



## **MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE SHIRE OF HALLS CREEK PRESIDENT – MALCOLM EDWARDS**

### **Slew of Misconduct charges substantiated against former Halls Creek CEO, Investigation reveals.**

An independent report into former Halls Creek CEO Phillip Cassells has substantiated a raft of misconduct charges against him, including that he misappropriated funds from the sale of a wrecked Shire Land Cruiser.

The 50-page report was prepared by PSL Legal after a months-long investigation into allegations of serious financial misconduct during Mr Cassell's tenure at the Shire of Halls Creek.

Of the 40 charges - ranging from misappropriating funds to using derogatory names for council members behind their backs - 16 have been substantiated, while another seven have been "partially substantiated".

Shire President Malcolm Edwards said the investigation confirmed a hefty range of misdemeanours had been committed by Mr Cassell, and proved him to be "a prolific liar".

"It is painful that this man came into our community with such underhand and selfish intentions," Mr Edwards said.

"We hope the community will be satisfied that the council's dismissal of Mr Cassell was justified. As a council we apologise to our community that this man has betrayed the trust of us all."

The most serious charges against Mr Cassell relate to his misappropriation and mismanagement of Shire funds, as well as his hiring of contractors whom he had prior - undisclosed - personal relationships with.

Regarding the disposal/sale of a Shire Toyota that had been wrecked on the Duncan Road and auctioned in 2023, the report found that Mr Cassell was guilty of auctioning the vehicle in a manner "noncompliant with Shire asset disposal policies, lacking proper contract and/or procurement documentation, and otherwise lacking proper financial, legal, risk or governance oversight".

A second charge against Mr Cassell regarding the vehicle found he had engaged in "material dishonesty" regarding the sale of the wrecked vehicle.

Mr Cassell also engaged the services of various contractors without following Shire procurement procedures. One such charge that was substantiated found Mr Cassell contracted an HR Consultant for 'Leadership coaching' in an unorthodox and non-transparent manner which constituted "moderate misconduct" as it violated Shire procedures and oversight.

In another example Mr Cassell engaged a finance company on a two-year \$240,000 retainer in a manner that was found non-compliant with Shire procurement and hiring procedures.

In another charge which was substantiated Mr Cassell hired a turf company for significant works on the Halls Creek Oval, without declaring a "conflict of interest" as Mr Cassell had a "personal relationship with the contractor".

Mr Edwards hoped the community would find some peace now Mr Cassell has been independently investigated.

On a positive note, Mr Edwards said that Council has engaged Ms Susan Leonard as the new CEO of the Shire of Halls Creek. Susan has worked in the Kimberley before and proved to be an asset to the communities where she worked.

"Halls Creek is a strong community, and we will get through this," said Mr Edwards.

**MALCOLM EDWARDS**  
**SHIRE PRESIDENT**