

**Response from a Nine Entertainment Co. spokesperson:**

**The story points to “holes” in the payment process, with money going to people who “were in jail or dead”. The claimants’ lawyer says that’s completely untrue. Does Nine stand by this fact? Can it point to evidence?**

The Supreme Court did award money to fraudulent claimants - people using the names of other Palm Islanders who a) weren’t on the island at the time; b) were in prison at the time; or c) were dead long before the time.

Stewart Levitt, the lawyer who signed all the compensation cheques on behalf of the State Government and who appeared in the story, told Nine News that he and his legal team discovered these people had lied in the class action and removed their names from the pool of people sharing in the \$30 million, before they wrongly received any money.

We also interviewed Lex Wotton, the Palm Island man who led the class action against the State Government – Lex confirmed to Nine News in our interview with him that yes he knew of locals who had attempted to fraudulently claim money they weren’t entitled to.

**The story says “around \$3 million destined for dodgy claimants” is currently being redirected. Again, the claimants’ lawyer says that’s completely untrue. Does Nine stand by this fact? Can it point to evidence?**

Stewart Levitt told Nine News it was he and his team who discovered some of the claimants don’t exist. He has taken them out of the pool of recipients and redirecting money that would have gone to them, back to honest claimants.

**The story says “some people were deceased”. The claimant’s lawyer says one person died before the decision was handed down but the money went to beneficiaries. Why didn’t Nine make this clear? Does it believe beneficiaries are not owed payment?**

We agree those beneficiaries of legitimate claimants deserve the money.

Since the Supreme Court decision, we agree there are honest recipients who have either died, gone to jail or changed address. Lawyer Stewart Levitt is holding that money in an interest bearing bank account until it can be given to them or their beneficiaries.

**The story, and promos in the lead-up, strongly implies claimants had no right to payment. A court ruled clearly that they were entitled to it. Why didn’t Nine make this clear?**

Nine never claimed the honest recipients weren’t entitled to their compensation money, Nine agrees they absolutely are.

The story spends one minute on anecdotes of claimants buying “luxury” cars and boats but only five seconds on a man who invested the money in a business. Does the reporting properly reflect this imbalance? Is Nine suggesting they shouldn’t be allowed to spend the money as they wish?

Nine made no suggestion as to how they should spend their money. All the anecdotes told to the reporter by locals are in the story.

The claimants’ lawyer says the story is “based on racist tropes”; others on social media have called the story racist. What’s Nine’s response?

Nine refutes any suggestion that the story is racist.

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**GENERAL NOTES:**

Two weeks ago, Nine News received a tip off that some of the taxpayer-funded \$30 million Queensland State Government compensation payout to victims of police racism on Palm Island had been awarded to people claiming it fraudulently.

At the time of the police arrests the day following the Palm Island riot - these people a) weren’t on the island; b) were in prison; or c) were dead.

Stewart Levitt, the lawyer who signed all the compensation cheques on behalf of the State Government and who appeared in the story, told Nine News he discovered some of the claimants don’t exist for the above reasons.

We also interviewed Lex Wotton, the Palm Island man who led the class action against the State Government – Lex confirmed to Nine News in our interview with him that yes he knew of locals fraudulently claiming millions of dollars in money they weren’t entitled to.

That’s the worthy story of major public interest Nine News went after – however, while we were up in Ingham, the ferry port to get to Palm Island, we were also shown photos of expensive purchases made by honest recipients of the compensation – sports cars, fancy boats etc - these photos appeared in the story – as well as anecdotes of rapid spending like how a 19 year old on the island, who was 3 years old at the time, received \$380,000 in taxpayer funded compensation – he spent every cent of that money in two weeks buying hotted up cars for him and two mates.

It’s this side-bar part of the story that critics seem to be focussing on when calling our story racist – however the guts of the investigation is the fact that the Supreme Court awarded compensation money to people who didn’t exist.