



Procedure and Privileges Committee

Report on a Person Adversely Referred to in the Legislative Assembly — Rev Peter Abetz

**Report No. 5
August 2018**

**Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Western Australia**

Committee Members

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	Mr Kevin Michel MLA Member for Pilbara
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**Published by the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Western Australia, Perth.
August 2018.**

ISBN: 978-1-925724-18-9.

(Series: Western Australia. Parliament. Legislative Assembly. Committees.
Procedure and Privileges Committee. Report 5)

328.365

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Rev Peter Abetz*

Report No. 5

Presented by

Ms Lisa Baker MLA

Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 23 August 2018

Report

In my capacity as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, I referred to the Procedure and Privileges Committee a submission from Rev Peter Abetz seeking to use Standing Order 114 to respond to statements made in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday 14 June 2018 by the Member for Southern River, Mr Terry Healy MLA.

The Committee has agreed to recommend the incorporation in *Hansard* of the appended response by Rev Peter Abetz.

In accordance with Standing Order 114, the Committee has not considered or judged the truth of any statements made in the Legislative Assembly or in the submission.

Recommendation

The Committee recommends —

That a response by Rev Peter Abetz, in the terms specified in the Appendix to this Report, be incorporated in *Hansard*.



HON PETER WATSON MLA
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE
23 AUGUST 2018

Appendix One

Response by Rev Peter Abetz

Agreed to by Rev Peter Abetz and the Procedure and Privileges
Committee pursuant to Standing Order 114

Response Pursuant to Legislative Assembly Standing Order 114

I am writing regarding statements made on 14 June 2018 by Mr Terry Healy MLA, the Member for Southern River, in his second reading speech on the Local Government Amendment (Suspension and Dismissal) Bill 2018. In his speech the Member:

- a. repeated false historic public allegations made against me by two councillors at the time of the City of Gosnells mayoral election held on 23 October 2017, when he knew, or should have known, them to be false, and
- b. without any evidence, linked the resignation of Cr Elizabeth Storer in April 2018 to these false allegations.

The statements made by the Member:

"I would like to refer to an allegation of Liberal Party meddling at the Gosnells council ballot draw last year. Again, I will quote an article from a local paper. The article titled 'Abetz denies "meddling" allegations' is from the Gosnells Examiner of 9 November 2017. The former member for Southern River very successfully became one of our local councillors and is doing good work. The article reads —

The West Australian Liberal Party has been accused of 'meddling' in the City of Gosnells mayoral elections.

Gosnells councillors Ron Mitchell and Dave Griffiths alleged Councillor Liz Storer was threatened by the Liberal Party to vote in support of Peter Abetz's run for mayor, although she initially pledged her support for Mr Mitchell.

...

Mr Mitchell said he could confirm there was interference by Mr Abetz and the Liberal Party ...

An article in the Examiner from 10 May 2018 on Councillor Liz Storer's resignation from the council states —

Ms Storer handed in her resignation on April 24 ...

She told The Examiner her resignation was for personal reasons ...

I am not necessarily saying that these events would come under the minister's direction to move people on ..."

Response:

Several hours before the City of Gosnells mayoral election on 23 October 2017, a particular councillor, who was aspiring to the office of mayor, spoke to councillors individually, claiming that he had been told by 'a contact' in the Liberal Party that I had

used my influence in the Liberal Party to have Cr Elizabeth Storer threatened with being sacked from her employment with the Hon Nick Goiran MLC, if she did not vote for me in the mayoral election. (In the City of Gosnells, the councillors elect the mayor.)

Councillors Mitchell and Griffiths repeated this allegation to the *Gosnells Examiner* newspaper after the mayoral election and claimed to have evidence to support their assertion. Mr Healy correctly quotes the *Gosnells Examiner* regarding this.

When I became aware of the allegation, I confronted the councillor concerned and told him it was untrue. I insisted that if he had even a skerrick of evidence, for such a serious allegation, he needed to take his evidence to the Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC). He did not contact the CCC. When councillors Mitchell and Griffiths repeated the allegation to the *Gosnells Examiner*, I also informed them that if they had evidence, they should convey it to the CCC.

Councillor Elizabeth Storer denied that anyone put pressure on her to vote for me in the mayoral election, as reported in the *Gosnells Examiner*. I also made a public statement denying that I had tried to influence Cr Storer's vote, other than by my personal conversations with her.

The Member chose to repeat the false allegations in his speech without making any effort to contact either myself, Ms Storer, nor Cr Griffiths or Cr Mitchell.

Had Mr Healy bothered to contact any of the said councillors prior to making his speech, they would have confirmed to him that their allegations were based purely on hearsay.

The Member implied in his speech that there is a link between the allegations made in October 2017 and Cr Storer's resignation from Council six months later. This is totally false. Cr Storer resigned for personal reasons to take up residence in Canberra. Had the Member had the courtesy of contacting Ms Storer after her resignation, she may well have informed him of the very happy reason for her move to Canberra—a reason totally unrelated to Council matters.

The Member's linking Cr Storer's resignation to the above-mentioned discredited allegation had the effect of giving a measure of credibility to the allegation, which has the flow on effect of denigrating my character.

The Member further sought to give credibility to the allegation by asserting: 'I am not necessarily saying that these events would come under the minister's direction to move people on ...'.

Appendix One

The Member's comments in Parliament implying that the false allegations made against me in October 2017 by certain councillors have credibility, when they are totally false, is damaging to myself, in that they adversely affect my reputation.

I kindly ask that my response be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Rev Peter Abetz
Councillor, City of Gosnells
August 2018

Appendix Two

Committee's Functions and Powers

Legislative Assembly Standing Order 284 provides the following functions, powers and terms of reference to the Procedure and Privileges Committee —

Procedure and Privileges Committee

- 284.** (1) A Procedure and Privileges Committee will be appointed at the beginning of each Parliament to —
- (a) examine and report on the procedures of the Assembly; and
 - (b) examine and report on issues of privilege; and
 - (c) wherever necessary, confer with a similar committee of the Council.
- (2) Membership of the committee will consist of the Speaker and four other members as the Assembly appoints.
- (3) Standing Order 278 will apply except that where possible any report of the committee will be presented by the Deputy Speaker.
- (4) When consideration of a report from the committee is set down as an order of the day it will be considered using the consideration in detail procedure.