
Police probe Robinson on pub cheques

Tony Koch, Kristen Smith
Courier Mail
24 August 2002

ATSIC deputy chairman Ray Robinson is under police investigation for countersigning two cheques that were drawn on an Aboriginal housing company for which he was not an authorised signatory.

Queensland Fraud Squad detectives executed warrants two weeks ago to obtain the original Indigenous Housing and Construction Company cheques -- for \$2000 and \$2800 -- which were cashed at the Inala Hotel on Saturday, May 11. The first cheque was allegedly cashed at midday and the second about 7pm.

Mr Robinson is one of four directors of IHCC and is one of its three shareholders along with Robert Lacey and Vincent Mason.

A non-repayable grant of \$165,000 was obtained from ATSIC on April 8, 2002 to establish a private company to renovate Inala homes -- providing employment and training for indigenous apprentices.

It is a company established for profit and its directors are entitled to fees and dividends.

Mr Robinson is chairman of 15 Aboriginal corporations established with grants or loans from ATSIC.

Mr Lacey said he and Mr Robinson signed the cheques although he knew Mr Robinson was not a legal signatory. He said the signing of the cheques was "an oversight" and that none of the funds had to be paid back.

"One was for wages and the other was to pay an electrician who could not wait until Monday to get paid," Mr Lacey said.

Mr Robinson was asked through his solicitors to reply to questions about the cheques, but did not do so.

Mr Mason said there were only two signatories to IHCC cheques at the time the two were drawn -- he and Mr Lacey. Both signatures were required for the cheques to be valid.

"Mr Lacey rang me on Monday, May 13, and said that Robinson, who is a director of our company but is not a cheque signatory, asked him at the Inala Hotel on Saturday for a cheque he could cash," Mr Mason said.

"Robert said he pointed out to Robinson that he was not a signatory, but Robinson countersigned it himself anyway -- for \$2000.

"Then at about 7pm, the same went on with a second cheque for \$2800, but it had to be taken by cab to the Acacia Ridge Hotel to be cashed.

"I have referred this matter to the Fraud Squad and the cheques have been retrieved by the bank showing Robinson's signature is certainly on both of them."

IHCC has entered into a contract with the Fed-

eral Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business to train nine construction industry apprentices.

The contract provides \$400,000 over the next four years to the proprietary company. The project has been supported by the Queensland Government.

The Department of Works and Housing has allocated homes in the Inala area for repair and renovation as part of a \$80 million urban renewal scheme.

ATSIC is investigating how accounts for the housing company were settled using cheques from an ATSIC-funded Aboriginal employment agency that is also managed by Mr Lacey.

Mr Mason said that from the time he objected to the cashing of the cheques at the Inala Hotel, Mr Lacey had refused to allow him into the IHCC office, or to check the books and accounts.

He said he would be taking court action next week to exercise his rights as a director and shareholder to inspect the books and accounts.

Mr Robinson and Mr Lacey have subsequently registered another company called Indigenous Housing and Construction Co 1 Pty Ltd, with themselves as the only directors and Mr Lacey as the company secretary.

On Monday, August 19, Mr Lacey told The Courier-Mail the counter-signing of the cheques by Mr Robinson had been

"an oversight".

"Vince Mason has gone feral," he said. "Sugar (Ray Robinson) has not done anything wrong. Vince is carrying on like he knew nothing about this, but even the publican at the Inala Hotel told him everything.

"He has brought the fraud squad out here and they have gone away. This is just ridiculous. It was a basic oversight -- Ray signing the cheques."

Mr Lacey is also the manager of the Inala-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for All Sports, Health, Recreation Association which manages an indigenous work-for-the-dole program called the Community Development Employment Project.

According to documents obtained by The Courier-Mail, on July 10, 2002, Bunnings Warehouse at Oxley billed AISHRA for \$13,119.08 in building materials. Mr Mason said they were actually for the privately-owned IHCC.

He said another Bunnings account for \$139.49 was paid on the same day by AISHRA for building materials and bar chairs bought by IHCC, and on July 10, the same occurred when mesh was bought for \$53.69.

AISHRA on July 11 paid another account for \$59.79 for IHCC when bathroom fittings were bought from Bunnings.

Mr Lacey said AISHRA cheques were used to pay accounts for IHCC because it was a new company which did not yet have a line of credit.