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I need some legal advice

# Fight over \$4.5m

## Heat on ACCC over Scientologist TV star's land deals



Denies debts: Carly Crutchfield admits cancelling deals but denies she owes those investors money

Picture: Tim Hunter

A HIGH-PROFILE Sydney developer and senior Scientologist is being investigated over a series of property deals.

The inquiry by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission into Carly Crutchfield — a millionaire property developer who boasts she has been involved in projects around Australia worth \$300 million — was launched after Senator Nick Xenophon sent a dossier to ASIC last month.

Senator Xenophon, a vocal opponent of the Church of Scientology, sent a detailed

submission to ASIC, which referred the documents to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

Queensland woman Larmie Musson, who took her concerns to Senator Xenophon, claims Ms Crutchfield owes her \$4.5 million.

Ms Musson alleges she signed a binding “unconditional” contract with Ms Crutchfield to develop her oceanfront mansion at Redcliffe, in Brisbane, into an 11-apartment complex.

The \$5 million deal was made after Ms Musson met

Ms Crutchfield at a development seminar in 2008.

The contract would have allegedly secured Ms Musson cash and a penthouse.

Ms Crutchfield, 29, allegedly dissolved the development company in March over concerns about a council development approval.

Ms Musson claims she is out-of-pocket because the development was scrapped.

“I’m selling in a depressed market,” Ms Musson said.

Another alleged deal involved Brisbane widow Lorraine Bell, who lives in the

suburb of Thornlands. Ms Bell claims she was originally promised \$1.5 million for the rezoning of her land at the front of her property.

The deal stalled and was later cancelled, not long after Ms Bell secured a \$290,000 loan at high interest and she was forced to sell her home.

Ms Crutchfield, who starred in the TV series *The Secret Millionaire*, admits she walked away from both deals but denies owing any of her investors money or having any personal involvement in Ms Bell’s property deal.

“There has been no indication from ACCC or ASIC that they have instituted actions to investigate my company,” she said.

“I don’t think this story is actually about Carly Crutchfield or my company. It’s become about religion.”

Ms Crutchfield and her business partners are not believed to have wrongfully breached contracts. All have denied any wrongdoing and Ms Crutchfield said she was considering legal action against Ms Musson for defamation and discrimination.

## Finding fairness in sale of home

Nikki asks:

My defacto husband of five years and I purchased a property five years ago. His share was 75 per cent. My share was 25 per cent. We both lived in the house for the entire five years. We are now separating and he is offering to buy me out of my quarter share. The value of the house has increased by 10 per cent. Is the offer fair? I appreciate your advice. I don't know much about the law in this matter.

Have your legal queries answered on our blog with Maurice Blackburn legal expert Giri Sivaraman



Giri says:

If a court was to look at your circumstances and decide what’s fair, it would look beyond what you both put in to buy the property.

It would also look at things like your family responsibilities, whether you had kids, your earning capacity and your ex-partner’s earning capacity, and your general asset pool.

It’s hard to tell you whether you are entitled to more, but if for example you have less of an earning capacity and are taking care of the kids then you are probably entitled to more.

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