is expected to hit 39

degrees. National Park has been closed and walking trails in many other parks have been shut. Hospitals are bracing for a surge of heat-related illnesses, and people have been warned to limit physical activity

The doctor takes a wife – and corrects some rumours

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The Melburnian had come to Sydney to show her off and take the *Herald* to lunch to correct versions of his life that pop up in the media when his strangely peripatetic life attracts attention.

Edelsten wants it known that he was not sacked from the Sydney Swans. Nor did he hire the hitman Christopher Dale Flannery to deal with a man known then as Stephen William Evans. Edelsten claims Evans conducted a long campaign of harassment, including making death and kidnap threats and firing bullets at his home.

"When the legal thing blew up, I realised the potential damage my involvement could have on the Swans, and so I resigned of my own volition," he says.

"As to Flannery, I'm a doctor. Hurting somebody is anathema to me. Besides, at the time these events were alleged to have occurred, Flannery's later reputation as a hitman was unknown."



Edelsten and Gordon at the Brownlow Medal. Photo: Paul Rovere

In 1990 Edelsten served a year's jail after being found guilty of soliciting Flannery to assault Evans and pervert the course of justice by obtaining an adjournment by certifying Flannery was unfit for trial on another matter.

Edelsten has a 1993 opinion from Peter Connolly, a former

Queensland Supreme Court judge, saying there are grounds for a review of the convictions or a governor's pardon. Edelsten says the NSW Government is not interested.

Once he was the king of the world. The eldest of two sons of financially comfortable Melbourne ragtraders, Edelsten was born in Carlton but grew up in Toorak.

He had been a prefect at Mount Scopus Memorial College, captain of the school Australian rules and cricket teams and shared the 1963 third-year anatomy exhibition at the University of Melbourne with the present vice-chancellor of Monash University, Richard Larkins.

After graduating, he worked as a GP in Sydney and the bush and after some time in the US in the 1970s returned brimming with ideas. He sponsored Carlton's scantily clad cheerleaders and started a chain of medical clinics that offered not only attention-seeking white pianos and chan-

deliers but bulk-billing of patients. Edelsten earned the ire of the Australian Medical Association, which was upset that mass-produced medicine stopped patient choice and the doctor's handy gap fee.

Having made millions in Sydney, Edelsten was a natural fit to personify a new image of the flagging Swans. He seemed to possess the money, the woman, the cars, the helicopter, the pizzazz. The Swans drew crowds of 40,000-plus, got into the finals, somebody won the Brownlow, Swans au go-go.

Then it stopped. There were telephone threats, tricked-up pornographic photographs distributed, resignation, marriage breakdown, bankruptcy, a sensational trial and jail.

After being released from Long Bay, he was barred from practising medicine but free to run a medical corporation.

He started doing university courses and in four years took

masters degrees in law, business administration, sports medicine, occupational medicine, science, family medicine and health-care management and a doctorate in health from New England, Wollongong, Edith Cowan and Charles Sturt.

"An achievement believed unequalled in Australia by one individual... No, I don't think I'm obsessive," Edelsten says.

Interest in Edelsten waned after his fall from grace. Occasionally there were reports – unsuccessful attempts at re-registration on the NSW and Victoria medical boards, a \$200 speeding fine.

Edelsten devotes much energy to challenging media coverage. He has gone to the Press Council, conducts long exchanges with editors, pays Google to alert him when his name appears.

A website, australiasworst-journalist.com.au, appeared this week naming 10 journalists – including the *Herald's* Andrew Hornery and Kate McClymont,

the investigative reporter Paul Barry and *A Current Affair's* Adam Shand. Eight of them have one thing in common – they reported on Edelsten.

Edelsten brought a public relations man to the Icebergs lunch. The waitress had run through the Italian-style menu, lingering on the selection of seasonal fish, when the PR man said Australian journalism liked to tear down tall poppies, and noted that Michael Jackson had been attacked during life but lauded after death.

Gordon ordered steak. Edelsten's PR man went for the baby snapper, Edelsten too. When the fish arrived, Gordon said she did not like the eye staring at her.

Edelsten seems to have suffered much illness and injury. The late Fred Hollows removed his right eye in 1985. The next year a car crash broke his legs. He reportedly suffered a heart attack the day after he was struck off the medical roll in Victoria in 1992.

Earlier that year he was diag-



Go the Swans ... Edelsten with some of the players – Anthony Daniher, Rod Carter, Steve Taubert, Mark Bayes and Craig Braddy – in 1985.

nosed with a brain tumour. Vinko Dolenc, a neurosurgeon, removed it in July 1995. Edelsten says he feels fine, apart from the fact that when he scratches his nose, he feels it on his left forehead.

Edelsten says he would not do everything again. He worries about the impact of his fame on his family. His father, who died two years ago, loathed the publi-

city. They did not speak for four years.

But it was not all sadness. "I was driving through east Los Angeles, a poor black area, in a Rolls-Royce, and there are some poor blacks kids, obviously out of work, and they see this car and they get up and they clap. You can see their thoughts: 'one day, maybe me'," Edelsten says.

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