

Sorry, but I'm not going to apologise, Barr says

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Education minister Andrew Barr will thumb his nose at the Assembly by refusing to apologise and withdraw comments made to the non-government schools council about Liberal MLA Steve Doszpot. A censure motion by the Liberals was unsuccessful but an amendment by Greens MLA Amanda Bresnan was passed. The motion called on Mr Barr to apologise to Mr Doszpot in the chamber for misrepresenting him in a letter. It also called on Mr Barr to write to the non-government schools, withdrawing the statement in the letter and to table a copy of the signed letter by the end of sitting today. If Mr Barr fails to write the letter, Speaker Shane Rattenbury will write to the council for him. A spokesman for Mr Barr indicated he would not be making an apology or writing the letter. Mr Barr was not available for comment last night. In a statement released by his office, Mr Barr said, "The weakest censure in the history of ACT self government failed. These types of

frivolous motions are a waste of the Assembly's time." Ms Bresnan said Mr Barr had not acted honestly. "There is the argy-bargy of politics and people say things in the chamber ... but this was actually doing something entirely different. He was using his ministerial resources, he wrote a formal letter and he misrepresented what another member of the Assembly said." In a letter to non-government schools education council chairwoman Narelle Hargreaves on July 28 this year, Mr Barr wrote, "I have made abundantly clear in the Legislative Assembly that the Government opposes suggestions by the Liberal Party's spokesman that I should use the Human Rights Act 2004 as a way of the Government taking over non- government school teaching and curriculum. That will never be my policy." Mr Doszpot said he never made such a statement. "I am pleased the record will be corrected and I hope this will be the end of this sort of gutter politics from the Government," Mr Doszpot said. Ms Bresnan said the Assembly found Mr Barr misled a statutory council.

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