

Freedom of Information - a step nearer?

Written by wilf

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Today Tynwald approved unanimously that CoMin bring forward its proposals on access to information as a matter of urgency.

This was one of the recommendations of the Select Committee on the 'Report on Redress' for Mr and Mrs Spadoni.

The affair has been going on for about 10 years with local fisherman, Dante Spadoni and his wife Joan, relentlessly seeking redress for being wrongly accused of interfering with the stability of their beam trawler "Suzanna D".

It ended with the couple requesting, via their MHK Phil Gawne, a full unreserved apology, in order to clear their name.

This was somewhat reluctantly approved by the Court; Keys voting in favour, 15 votes to 6 and LegCo being deadlocked, 4 in favour and 4 against. The vote reflected the sentiment of an impassioned speech by Minister Gawne where he said "sorry seems to be the hardest word, particularly if you are in a position of power"

The case has cost the couple many thousands of pounds over the years and, as the Report states, it has received the direct attention of their MHKs and successive Chief Ministers and Ministers for Trade and Industry, as well as a CoMin sub-committee and finally a Select Committee.

The conclusion by the Select Committee, urging action by CoMin, to introduce an Access to Government Information Bill, is founded on "Document 437" which, had it been made available to the couple earlier in the decade, would have unambiguously shown that there was an inherent design fault in the trawler since being built in 1966.

This vote by Tynwald must surely now mean that the long promised legislation is brought forward by CoMin and soon!

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