Ley bats away anger at jibe

WHEN member for Farrer Sussan Ley agreed to join her long-time campaign manager Angus Macneil at last month’s infamous Young Liberals dinner in Sydney, it was the first time she had met radio broadcaster Alan Jones.

The pair had attended a Liberal Party council meeting that day and Ms Ley thought the dinner would provide an opportunity to catch up with party colleagues.

She said she was tired and at the point of heading home when Jones began his speech at 10.20pm; the noise level was high and she didn’t hear his comment that Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s late father had “died of shame”.

“Ms Ley said.

“What I heard was Alan Jones being Alan Jones. “I do find some of his comments offensive and I found the comment about the PM’s father offensive also. In no way do I endorse it.

“But what I heard to my way of thinking was the Alan Jones’ view of the world that had been reported before.”

Ms Ley said while she didn’t share Jones’ opinion that the tone of the evening was “rollicking”, neither had it been deadly serious.

“It was not the case that there was the keynote speaker and it was so quiet you could hear a pin drop as people hung on every word,” she said.

The evening had been chaotic, with guests at a wedding next door coming into the dinner to have photographs taken with Jones, she said. For Ms Ley, the consequences of the evening have been anything but insignificant; she has spent the better part of the past weekend answering emails and calls from constituents, angry at the comments made by Jones and responding to her attendance at the dinner.

“People have made a lot of assumptions about the event; some said I shouldn’t have been there,” she said.

“I didn’t approve of the comments made, I thought them out of order; but I have sat through much worse said about John Howard and Tony Abbott. “I have sat through church services where Tony Abbott has been vilified and events in my own electorate where John Howard has been vilified.

“I have not walked out of those.”

In spite of the furore following the Young Liberals dinner, Ms Ley did not rule out making an appearance on Jones’ radio show should she be asked.

“IT would depend on the subject matter but I might go on the show,” she said.

“I have not been on the show previously, indeed our paths have never crossed until that night.

“I know some of my constituents have been on the show talking about the Murray Darling basin and with regards to his views there I think he represents, better than others have in the city, those people living in the bush and life in the bush.”
Sussan Ley has spent the past week dealing with the Alan Jones fallout.