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## LGAQ boss sues ex-MP over 'Jabba the Hutt' Facebook posts

By [Mark Solomons](#)

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Greg Hallam, boss of the peak body representing Queensland councils, is suing former state independent MP Rob Pyne, two anti-corruption campaigners and the husband of one of them for more than \$2 million in damages over Facebook posts, some of which allegedly defamed Mr Hallam by likening him to Jabba the Hutt.

Mr Hallam, the long-time chief executive of the Local Government Association of Queensland, a lobby group owned by councils, has filed a claim in the District Court in Brisbane alleging Mr Pyne, Jason Ward, Lyn O'Connor, and her husband Desmond O'Connor all defamed him in posts on public and closed Facebook sites that discuss local government corruption and in Mr Pyne's case, on his Facebook website.



Former MP Rob Pyne (left) with Jason Ward at a protest outside the Queensland Parliament last July, calling for an ICAC for the state. FELICITY CALDWELL

The claim alleges Mrs O'Connor or her husband made posts under a false name that included a caricature "depicting a creature whose body bears a striking resemblance to the well known popular culture figure fictional character from the Star Wars movie franchise, Jabba the Hutt, but whose Jabba the Hutt style head bears a passable likeness to Mr Hallam's appearance".

Mr Hallam claims in the suit that an ordinary and reasonable person would know that Jabba the Hutt "was the head of a crime family ... the leader of a criminal cartel ... the most powerful crime boss on the planet, Tatooine ... employed a retinue of career criminals, bounty hunters, smugglers, assassins and bodyguards to operate his criminal empire ... had affinities for gambling, slave girls and torture ... kept a host of entertainers at his disposal at his palace including slaves, droids and alien creatures and ... was motivated by lust, greed and gluttony".

The LGAQ boss claims he has been "greatly injured in his credit and reputation" by the posts and that they have affected his health and caused "feelings of frustrated anger, irritability and short temper" and "social withdrawal".

He is claiming \$750,000 in damages from Mrs O'Connor and \$500,000 each from Mr O'Connor, Mr Ward and Mr Pyne.

Lyn O'Connor said she would vigorously defend the action and would be filing a formal defence in the proceedings later this month. She said her husband had had nothing to do with the posts.

"Mr Hallam has been CEO of the LGAQ for 20 years and he can't be naive to what's going on in local government in the state," she said.



Greg Hallam has been chief executive of the LGAQ since 1992.

Mr Ward said he was reviewing the claim and preparing a defence but otherwise declined to comment.

Comment has been sought from Mr Pyne.

An LGAQ spokesman said the court action had been approved by the association's board.

"The LGAQ is funding the action as it has a legal duty of care to protect its employees," he said.

Mrs O'Connor and Mr Ward worked closely with Mr Pyne during the last Parliament when he was the MP for Cairns campaigning for local government reform.

While an MP, Mr Pyne used Parliamentary privilege to table documents alleging corruption at a range of Queensland councils, including allegations that the LGAQ "rehomed dodgy and sacked CEOs" at councils.

The LGAQ is a private company owned by Queensland's 77 councils. It runs procurement, executive employment, call centre and insurance services used by councils in Queensland and NSW and had income of more than \$70 million last year.



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