

State parliament to decide whether to suspend Geason

MP VOTE TO DETERMINE JUDGE'S FUTURE



State parliament will resume on Tuesday to debate the potential suspension of Justice Gregory Geason, pictured.

“
The Attorney-General has agreed to instead move a motion in both Houses of Parliament on 12 December 2023 calling on her Excellency the Governor to suspend Justice Gregory Geason

Statement from Attorney-General's office

**David Killick
Amber Wilson**

A Supreme Court judge accused of criminal offences could be suspended by a vote of state parliament on Tuesday after an 11th-hour deal to allay concerns by independents about legislation to refer him to an inquiry.

Justice Gregory Geason is on bail while awaiting a court appearance in February on charges of assault and emotional abuse. He has been on leave since early November.

Shortly after 4pm on Friday, Attorney-General Guy Barnett announced that plans for legislation to establish an inquiry into Justice Geason would be shelved for the time being.

Instead, parliament will vote on whether to ask Governor

Barbara Baker to suspend the judge instead.

“Following consultation, the Attorney-General has agreed to instead move a motion in both Houses of Parliament on 12 December 2023 calling on her Excellency the Governor to suspend Justice Gregory Geason under the Supreme Court (Judges’ Independence) Act 1857,” Mr Barnett said in a statement.

“The government will continue to develop a Bill to ensure that a mechanism to assist parliament and the Governor to consider the serious matter of the fitness for office of a Judge of the Supreme Court can be brought before parliament at an appropriate time in the future.

“The Attorney-General thanks members for the co-op-

erative and non-partisan way in which they have engaged in this process.”

The resolution was reached after MPs Lara Alexander and Meg Webb raised concerns about the draft Bill and proposed the alternative approach.

“Clearly there was growing disquiet and concern among MPs, the legal fraternity and other stakeholders over the apparent overreach, blurring of powers, and the dangerous potential precedents impeding natural justice processes posed by the government’s proposed Bill,” Ms Webb said.

“Both Ms Alexander in the [House of] Assembly and myself in the [Legislative] Council shared serious concerns regarding the proposed Bill and had sought advice on each of us

moving next week in our own chamber an alternative mechanism which would see both houses of parliament consider the possible suspension of the justice without requiring the other problematic aspects of the proposed Bill.”

The Law Society of Tasmania on Friday announced its opposition to the Bill, which the Mercury understands was on its 10th or 11th draft.

Society president Julia Higgins said rushing the Bill through would be a mistake.

“The society has significant concerns with the Bill as it is drafted,” she said.

“The Bill provides too broad a power to the commission to conduct the inquiry and obtain information ‘in any manner that it considers appropriate’.

“The power given to the

minister alone to recommend suspension is likely to be unconstitutional.”

Particulars released by the Hobart Magistrates Court show the charges Justice Geason faces involve an accusation of common assault by “grabbing [a woman] by the arms and squeezing, shaking her and striking her chest with your hand”.

The redacted particulars also reveal Justice Geason has been charged with emotional abuse or intimidation by tracking a

person’s movements using technology, coercing them into establishing a shared phone account to gain access to her electronic records, and interrogating her about her location and details about her companions.

Also as part of that charge, Justice Geason has been accused of scrutinising the person’s electronic devices and reviewing her messages, including deleted messages, and subjecting her to verbal abuse, including remarks about her

professional and personal life, and persistently “yelling and screaming at her”.

It is further alleged he demanded a person “contribute \$300,000 equity from her own home” and pressured them to sign a contract of sale on a home.

The particulars also reveal he has been accused of “exhibiting jealousy, rage, anger and aggression”.

Justice Geason is due to reappear before the Magistrates Court on February 6.