




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Australian 4WD Hire; Roesch, Mr V

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (12.25 am): I bring to the attention of the House unscrupulous, unfair, fraudulent and quite possibly illegal activities that affect many Australians and foreign tourists as well as damage Queensland's and Australia's reputation as a friendly, safe and honest destination for holidays. Who is conning these tourists? Who is ripping off honest customers? Who is threatening them with legal costs and defamation actions? Who is carrying out a relentless, systemic and well-rehearsed fraud on four-wheel drive vehicle hirers? Who is breaking the Australian and Queensland Consumer Law and who-knows-what other laws?

The answer is a business called Australian 4WD Hire and an unsavoury character and undischarged bankrupt: a Russian businessman named Vitali Roesch. Let me say it again clearly: the rip-off merchants are the business called Australian 4WD Hire and the individual Vitali Roesch. Australian 4WD Hire's registered office and principal place of business is at the Q1 tower, Hamilton Avenue, Surfers Paradise. The business operates throughout Queensland and Australia, including my electorate of Clayfield. It appears that the company is under the command and control of bankrupt Russian businessman Vitali Roesch, despite the single share in the company that was transferred from Mr Roesch to his wife, Ms Maryna Kosukhina, on 27 February 2017. Ms Kosukhina was also appointed sole director on 11 September 2015; Vitali Roesch resigned as director on 7 October 2015. What is even more concerning is that he was charged with domestic violence against Ms Kosukhina and received an 18-month sentence but was given immediate parole by the court. I table a dossier outlining many of the salient facts around the operations of Australian 4WD Hire.

Tabled paper: Bundle of documents regarding Australian 4WD Hire [\[916\]](#).

The dossier includes copies of media reports concerning the domestic violence case as well as media reports, including 'Russian magnate fights bankruptcy' and 'Russian Vitali Roesch, once linked to credit card scamming, now ordered to pay a six-figure tax bill'. It includes extracts from a 2013 QCAT hearing wherein the presiding member was satisfied that Mr Roesch is not a fit and proper person to hold a weapons licence. Perhaps this is because he has been charged on two occasions with assault occasioning bodily harm. He has also accumulated 59 demerit points since 2001, including for speeding and unlicensed driving offences. The presiding member concluded that his conduct 'demonstrates irresponsible and antisocial conduct, indicating that he is a risk to public safety'.

I will explain the scam or rip-off. When someone hires a four-wheel drive for the adventure of a lifetime they sign a lengthy standard form take-it-or-leave-it hire contract containing terms which, in my view, are a clear breach of Australian Consumer Law. They pay a deposit of up to \$5,000, sometimes more, and they leave a credit card imprint as additional security. They collect the vehicle, usually from an agency at or near an airport, and head off on their adventure. This is where it goes wrong. On many occasions the hire vehicle is not up to the job and breaks down through no fault of the hirer. Then Mr Roesch and the company start getting threatening and abusive. They start debiting the customer's

credit card for repairs—in one case for an engine replacement, in others for mechanical rebuilds. There are other scams, of course. Time does not allow me to cover them but, Mr Speaker, despite reports to the Office of Fair Trading, nothing has been done to date. There have been 10 Magistrates Court proceedings involving Australian 4WD Hire in the last two years, with one hearing held in Brisbane as recently as last week.

Many customers feel intimidated by Mr Roesch's intimidating and aggressive behaviour and his reputation, but I will not let this rip-off continue. I will be taking this matter further with the federal authorities. I call on the Attorney to also investigate and take action. In the meantime, here is a warning: stay away from Australian 4WD Hire and Vitali Roesch.