

## **INTERVIEW WITH TIM COX**

**ABC 936 STATEWIDE MORNINGS, HOBART**

**5 AUGUST 2009  
9:05AM**

**SUBJECTS: Grech affair**

**TIM COX:**

Senator Nick Sherry was listening to the interview with Eric Abetz this morning. The Assistant Treasurer is on the phone. Senator Sherry, good morning to you.

**NICK SHERRY:**

Good morning, good morning to your listeners.

**TIM COX:**

What can the Privileges Committee investigate specifically?

**NICK SHERRY:**

Well, if I start with the last point that Senator Abetz made and he said, look, some evidence on the face of it is false and that's a serious matter and that's a matter for the Privileges Committee and I take that as a reference to Mr Grech. And it certainly is serious on the face of it and prima facie a breach of Senate standing orders and a very serious matter.

So that's an issue the Privileges Committee of the Senate can examine but there are two actions of Senator Abetz that on the face of it are very serious.

One is Senator Abetz told the Senate inquiry he received his information on OzCar from a journalist. Now, not even Senator Abetz is maintaining that any more. In fact, he received it at a secret meeting, along with Mr Turnbull, with Mr Grech. He didn't receive it from a journalist and my point there is, at least on the face of it, Senator Abetz hasn't been accurate and told or given a correct answer in the Senate or a correct statement. He said a journalist gave him the information when, in fact, it was Mr Grech.

But I think the much more important and serious matter is this whole Senate inquiry that took place was a sham. The whole thing was a charade or a pantomime because Mr Turnbull and Senator Abetz met with Mr Grech before the Senate hearing and that can constitute coaching a

witness, interfering with the legitimate Senate inquiry and that, of itself, is a very serious matter and that's the second ground on which Senator Abetz's actions need examination.

**TIM COX:**

Difficult to prove though.

**NICK SHERRY:**

Well, at this point in time, Senator Abetz would have to, if the inquiry went ahead, there would be witnesses called, including Senator Abetz, and they would have to explain. I mean, on the face of it Senator Abetz has said the journalist - a journalist gave him the information when it seems very clear now that Mr Grech gave him the information.

Well, that, on the face of it, appears to be a breach of the Senate standing orders and a matter for Privileges to consider.

But no, I don't believe it's difficult to - to prove. You made, I think, the perfectly reasonable point, if Senator Abetz has nothing to fear he and the Liberal Party in the Senate will not oppose a Privileges Committee.

There's already been one attempt to refer this matter to the Privileges Committee when the Senate last met and Senator Abetz opposed it. And if things are as he says they are, he has nothing to fear from appearing at the Privileges Committee, allowing the Privileges Committee to refer it and explaining his involvement in the charade and the pantomime and all of the conversations that took place with Mr Grech prior to a supposedly independent, legitimate Senate inquiry.

**TIM COX:**

Senator Abetz reiterated a couple of times, Nick Sherry, that Kevin Rudd and Wayne Swan had a case to answer as well in their repeated suggestion that it was Malcolm Turnbull and he - Senator Abetz - that had faked that email.

**NICK SHERRY:**

No, I - what - what questions were asked yesterday was Mr Turnbull and Senator Abetz needed to explain whether they had any part in placing pressure on Mr Grech, a claim, I might say, Mr Grech has made, in relation to the creation, promotion or distribution of what was a fake email.

**TIM COX:**

Thanks for your time this morning.

**NICK SHERRY:**

Thank you, good morning.

**TIM COX:**

Nick Sherry, Tasmanian Labor Senator, the Assistant Treasurer as well.