

The Senate

---

Committee of Privileges

---

Persons referred to in the Senate

Ms Vicki Dunstan on behalf of the  
Church of Scientology Australia

146th Report

June 2010

© Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 2010

ISBN 978-1-74229-326-4

*This document was produced by the Committee of Privileges, and printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra*

## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Senator the Hon. David Johnston (**Chair**) (Western Australia)

Senator David Feeney (**Deputy Chair**) (Victoria)

Senator Don Farrell (South Australia)

Senator Julian McGauran (Victoria)

Senator the Hon. Jan McLucas (Queensland)

Senator Kerry O'Brien (Tasmania)

Senator Marise Payne (New South Wales)

The Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6277 3360  
Facsimile: (02) 6277 3199  
E-mail: [Priv.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:Priv.sen@aph.gov.au)  
Internet: [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate\\_privileges](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_privileges)



## Report

1.1 On 11 May 2010 the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon. John Hogg, received a submission from the President of the Church of Scientology Australia, Ms Vicki Dunstan, 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 Senators Xenophon, Milne and Bob Brown in the Senate on 11 and 18 March 2010. The President, having accepted the submission as a submission for the purposes of the resolution, referred it to the Committee of Privileges on 12 May 2010.

1.3 The committee met in private session on 17 June 2010 and, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Privilege Resolution 5, decided to consider the submission. The response, which the committee now recommends for incorporation in *Hansard*, has been agreed to by Ms Dunstan and the committee in accordance with Resolution 5(7)(b).

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 Ms Vicki Dunstan in the terms specified at Appendix One, be incorporated in *Hansard*.**

Senator David Johnston  
**Chair**



# **Appendix One**

**Response by Ms Vicki Dunstan,  
President, Church of Scientology Australia  
Pursuant to Resolution 5(7)(b) of the Senate of 25 February 1988**

**Reply to comments by Senator Nicholas Xenophon (and others) in the  
Senate**

**(11 & 18 March 2010)**

Pursuant to resolution 5 (7) (b) of the Senate of 25 February 1988, I make this submission on behalf of the Church of Scientology regarding comments and allegations made in the Senate concerning the Church by Senator Nicholas Xenophon, Senator Bob Brown and Senator Christine Milne on the 11th and 18th of March 2010.

The allegations that have been made against the Church by former members were first raised in the Senate by Senator Xenophon in November 2009 and repeated by various media and have remained as bald allegations—unproven and unprovable because they are false. The same is true with regard to the latest round of false allegations.

On 17 November 2009, Senator Xenophon raised a series of unfounded and irresponsible allegations in the Senate.

The Church was and remains deeply concerned about the comments and issues raised by Senator Xenophon.

The Church strongly advocates that any issue or individual that involves criminal conduct should be brought to the immediate attention of the relevant law enforcement agency for investigation. The Church does not resile from this position.

As a religious institution, we believe that it is appropriate to bring any such claims before relevant authorities to investigate without favour or “political agenda”.

We believe that is fundamental to section 116 of Australia’s Constitution and the principles of our modern democracy.

Despite the unsubstantiated claims made by Senator Xenophon in the Senate under parliamentary privilege, the Senator refused to meet with representatives of the Church.

Access to Senator Xenophon was denied. No opportunity was afforded the Church to correct the record with the Senator.

In response to the unfounded and irresponsible allegations made by Senator Xenophon, the Church submitted a detailed Right of Reply to the Senate, outlining the inaccurate claims made under privilege, and this was incorporated in the Hansard in February 2010.

Following this submission to the Australian Parliament, Senator Xenophon raised further unfounded and irresponsible claims on the 11th and the 18th of March 2010.

Senator Xenophon once again failed to contact the Church to verify the claims, violating the principle of fundamental fairness.

Instead, the Senator based his unfounded and irresponsible allegations on hearsay; at no time did Senator Xenophon attempt to hear the Church's side of the story to correct and clarify the facts.

In response to the allegations raised in the Senate on 11 and 18 March 2010, the Church wishes to place on the Senate record the following factually based evidence.

1. Alleged Abortions:

The practice of abortion conflicts with fundamental teachings of Scientology. As stated by the Founder of Scientology in *Dianetics: Modern Science on Mental Health*:

*"Once the child is conceived... that man or woman who would attempt an abortion on an unborn child is attempting a murder which will seldom succeed and is laying the foundation of a childhood of illness and heartache.*

*"Anyone attempting an abortion is committing an act against the whole society and the future...."*

It is not Church policy or practice to counsel expectant mothers or any of its staff to have abortions.

Nevertheless, the Church recognises that the law permits women to obtain abortions from qualified medical personnel under certain circumstances.

The Church, like all Australian institutions, respects the legal parameters set by our legislators and judiciary, and does not interfere with a woman's freedom of choice in this regard.

In Senator Xenophon's speech the Senate on 17 Nov 2009, he refers to claims by Mr Aaron Saxton about women he allegedly coerced to have abortions. Since the delivery of this Senate speech, Mr Saxton has also corrected the record by publishing an article on James Randi Educational Foundation site ([www.randi.org](http://www.randi.org)) that none of these women he supposedly coerced "factually did" have abortions.

The Church of Scientology considers the family unit and children to be of paramount importance and that *"when children become unimportant to society, that society has forfeited its future,"* as stated by the Founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard in his



---

book *Science of Survival*. The allegations being made are without merit and are contrary to the widely known beliefs and practices of the Church.

## 2. Occupational Health and Safety

The Church places the safety of its people as a core responsibility of the organisation.

A safe and secure workplace is valued by all members of the Church.

We adhere to legislative and statutory regulatory requirements with regard to safety of the workplace as outlined by the Commonwealth and respective state governments.

Like all major Australian institutions, the Church employs a range of recognised and accredited experts to advise on appropriate workplace safety measures to ensure that all legislative and regulatory requirements are achieved.

Church staff enjoy a low incidence of sickness or injury in the workplace and we remain committed to providing a safe and secure environment.

Senator Xenophon's allegations of unsafe Occupational Health and Safety practices by the Church are false. Only general statements without empirical evidence have been provided to the Senate.

Once again, Senator Xenophon denied the Church the opportunity to provide information regarding these allegations before he addressed the Senate under the cover of parliamentary privilege.

## 3. Alleged Harassment

The Church does not tolerate harassment of individuals in the workplace or in the broader community.

We have a strong commitment to promoting freedom of religion and tolerance around the world.

Unfortunately, many members of the Church have experienced unfair treatment, stalking, threats and harassment by hate groups. On all occasions, the Church has taken appropriate action and referred these matters to the authorities.

Senator Xenophon in his speech of the 18th of March outlines unfounded and irresponsible allegations of harassment by alleged representatives of the Church.

Again no evidence is provided to the Senate. Again unfounded claims have been made under the cover of parliamentary privilege.

## 4. Alleged Financial Impropriety

The Church places enormous importance on financial management and trust. We rely on the ongoing support of our members in assisting our community and outreach activities around Australia.

This support is critical to our ministry and to providing assistance to thousands of Australians who suffer drug related problems and other personal issues.

Churches rely upon a system of tithes, or rely on members to make charitable payments to support their functions, fund their community activities and to spread their teachings. The Church of Scientology is no exception.

Courts and governmental agencies in the United States, Europe and other countries have repeatedly acknowledged Scientology's religiosity. In October 1983, The High Court of Australian in Church of the New Faith v. Commissioner of Payroll Tax (Vic) recognised Scientology.

#### 5. Alleged risk to the community

The Church of Scientology and the prominent psychiatric professor and author Dr. Tomas Szasz founded the Citizens Commission on Human rights in 1969 to investigate and expose abusive practices in psychiatry.

CCHR comprises many professionals, including psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, educators and others who share a common concern about the human rights abuses and stigmatization inherent in the mental health system. Indeed, it was due to CCHR's efforts that mental health laws enacted legal rights for patients and their informed consent for treatment rights that until then psychiatrists had denied them.

Over the past four decades, the lives of many children and adults have been saved by the dedicated work of Scientologists and many other concerned individuals working together for mental health reform and access to proper medical treatment.

In conclusion, Australians enjoy a nation that promotes religious freedom, tolerance and understanding.

It underpins our society and is the cornerstone of our great democracy. The origins of the freedoms that all Australians enjoy today can be traced back to the earliest of times.

The Church, its parishioners and supporters are proud of their contribution to our Australian way of life through volunteerism; pastoral; and community activities, including its effective drug prevention program "Say No to Drugs, Say Yes to Life" and Volunteer Ministers Disaster Relief program.

The Volunteer Ministers, over 200,000 strong worldwide, have helped more than 1.4 million people in times of disaster during the past year, and have volunteered much-needed disaster relief aid in Haiti since the January earthquake.

Like all religions, we aim to enrich society and support our neighbourhoods.

We remain vigilant in protecting and promoting human rights.

That is why we take this opportunity to reply to the irresponsible allegations made by Senator Xenophon in the Senate.

Again we extend to Senator Xenophon the opportunity to meet with the Church and receive factual information about our pastoral work and care.

We do this openly and with confidence.

Further, we extend this opportunity in the spirit of our founding fathers as want to ensure freedom of religion for all Australians and that our laws are respected and obeyed.

- END -

