

Mayor 'traded worthless bonds'

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TOM Tate, the mayor of Australia's second-largest local government, will face questioning in court over allegations that he traded in "worthless forestry bonds" while acting as a property developer in regional NSW, a court heard yesterday.

The allegations against the Gold Coast Mayor are being levelled by his former political adviser, Amanda Duncan-Strelec, who unsuccessfully sued him in 2010 for allegedly reneging on a property deal near Albury, on the NSW-Victoria border.

Ms Duncan-Strelec, a former mayor of Albury, has since begun a website accusing Mr Tate of "scam" behaviours, including issuing "worthless" \$100,000 bonds backed by forestry plantations that "do not exist".

Mr Tate, who was elected as mayor last year, has asked the NSW Supreme Court to close down the "defamatory" website and find Ms Duncan-Strelec in contempt of court for uploading privileged court documents to the internet, including one of the contentious bonds, and lowering the authority of the court with her claims.

"The allegations against (Mr Tate) are completely false," Bruce McClintock SC, for Mr Tate, told the court.

Ms Duncan-Strelec told the court yesterday she had directed the manager of the website to pull down the controversial content, but the details have reappeared without her blessing.

Mr McClintock claimed Ms Duncan-Strelec was responsible for migrating the website to a server based in Panama, where the court has no jurisdiction, as "no one else could have any interest in doing that".

Ms Duncan-Strelec insisted her claims were substantially true, and anticipated a lengthy cross-examination of Mr Tate to test the allegations.

Ms Duncan-Strelec sought a two-month adjournment.

Judge Richard White instructed the parties that the contempt and defamation proceedings must be separated, to protect Ms Duncan-Strelec's right against self-incrimination on the contempt charges.