



Member for Fadden Stuart Robert Photo: David Clark

Gold Coast

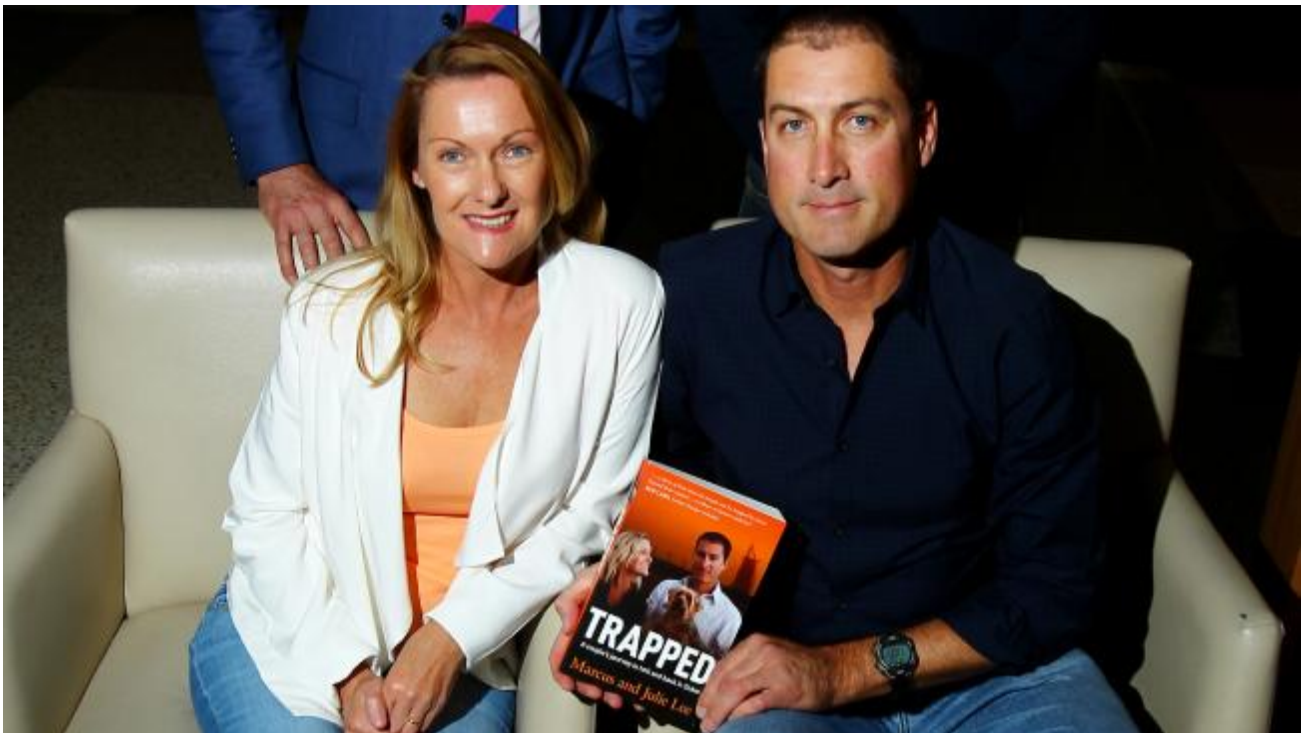
Gold Coast MP Stuart Robert linked to Sunland lobbyist and wrongful detention of men

Jenny Rogers and Kathleen Skene, Gold Coast Bulletin
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EXONERATED Gold Coast man Marcus Lee has demanded an apology from Fadden MP Stuart Robert, who backed the developer whose testimony saw him wrongfully detained in Dubai for almost five years.

Mr Lee and former colleague Matthew Joyce were trapped without trial after Sunland gave evidence against them. Both were eventually acquitted of bribery charges and freed to return to Australia.

Mr Lee, who lives at Burleigh with wife Julie, is pursuing a \$10 million damages claim against Sunland, alleging malicious prosecution and conspiracy to injure.



📷 Julie and Marcus Lee at launch of their book, 'Trapped', which tells of his ordeal in a Dubai jail and his five-year fight for freedom against false fraud charges over a Dubai land deal involving developer Sunland. Photo: Kit Wise

According to reports this week, Sunland attempted, through lobbyist Simone Holzapfel, to influence the then-Liberal Opposition's stance on the case.

Mr Robert strongly defended Sunland in Parliament, describing the group as a "solid Australian corporate citizen".

Both he and Sunland have strongly denied any link between Mr Robert's backing and donations from the group to the Liberal Party.

Mr Robert yesterday did not deny reports his public defence of Sunland was based on confidential briefing notes written by Ms Holzapfel, a registered lobbyist for Sunland.

Mr Lee said Mr Robert's claims his speech and Sunland's donation were unrelated showed "he completely misses the point and has learnt nothing".

“While Mr Robert states he spoke with multiple sources before giving his speeches under parliamentary privilege, at no time did he contact me or my representatives to get a balanced view,” he said.

“Given the gravity of my situation in the Middle East, and as an Australian citizen, you would think he would have done this at a minimum.”

“In making his speeches in Parliament Mr Robert not only denied me the presumption of innocence, while a serious criminal case was before Middle East courts, but in doing so he also put me and my wife’s life at risk with total disregard.

“Mr Robert now bizarrely justifies his actions in his statement, seemingly because Sunland were getting a bad rap in the press.”

Mr Robert’s involvement in the unrelated funding of so-called independent candidates for this year’s council election is under investigation.

“Given I was completely exonerated by the Dubai courts I’m still waiting for an apology from Mr Robert,” Mr Lee said.

Sunland Group released a statement saying their donations were transparent.

“The Group denies any assertions that it has gained any benefit through its donations to the Labor and Liberal parties,” the statement said.

Ms Holzapfel could not be contacted.

