SACKED minister Stuart Robert’s secret stake in a company linked to his controversial China-deal trip cost his job.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull dumped the Human Services Minister yesterday after revelations of Mr Robert’s hidden shareholdings.

An inquiry by top public servant Martin Parkinson concluded Mr Robert had acted “inconsistently with the Statement of Ministerial Standards” when he flew to Beijing in August 2014. There he saw close friend Paul Marks ink a deal between his company Nimrod Resources and a Chinese government-owned miner, Minmetals.

Mr Robert admitted to Dr Parkinson’s inquiry that his trustee had been “allocated” shares in a company called Metallum Holdings, which had an interest in Nimrod Resources. The MP said he did not know this when he flew to Beijing.

Mr Turnbull said in a statement yesterday: “Mr Robert recognised that this connection would create the impression that at the time he went to Beijing he had something personally to gain from the Nimrod Resources project. As a result, Mr Robert has asked me not to consider him in the pending reshuffle of the ministry.”

Dr Parkinson’s investigation concluded that Mr Robert had acted inconsistently with the ministerial standards, although he accepted that Mr Robert “may not have intended to do so”.

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ELLEN WHINNETT AND FIONA HUDSON
TWO high-profile murder suspects were free to kill their victims—a woman and a child—despite parole breaches and exploiting a supervision loophole.

The disturbing revelation has plumped the parole board back into crisis and comes despite extensive reforms in recent years to improve Victoria’s flawed justice system.

The alleged killers are protected by the legal system and cannot be identified. But the Herald Sun can reveal one of the men breached parole twice in matters that should have seen him behind bars.

The convicted criminal, who was on parole after having his original sentence for a serious offence reduced at appeal, allegedly returned a positive drug test when reporting to Corrections Victoria, and on further investigation, police claim they found child porn on his mobile phone.

A court heard the images were of his then partner’s five-year-old daughter, naked in various poses on a bed and in the bath.

The girl’s mother considered the images so serious she ended her relationship with the accused.

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EMBATTLED Liberal minister Stuart Robert organised a dinner in his Parliament House office with Tony Abbott and a Chinese business mogul at the request of his donor mate, Paul Marks.

Mr Robert hosted the dinner — three months out from the federal election in 2013 — so businessman Li Ruipeng could meet senior Liberals including shadow resources minister Ian Macfarlane.

Today’s revelations will heap further pressure on Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to act against the Human Services Minister, already under investigation over a potential breach of ministerial standards.

Mr Robert is being investigated after the Herald Sun revealed he secretly joined donor mate Mr Marks in Beijing to attend a signing ceremony between Mr Marks’s firm, Nimrod Resources, and Chinese government-owned Minmetals.

The Herald Sun then revealed Mr Robert also led a delegation, that included Nimrod representatives, to meet a Chinese government minister while he was claiming to be on holiday; and that Mr Li gave MPs who were at the 2013 dinner designer watches worth $250,000.

It has now emerged those MPs returned the watches to Mr Marks, not to Mr Li, because by the time they realised that the watches were not fake, Mr Li had disappeared.

Mr Macfarlane, who went on to become science and industry minister, yesterday told the Herald Sun: “I have a receipt showing I handed the watch back to Paul Marks.”

Also present at the gathering was the then-president of the Liberal National Party, Bruce McIver, a party powerbroker recently appointed as a director of Australia Post.

A spokesman for Mr Abbott said last night Treasurer Scott Morrison also attended the dinner briefly.

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