

The Senate

Committee of Privileges

Person referred to in the Senate

Reverend Monsignor Ian Dempsey

147th Report

September 2011

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Report

1.1 On 21 September 2011 the President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable John Hogg, received a submission from Reverend Monsignor Ian Dempsey 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 comments made by Senator Xenophon during the adjournment debate in the Senate on 12 and 13 September 2011. The President accepted the submission as a submission for the purposes of the resolution and referred it to the Committee of Privileges on 21 September 2011.

1.3 The committee met in private session on 22 September 2011 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 or with the senator concerned.

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 of the submission.

1.5 The committee **recommends:**

That a response by Reverend Monsignor Ian Dempsey, in the terms specified in the Appendix, be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Senator David Johnston
Chair

Appendix

Response by Reverend Monsignor Ian Dempsey

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

Reply to comments by Senator Nick Xenophon in the Senate

(12 and 13 September 2011)

Senator Nick Xenophon,

You have shot the wounded. I am the priest whom you named in Parliament under privilege. You state your reason for doing so was the frustration you had with the lack of progress John Hepworth has in his false complaint about me to the Adelaide Archdiocese.

I was, and am, in no position to influence the timing and course of action in this matter by the Archdiocese. You have chosen to shame me publicly in order to address a matter which I have no way of influencing. Why?

I am also a victim of process. Hepworth wrote to Monsignor Cappo on 23 February 2011 (note this year) - to make a formal complaint against me. I received written notification of this complaint from the church lawyers on 3 March 2011.

For over forty years I have served with integrity and honour as a Catholic priest. I have been a parish priest, Director General of Navy Chaplains, for which service I received the award of Officer in the Order of Australia, a Vicar General in both the Military Ordinariate and Adelaide Dioceses – at 2121 last Tuesday night you irreparably smeared and denigrated my reputation. You have acted on the information of one person whom you state is credible. Time will give a different picture.

Despite your attack on my character, the people who know me whether they be family, parishioners, Navy personnel, priests, and friends around Australia, know I am incapable of perpetrating the false accusations made against me. I am innocent of these allegations which you used parliamentary privilege to name me. I have emails from Navy personnel whom I served with since 1972 affirming me as an honourable and trustworthy chaplain. Hardly the accolades an alleged serial rapist would receive.

This has not prevented those who have grudges against the church to send me hate mail. This has greatly disturbed the parish staff. You say you had a restless night – I have had many thanks to you.

I have not been charged with any offence, there is no police investigation, the Archbishop has not stood me down, I have not been interviewed by the Archbishop's lawyers, I have a reputation of honesty and integrity. You did not even bother to find out about any matter relevant to this case except from the one source, John Hepworth. You refused the offers of the Archdiocese to give you a briefing. You never contacted me. You still went ahead to name and shame me.

This is all happening as I recover from a life-threatening illness and is not helping me to return to full health.

You have shot the wounded – you who proclaim to be an advocate of those who are hurting in our society.

Ian Dempsey AO PP KSJ RAN(rtd)
Reverend Monsignor