



# Investigator defends his Thomson report

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FAIR Work Australia investigator Terry Nassios has defended his three-year 1100-page report on rorts at the Health Services Union, rejecting claims by MP Craig Thomson that his inquiry was biased and not forensic.

In his first comments since his explosive report was tabled in parliament in May, Mr Nassios told a committee via a telephone hook-up from his home in Melbourne that he stood by his statement that Mr Thomson had provided “false and misleading” information.

He conceded it would help if the union watchdog had more powers and the documents obtained by Fairfax Media through legal discovery — after Mr Thomson sued them for defamation — were integral to him making findings against the Labor then independent MP.

“There were materials . . . I was able to obtain as a result of the Fairfax proceeding which I believe were crucial in me making the conclusions in terms of expenditure on escort services,” he told the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

Mr Nassios agreed with Lib-

eral senator Scott Ryan, who put to him that it would be better if FWA investigators had the power to obtain this information without relying on third-party legal action.

But he rejected criticism that the report took too long. “I believe it was a proper investigation taking the appropriate period of time,” he said.

The investigator confirmed that former industrial registrar Doug Williams, who was his boss from 2006 to 2009, emailed him during the handover to FWA and advised him to refer the HSU investigation to police in 2009.

But he denied ignoring the request, saying it was up to the FWA general manager to decide to refer information to authorities.

“I don’t have a role in terms of referring any matter to police,” he said.

Mr Nassios also said he told Mr Williams the conclusions about the HSU at that time would not have stood up to scrutiny.

“I would have indicated to (the registrar) that I felt the conclusions he had drawn on that particular date would not have stood up to the scrutiny that those

conclusions would no doubt have been subject to,” he said.

The investigator also said he was a lawyer who could have compiled a brief of evidence on the investigation but he was never asked to by FWA acting general manager Bernadette O’Neill.

In his report Mr Nassios found Mr Thomson spent union funds on prostitutes, travel and his election campaign when he was the union’s national secretary.

Mr Thomson, who has denied any wrongdoing, has accused Mr Nassios of being “not forensic” and biased during his investigation.

Asked by Liberal senator Bronwyn Bishop whether his report was forensic and unbiased and if he stood by his findings that Mr Thomson “provided false and misleading information”, he said “yes”.

The investigator, who is on long service leave until next year, said he could not come to Canberra because a welcome home party was being held for his three-month-old twin grandchildren, who were born prematurely.