



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE**

**PERSON REFERRED TO IN THE LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

**MR ROBERT LAROCCA**

**15 APRIL 2008**

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## **Members of the Committee**

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Ms K Murray, Manager Procedure Office, Legislative Assembly

## **REPORT**

1. On 10 August 2007 Mr Robert Larocca made a submission to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly seeking redress under Standing Order 227 relating to the protection of persons referred to in the Legislative Assembly.
2. The submission referred to statements made by the Member for Kilsyth, Mr David Hodgett, during the adjournment debate on 9 August 2007. The Speaker, having accepted the submission as a submission for the purposes of the Standing Order, referred it to the Committee on 15 August 2007.
3. The Committee met in private session on 27 February 2008 and, under Standing Order 227(10), decided to accept an application for right of reply from Mr Larocca.
4. The Committee suggested some changes to the text of the draft response prepared by Mr Larocca. On 26 March 2008 Mr Larocca wrote to the Secretary to accept the changes suggested by the Committee.
5. The Committee met again in private session on 10 April 2008, and agreed to accept Mr Larocca's response. In agreeing to accept the response, the Committee did not consider it necessary to consult further with Mr Larocca, or to consult with Mr Hodgett.
6. The Committee draws attention to Standing Order 227(9) which requires that, in considering a submission under this Standing Order and reporting to the House, the Committee shall not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the House or in the submission.

### **Recommendation**

**That a response by Mr Larocca, in the terms specified at Appendix 1, be published with this report.**

**Committee Room  
10 April 2008**

## Appendix One

### Response by Mr Robert Larocca under Standing Order 227

#### Statement:

The Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC) is made up of seven council [...] Its primary objective is to have the federal government fund public transport in Melbourne's outer east. One wonders why on earth a group of local councils would choose to lobby the federal Government on public transport, a state issue. Why would this group of local councils hire a public relations consultancy firm, spending thousands of dollars to lobby the federal government for funding for public transport at ratepayers expense, shifting the blame from the state Labor government? It raised my suspicions.

If you look hard you will discover that the public relations consultant doing the work for the ETC is Labor Party member and former Labor mayor of Moreland, Robert Larocca.

If you look deeper you will uncover that Robert Larocca was a former adviser to both the member for Footscray and her husband, the federal member for Wills, Kelvin Thomson. He was the electorate officer to Kelvin Thomson when a liquor licensing character reference was written for Tony Mokbel. And — guess what? — he was the mayor when a controversial \$18 million, 10-storey development in Brunswick by Tony Mokbel was approved, despite the wishes of his own internal department and 74 objections. Council approved the project two months after Mr Thomson gave the reference for the liquor licence application.

Given Robert Larocca's history and the fact that his firm has deep-rooted links to the Labor Party, the real reason behind the pressure to have the federal government fund state public transport is quickly exposed. Premier Brumby is behind this. He cannot have it both ways: he screams when the federal government picks up in areas where the state is deficient, but he is happy for a behind-the-scenes campaign to offload the state's doomed public transport system. Our local councils have been conned by Larocca's PR firm, CPR. How much of ratepayers money has been spent on this con job? This stunt has no credibility. All the government wants to do is get off the hook for its public transport failures.

[*Hansard*, pp 2647–8, 9 August 2007, Mr David Hodgett MP]

#### Response:

The member made comments about me which were factually inaccurate and may cause me harm in a professional and personal manner. I was distressed by the baseless allegation that I am associated with a convicted felon.

For the record facts of the matter are:

**'... he was the mayor when a controversial \$18 million, 10-storey development in Brunswick by Tony Mokbel was approved...'**

- a) The development that he refers to was decided on at the Moreland Urban Planning Committee, a fully delegated committee under the Local Government Act of Council on 20 November 2000.
- b) I was not a member of that committee so had no legal role in the decision.
- c) I was elected Mayor on 26 March 2001, some three months after the decision was made.

**‘despite the wishes of his own internal department...’**

- d) The development was recommended for approval by the Director City Strategy.