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Rt Hon Gerry Brownlee  
Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives  
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Wellington

Copied to:

Chair of Privileges Committee and Party Leaders

### **Serious Allegations Against Hon Willie Jackson MP**

#### **Request Referral to Privileges Committee**

Kia ora Mr Speaker,

I raise compromising allegations of serious misconduct by the Hon Willie Jackson MP that I believe reaches the threshold for you to forward this complaint to the Privileges Committee.

Willie has acted in behaviours over the past few months that are surely contrary to what is expected of a member of parliament. I raised this matter with the NZ Labour leader Rt Hon Chris Hipkins MP on 5 September without success. I have attached my correspondence to him.

Specifically the allegations are:

- 1. Willie orchestrated the sacking of the Chair of the Manukau Urban Māori Authority (MUMA) to cover up credible allegations of serious misconduct and bullying by the CEO, who is his wife.**
  - a) In February this year two senior managers, Mike Tukaki and Deborah Mahuta-Coyle, who were previously employed in Willie's ministerial office in the last government, were tasked to carry out an organisational review of MUMA.
  - b) They found serious cases of bullying and misconduct by the CEO. They believed MUMA was in such danger the CEO should be removed.
  - c) They raised their concerns and their recommendations with the CEO, the Chair, and Willie. The Chair then raised the matter with the board who delegated the Chair and Deputy to discuss the concerns with the CEO. It did not go well.
  - d) Willie then contacted the Chair, claimed to be the CEO's employment advocate and insisted on a face-to-face meeting. Throughout this meeting the Chair felt bullied. Willie demanded the review be terminated, and no report was to be given to the board. Instead, he insisted the Chair make a written apology to the CEO and the board. When the Chair

said he was required to report relevant matters to the board, Willie said he would have him removed as Chair and he would lose his \$70,000 annual stipend.

- e) After this meeting Willie contacted individual board members to organise the removal of the Chair. A few days later a special board meeting was called. The Chair assumed it was called for him to report on his discussion with the CEO. Instead he was ambushed and removed at the start of the meeting by a simple vote.
- f) Contrary to the rules, the Chair also lost his board membership without any process or notice. His email and phone were immediately cut off after this meeting, and his correspondence has been unanswered since. The Chair was for many years deputy to the MUMA founder Dame June Jackson and served in senior paid and voluntary roles at MUMA for decades. His termination is shameful to all those who participated.
- g) Willie then hand-picked three new board members who are close to him. Kiri Skipworth, his parliamentary electorate agent, Jerome Mika, a senior Labour Party leader and academic Ella Henry. It is unclear if there was any appointment process. None of them have responded to emails that outline the bullying allegations.
- h) For a member of parliament to be actively involved in this behaviour I believe requires investigation by the Privileges Committee.

## **2. MP Bans a Union Access and the Right to Bargain for its Members.**

- a) Willie signed and issued a trespass order against me personally and then extended it to include any union representative. This order covered all MUMA workplaces.
- b) This came about after a delegation of MUMA employees requested a hui with me and came to my office. They raised several cases of bullying by the CEO and breaches of their salary provisions. I advised them to join a union so they could deal with their concerns collectively. To facilitate this, I reached out to other unions without success.
- c) Days later a team leader called me saying her salary increase recommendation by her own manager had been unilaterally vetoed by the CEO without explanation. This was not uncommon.
- d) Consequently I reregistered my old union, One Union, and told them if a certain number joined the union online, I would be prepared to help them, at least initially. They met the agreed membership target in less than a week.
- e) On 25 July, within hours of One Union initiating bargaining with MUMA, Willie emailed me a trespass order refusing access to MUMA workplaces. I wrote back to Willie pointing out his actions were a blatant employment law breach. He doubled down and extended the trespass order to all union representatives. Mike Tukaki then contacted me saying

MUMA would not recognise the initiation of bargaining or allow any union communication with employees. Willie then arranged Mike Tukaki to hand-deliver me a paper trespass order in person the following week.

- f) The workers became frightened so I advised both Willie and MUMA I would put this dispute on pause to calm matters and we would address it at another time. After discussion with union members last week, One Union will now file this breach in the Employment Relations Authority.
- g) The sad sight of Willie, a current front bench Labour member of parliament, a former minister of employment and a former senior trade union official, coordinating an anti-union and anti-worker endeavour to cover up bullying and misconduct by a boss is deep tragedy.
- h) For a member of parliament to conduct themselves in this manner I believe requires investigation by the Privileges Committee.

### **3. Willie is Key Part of a Campaign of Intimidation**

- a) Recently, current and former employees have shared their stories with the media. In the last week employees say Willie has been at MUMA coordinating strategy related to managing any public fallout.
- b) Employees were called to several meetings last week and warned about discussing their allegations. They were told that if they did, they could be dismissed. Further, if certain allegations became public, MUMA would lose contracts that would cause them to lose their jobs. This is, and is meant to be, intimidation.
- c) As an aside I was threatened too. This is a common occurrence for me, so I just rolled my eyes and ignored it. But others don't have my background and experience.
- d) Late last week the former Chair received two letters from MUMA lawyers threatening him into silence. As I write this letter, he called me saying he had received a third letter from Chapman Tripp lawyers advising they were filing their case in the High Court today. That is three letters in four days. These are tactics to intimidate someone who was merely carrying out his responsibility as Chair after he received credible claims of bullying. The sad part of this the two managers who raised the allegations of bullying are now part of leading the campaign to destroy the former Chair for doing what they had asked him to do. This has caused enormous stress to him and his family, where they now fear they will lose their home. I have no doubt Willie is closely involved in this decision. I wonder how much these blue-chip law firms are costing the taxpayers who are funding MUMA.

- e) For a member of parliament to be actively involved in using the might of expensive lawyers to intimidate ordinary people to cover up bullying is ... further bullying. I believe these actions require investigation by the Privileges Committee.

#### **4. Considerations**

- a) I have been a close friend of Willie for 40 years. First as young trade union officials, and then as political allies. I get constant reports that Willie is telling anyone who will listen to him that he feels betrayed and upset at me. I assure you I feel even more betrayed and more upset at his behaviour. Both of us have had a lifetime of defending workers against abuse. I can't and won't look away from victims, no matter my personal relationships.
- b) I am also shocked that the MUMA board members - Martin Cooper, Dr Pauline Kingi, Rangi McLean and Frances Smiler-Edwards - who have all championed workers' rights for years, have now chosen to cover up the abuse of many of their dedicated wahine, who ironically are employed to help victims of abuse in the South Auckland Māori and Pasifika community. Having three other community leaders join the board and become implicit in this coverup is beyond disappointing.
- c) Given my long friendship with Willie and various board members, I repeatedly tried to resolve these matters informally and fairly. Even with the Chair being sacked, I still hoped for resolution. The Chair is someone I hold in great respect. When he reached out to me for my support I accepted without hesitation. The mana of the Chair and many employees have been severely damaged. Their mana must be restored.
- d) For many months, I have continuously reached out to Willie and his representative to no avail. I even tried last night. They have never refuted the details of any claims of mistreatment. Instead, they just smear me and the claimants, questioning their motives. They refuse to understand the only motive is for them to acknowledge their mistakes and make amends so we can all move on.
- e) Recently I wrote Willie a private letter outlining the problem and a respectful compromise solution. He did not reply. I then wrote to the new board three times asking for a confidential hui. They did not reply and blocked me. I advised the board and Willie directly that if they continued their silence I would write to Chris Hipkins, the Leader of the Labour Party. They did not respond.
- f) I then wrote to Chris Hipkins outlining the full story and requesting he tell Willie to just sort the matter out. I was informed he did read the letter, but then went to ground. Good grief. Labour's chief whip later claimed a Labour member of parliament brazenly using their power to cover up bullying of employees was not a matter for the party to be involved. Unbelievable! A case could be made the Privileges Committee should hold the Leader and the chief whip accountable for their actions in covering up the abuse. I have attached the correspondence with the Labour Leader's office.

- g) This is a matter I have personally struggled with for months. It will end a long and deep friendship. Ultimately we all have to stand up for what we know what is right, even if it comes at a personal cost. I'm sure MPs face that challenge many times over their career. After months of trying to resolve this matter I feel I have no choice but to ask for your assistance. If there is an investigation, I can provide witnesses and evidence to support any claims.

I look forward to hearing back.

Ngā mihi



Matt McCarten  
Secretary  
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**Disclosures:**

- I have had a close personal relationship with Willie and the CEO, spread over many years.
- I have had a prior work relationship with MUMA. I was a contractor in late 2023 and then employed as a HR advisor from January 2024 to early February 2025. I also carried out project work over the years for Dame June Jackson, the founder of MUMA.
- I have been representing three MUMA workers with personal grievances cases through my workplace advocacy company.
- In July I was appointed secretary of One Union. As such, all matters related to employees at MUMA have transferred from my employment advocacy company to One Union.
- I am acting for the former Chair as his support person and representative, as a separate matter from my union work.