

A Rebel with a cause to celebrate

Nathanael Cooper

The blockbuster defamation action brought against high-profile Aussie actor and comedian Rebel Wilson has drawn to a stunning conclusion, with a judge finding she did not defame her co-star Charlotte MacInnes.

The messy legal battle began at Bondi Beach in September 2023 when Amanda Ghost, a producer of Wilson's directorial debut film *The Deb*, had a medical reaction to the cold water. From there, Ghost and MacInnes returned to an apartment where they were staying and both ended up in a bath together wearing swimsuits.



Rebel Wilson

"To say that the circumstances surrounding how they came to be in the bath are unusual would be an understatement," Justice Elizabeth Raper said in her summary read out to the Federal Court yesterday.

What happened next was at the centre of the defamation battle which took place over nine gruelling days in May.

Wilson claimed that MacInnes complained to her that she was made to feel uncomfortable when she was asked to take a bath with Ghost.

However, MacInnes said she never made that complaint and was never made to feel uncomfortable.

A year later, after *The Deb* finished shooting and the relationship between Wilson and its producers had become acrimonious, the *Bridesmaids* star began posting a series of messages on her own Instagram and the Instagram account of the movie. MacInnes sued Wilson over four of the posts, claiming they painted her as a liar and, according to her barrister Sue Chrysanthou SC in court, a "woman for sale".

But Justice Raper found that three of the posts did not contain defamatory imputations, and that just one post, which said MacInnes had complained then changed her story, could convey a specific meaning. However, Justice Raper found saying someone changed a story for self-interested reasons was not defamatory.



Australian astronaut Katherine Bennell-Pegg. Picture: Lyndon Mechielsen / The Australian

Time to see KBP mission to space

Calls for government backing

Rebecca Whitfield-Baker

Space leaders want the federal government to back South Australian astronaut Katherine Bennell-Pegg's launch to the International Space Station, describing it as a "once-in-a-generation" opportunity.

The brightest minds in space research and innovation from around Australia – and the globe – have spent the past two days in Adelaide for the 19th Australian Space Forum.

Support for the Australian of the Year's planned spaceflight was robust amid talk of rovers, space probes, satellites, constellations, lunar test beds, microgravity, parabolic manoeuvres, orbits, docking CubeSats and prototypes. But the clock is ticking to seal the deal which would see Bennell-Pegg become the first professional astronaut to officially represent Australia.

Industry insiders say it's not about "sending one individual into orbit (but) anchoring Australia to the global space economy", describing Australia as "one of the most space-dependent nations in the world, with satellite services underpinning banking, agriculture, logistics, telecommunications, disaster management and national security".

Several speakers pointed to the importance of the mission – to cost at least \$100m – during their presentations, including prominent astrophysicist and UWA-based International Space Centre director Professor Danail Obreschkow.

"Getting Katherine up in space achieves so much for this nation; it is an investment in the future ... it will build a space economy here that is much

stronger and give us (new) opportunities with the international space sector," he said.

"(We know) from previous space flights ... if you invest into an astronaut, you get about seven to eight times that cash value back, invested into your country." Key, too, he said was the mission's power to inspire a new generation to pursue maths and science-based careers with Australia lagging other OECD countries in STEM participation.

"Imagine having one of us, an Australian, fly in space and seeing that little dot go across the sky every 90 minutes?" Prof Obreschkow said.

Space Industry Association of Australia CEO Dan Lloyd agreed. "(A human) spaceflight mission would be far more than tourism, this would be taking leading-edge Australian research and development as well as industrial capability that is on the verge of breaking through to leading-edge development," he said, adding Australia was "on the forefront of microgravity processing".

Amy Featherston, general manager of SA aerospace company Southern Launch, said Bennell-Pegg was "a beacon for the space industry here".

"If we have Katherine up in orbit I think the world is our oyster to be the next Cape Canaveral and really deliver for the global industry," she said.

Industry insiders say while Bennell-Pegg's name is pencilled in for the flight it was "likely a matter of weeks" before confirmation was needed.

The government did not respond to questions from The Advertiser relating to the mission.

Actor, 18, dies in crash

WASHINGTON: Kaylee Hottle, an 18-year-old actor who appeared in two *Godzilla* films, has died in a car crash in the US state of Maryland.

Hottle and another passenger were in a 1995 Honda Accord driven by a 19-year-old man that veered off a two-lane highway and struck a culvert, according to the local sheriff's office.

"Excessive speed is believed to be a contributing

factor in the collision," said the force, which responded at 2.52am Tuesday local time. The driver had injuries not believed life-threatening, while the other passenger declined treatment.

The actor, who was deaf, played Jia in *Godzilla v Kong* and the sequel *Godzilla X Kong*. Her father, Joshua, shared news of her death in sign language in a tearful Facebook video.



Kaylee Hottle

Support for theatre runs Dry

Ruby Stewart

A former Adelaide reality television star has hit out at the lack of government-supported theatre in an emotional social media post reflecting on the cancellations of nationally touring musicals *Waitress* and *Beetlejuice*.

Amity Dry, who starred in the inaugural 2003 season of *The Block* alongside her former husband, Phil Rankine,

staged her own musical, *The Perfect Life – The Musical* during this year's Adelaide Fringe season.

In her post, Ms Dry said while her show received "incredibly positive feedback" it still lost "a lot of money".

The real estate agent by trade admitted she had "a lot of feelings" since her production's run, but said the recent early closures of two major musicals had encour-

aged her to share her perspective. "If Broadway hits with huge budgets can't make it, what hope is there?" she wrote on Facebook.

"Producing a new musical, particularly an Australian musical, has always been an almost impossible feat.

"There are no real funding opportunities, no process for major development support and no big producers willing to take a risk on them."