

The Senate

Committee of Privileges

Persons referred to in the Senate

Ms Deborah Hegarty and Mr Peter Ross Hegarty

154th Report

June 2013

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Report

1.1 On 20 June 2013 the President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable John Hogg, received a submission from Ms Deborah Hegarty seeking redress under the resolution of the Senate of 25 February 1988 relating to the protection of persons referred to in the Senate (Privilege Resolution 5).

1.2 The submission referred to a speech made by Senator Furner in the Senate on 14 May 2013. The President accepted the submission as a submission for the purposes of the resolution and referred it to the Committee of Privileges.

1.3 The committee met on 20 June 2013 and, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Privilege Resolution 5, decided to consider the submission. The committee resolved to recommend that the response be incorporated in Hansard without change. In considering the submission, the committee did not find it necessary to confer with the person making the submission.

1.4 The committee draws attention to paragraph 5(6) of the resolution which requires that, in considering a submission under this resolution and reporting to the Senate, the committee shall not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the Senate or in the submission.

1.5 The committee **recommends:**

That a response by Ms Deborah Hegarty, in the terms specified at Appendix 1, be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Senator Gary Humphries
Chair

Appendix

Response by Ms Deborah Hegarty

Pursuant to Resolution 5(7)(b) of the Senate of 25 February 1988

Reply to statement by Senator Mark Furner

(14 May 2013)

I am writing to you in your capacity as the President of the Senate seeking “Right of Reply” consistent with “Privilege Resolution 5” specific to the information in HANSARD {page 74 and 75} 14th MAY Senate- in a speech delivered by Senator Furner who has MISLEAD THE PARLIAMENT with completely wrong and damaging information about myself and my husband.

Both my husband and I have been named in Hansard as Directors of Ready Flowers the company Senator has identified as having dealings with. The source of the information about us, taken from the Sydney Morning Herald was WRONG and we believe Senator Furner is trying to discredit and damage the business for his own ends or at the very least to assist one of his friends.

We are Directors of Ready Flowers Pty Ltd BUT NOT Directors of Ready Flowers Limited (Hong Kong) the online florist company that Senator Furner’s daughter reportedly made a flower order with.

Ready Flowers Pty Ltd was established in 2005 in Western Australia and subsequently sold the operations and assets to Ready Flowers Ltd {Hong Kong Company} in 2009 and has since changed business nature to a transaction processing company. Peter Ross and Deborah Hegarty are no longer either shareholders or Directors of Ready Flowers Ltd and have not been since the sale in 2009.

Senator Furner’s speech goes on to make further incorrect claims, using the Sydney Morning Herald again as his source, by stating

“ The Sydney Morning Herald article said that the company is owned by the Hegarty family from Western Australia. When you ring the company you get transferred to a call centre over in Hong Kong. That clearly demonstrates the shadiness of this particular company ... “

The inference being Deborah and Peter Ross Hegarty and the Hegarty family are “shady operators”, which is completely unfounded and not true at all.

Given Ready Flowers Ltd, who Senator Furner’s daughter reportedly traded with, is a Hong Kong Company, it is perfectly reasonable that the call centre operated by this company is also in HONG KONG. There is nothing “shady” about having a HONG KONG business with offices and support

functions such as a call centre actually based in HONG KONG as well.

Senator Furner's said during this speech:

“ ... According to an ASIC company extract, the company's directors Deborah and Peter Ross Hegarty are located in Manning in Perth ... “

This is correct if referring to Ready Flowers Pty Ltd, but not when referring to Ready Flowers Ltd, the HONG KONG Company Senator Furner was referring to.

Senator Furner has used the parliament to make his personal complaints against Ready Flowers (a Hong Kong based company) on behalf of his daughter, casting dispersions on the company, and even making recommendations about using a QLD based company that the public should be dealing with.

Despite Senator Furner MISLEADING THE PARLIAMENT with incorrect information, we consider it as AN ABUSE OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE using the Parliament for his own personal business on behalf of his daughter. Senator Furner's speech continued on to do a promotion of his friend's florist...

“ ... I have friends in the florist business. They run Sandgate Road Flowers. They do not do online bookings but they are a competent and very competitive florist that I know is trusted, on the north side of Brisbane. People should be looking in their own backyards and using florists there as opposed to the likes of Ready Flowers, which I and my daughter unfortunately did ... “

The information on this company, Sandgate Road Flowers, the Senator refers to, I would suggest also needs to be carefully examined as this is potentially incorrect and also misleading.

I am seeking to have the correct information recorded in Hansard and the very least a written apology from Senator Furner for any damage current and future that his incorrect comments may do to myself and my husband and both Ready Flowers Pty Ltd and Ready Flowers Ltd. I will be perusing this apology separately.

Thank you in anticipation of a positive response.