

## **Dave Sharma MP unable to prove allegations in defamation case**

A defamation case in the Federal Court has been discontinued after Dave Sharma was unable to prove allegations he made against another candidate.

In the lead-up to the 2019 election, David Sharma tweeted accusations that Melissa Parke was an antisemite who was “trafficking in conspiracy theories”. When asked to *plead truth* in the Federal Court, he instead deleted the tweet, and claimed the “excuse defences” of ‘qualified privilege’ and ‘honest opinion’.

“Mr. Sharma was not prepared to take up the challenge offered to him to justify his defamatory tweet. I consider that I am vindicated” said Ms Melissa Parke, former Member for Fremantle.

“Democratic debate does not extend to vilifying those who disagree with us, and allegations of antisemitism must not be used as a political weapon” she continued.

“I will continue to speak out against injustice, abuse of human rights and respect for the rule of law, including for the rights of Palestinians to be free of occupation, discrimination and apartheid. This makes me a humanist, not a racist”, she said.

Melissa Parke has issued the following statement:

I advise that my defamation action against Dave Sharma MP has been discontinued with no order as to costs either way.

My action was brought in response to a tweet by Mr Sharma on 12 April 2019 that I was an anti-Semite who trafficks in conspiracy theories. The tweet was posted after my resignation as a candidate for the seat of Curtin and had no connection to any issue of relevance to his seat of Wentworth.

I had no interest in unnecessarily running a long court case on Mr Sharma’s “excuse defences”, notwithstanding that I was confident I would defeat those defences. Mr. Sharma was advised well before he filed his defence that that was my position.

No doubt Mr Sharma will continue his current approach of defending the actions of the Government of Israel, no matter how racist, inhumane or illegal those actions are. While it is his democratic right to do so, he should not vilify those who disagree with him, out of respect for freedom of speech in Australia and for the position he holds in parliament.