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Disappointment at Government's delaying tactics

TasWater Chairman Miles Hampton says he is extremely disappointed that the State Government appears to be delaying his Citizens' Right of Reply to the Parliament over statements made in the House of Assembly by Treasurer Peter Gutwein.

He said it seemed the Government was using its numbers on the House Privileges Committee to prevent his Reply appearing in the official Hansard report prior to Parliament adjourning.

Mr Hampton said that was the only conclusion that could be made after his Reply was submitted to the Speaker Elise Archer on July 3.

"I've only received acknowledgement that it has been received from the Clerk of the House and no other advice in more than two months," he said.

"On May 3 this year, Mr Gutwein made extremely personal and disparaging remarks about me in his attempt to justify the Government's proposed hostile takeover of TasWater.

"Under the protection of parliamentary privilege, he elevated the issue from a dispute about the respective merits of the Government's and TasWater's plans for the upgrading of Tasmania's water and sewerage infrastructure, to a personal attack on my character, motivation and responsibilities as a company director under law.

"Had Mr Gutwein made his accusations of 'duplicity', engaging in 'propaganda' and 'misrepresentation in advice provided to shareholders' (a clear implication of failure to uphold my obligations as a company director), and 'acting in self-interest', outside the parliament, I would have immediately sought legal redress.

"To compound the harm, the Treasurer's comments were supported by Premier Will Hodgman MP in answer to a Question Without Notice the following day."

Mr Hampton said the Government's position and intransigence regarding the future of TasWater was in marked contrast to the position espoused by the Premier on 1 June 2007.

Appearing on the ABC television program *Stateline*, the then Opposition Leader Mr Hodgman said: "I believe it would be unfair, undesirable and in many respects immoral for the State Government to simply rip away from local councils, assets and a revenue stream without properly compensating them."



“Yet that is precisely what Mr Hodgman, Mr Gutwein and the Liberal Government are attempting to do and they appear determined to go to extreme measures to stifle any response, criticism or debate regarding their ill-considered, costly and doubtful asset grab.

“Under Parliamentary Standing Orders, I am entitled to a Citizens’ Right of Reply and after detailed consideration, I submitted this in early July.

“This is an important tenet of democracy when a person is wronged under parliamentary privilege and by any measure, this delay is unreasonable. You can only question the Government’s motives and its commitment to fairness and the democratic process.”

Mr Hampton said he had sought his Citizens’ Right of Reply to be incorporated in Hansard as his personal and professional reputation had been seriously and adversely affected by the unfounded comments and claims made by the Treasurer in the parliament.

“This is my only recourse and it appears the Government is doing all it can to delay or deny this,” he said.

Ends....