



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

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Subjects: Craig Thomson.

BRENDAN TREMBATH:

The New South Wales Federal Labor MP Craig Thomson says he's always rejected allegations of wrongdoing regarding claims he misused a credit card while he was the National Secretary of the Health Services Union. Mr Thomson says he'll make a comprehensive statement in the near future. The New South Wales Police say there's no evidence to warrant a formal investigation. The matter has now been referred to Victoria Police.

The Opposition says it will keep pursuing the case.

But Ministers say the Coalition should stop slinging mud, apologise, and let investigations continue without political sniping. One Minister has accused the Opposition of trying to achieve the easy, sleazy way to The Lodge.

Chief political correspondent, Sabra Lane.

SABRA LANE:

New South Wales Police made its decision to drop the investigation after reviewing documents given to it by the Federal Shadow Attorney-General George Brandis, and material from the Health Services Union. They include the findings of a 120-page union investigation into the allegations that more than \$100,000 was misused, and spent on things like escorts in hotel rooms.

New South Wales Police media spokeswoman Joanne Elliott.

JOANNE ELLIOTT:

After the examination of that information, it was concluded that there was no evidence to warrant a formal investigation by New South Wales Police. However, due to the fact that these financial controls at that union were being conducted by the Melbourne office of the union, and the timing of the MP's service with the union was in Victoria, we are forwarding that file to Victoria Police for its consideration.

LANE:

Victoria Police say it's yet to receive the referral. Fair Work Australia has been conducting an investigation into the claim since 2009. It's expected to announce its findings by the end of this year. The Shadow Attorney-General George Brandis, who referred the matter to the New South Wales Police, says he's not going to stop his pursuit of Mr Thomson.

GEORGE BRANDIS:

I put material before the New South Wales Police some weeks ago, as did the Health Services Union, which seemed to me - and to the Health Services Union, I might say - to suggest that Mr Thomson had used members' money as his own and that there was *prima facie* reason to believe that there may have been a breach of New South Wales criminal law.

Now the police have examined a great deal of material. They have concluded, as I understand, their statement that the material doesn't reach the threshold at which they would institute a prosecution. And as I have said from the start of this matter, this is entirely a matter for the professional judgment of the New South Wales Police. And the Opposition will abide their decision.

LANE:

The matter will now be forwarded to Victoria Police. It's been reported this morning that the police there are unlikely to reach a different conclusion than their New South Wales counterparts.

BRANDIS:

Well, that's a comment made by the person who wrote the story: so let's just wait and see what the Victorian Police do.

LANE:

Do you owe an apology to Craig Thomson?

BRANDIS: Not at all.

LANE: And the Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, this morning visited Craig Thomson's electorate of Dobell, saying the Opposition's attack won't cease.

TONY ABBOTT: There are still a lot of questions for Craig Thomson to answer. Why was his credit card misused? Why were the union dues of lowly-paid workers misused in this way? There are still a lot of questions for the Prime Minister to answer.

LANE: The Acting Foreign Affairs Minister Craig Emerson.

CRAIG EMERSON: Well, this is obviously a bitter disappointment to Tony Abbott and George Brandis, who thought this was going to be their cheap, easy way to The Lodge. Now they're actually going to have to do some policy work to put in front of the Australian people, instead of sleazing their way, trying to get into the Lodge the easy, cheap way.

The New South Wales Police have said that they have completed an assessment, and there is no evidence to warrant an investigation - so they haven't even moved past the assessment phase. They have actually concluded on the basis of the information that

there is no evidence to warrant an investigation.

LANE:

Senator George Brandis says it shows that it doesn't pass the evidence threshold test here, and that he doesn't owe Craig Thomson an apology.

EMERSON:

Well Mr Brandis is wrong about this.

It is not a matter of being insufficient evidence; it's that there is no evidence, and Mr Brandis parades himself as some sort of high, highly-qualified legal adviser. I wouldn't be taking any legal advice from Senator Brandis, including on issues of asylum-seekers or any other matter. And for Mr Brandis to seek to mislead people by saying there was insufficient evidence when the police statement says there is no evidence is a very bad reflection upon him indeed.

And he should apologise to Mr Thomson for this muckraking.

And he claimed in the media that he believed there was a *prima facie* case that Craig Thomson has committed an offence against the New South Wales Crimes Act.

That has proved to be completely false, and it exposes this: and that is that Senator Brandis's motivations were political all along.

LANE: The matter against Craig Thomson isn't completely closed. The Fair Work Australia investigation is still continuing.

EMERSON: Yes. And there is a Fair Work investigation underway, and Mr Abbott should now back off, and stop seeking to pressure that investigation.

LANE: You know Craig Thomson well. I don't know whether you've had a chance to talk to him this morning...

EMERSON: I've had a chance to talk to Craig Thomson. He obviously has felt a great burden from all of this. He has a seven-month pregnant wife with their second child. It will be a relief to them that the muckraking has come to nothing.

TREMBATH: The Acting Foreign Minister Craig Emerson ending that report from chief political correspondent Sabra Lane.

