

Transcript of the 3AW Interview

START: [00:00]

1 **N Mitchell:** Now as I said, that vote later today for Liberals to expel Moira Deeming
2 from the parliamentary party – she’s only been there five minutes – I’ll talk to the leader
3 John Pesutto in a moment. There are a lot of things that complicate this. I’d argue Moira
4 Deeming was entitled to be there, though I certainly wouldn’t have gone, but did she leave
5 when the Nazis turned up? The political optics are bad: a Liberal MP at a hate rally with
6 Nazis, if it’s a hate rally. That’s not entirely fair, I’m not defending Moira Deeming, she
7 stands for a lot of things I don’t like. I think she’s a [00:30] loose cannon for the Libs but
8 they’re going to throw her out. Opposition leader John Pesutto, good morning.

9 **J Pesutto:** Good morning, Neil.

10 **N Mitchell:** What did Moira Deeming do wrong?

11 **J Pesutto:** She’s had associations, Neil, with organisers of Saturday’s protest who
12 have known links with Nazis, Nazi sympathisers, far right extremists, white supremacists
13 and can I just make a couple of things very clear – at the outset because it’s very –

14 **N Mitchell:** – Just before you do, just before you do, who are you referring to there?
15 Are you referring –

16 **J Pesutto:** – Kellie, uh, uh, uh [01:00] Kellie-Jay Keen.

17 **N Mitchell:** And she’s had associations with, she’s got associations with Nazis? Who?

18 **J Pesutto:** Well, well people – okay, so um Jean-François Gariépy. She’s done videos
19 with Richard Spencer, Mark Collett, Klu [sic] Klux Klan leader David Duke. There’s a long
20 rap sheet – of

21 **N Mitchell:** – Were they videos or interviews?

22 **J Pesutto:** Videos, interviews, she’s shared platforms with – this person, can I offer
23 you a different perspective on this person, Neil. This person is not somebody who comes
24 to this with a clean skin, she has known associations with [01:30] uh, I really just want to
25 be able to set a few things straight, Neil.

26 **N Mitchell:** But she does say, she does say she'll be interviewed – she's willing to be
27 interviewed by anybody.

28 **J Pesutto:** Uh no, that, that's not right.

29 **N Mitchell:** Okay.

30 **J Pesutto:** Her history of activism actually has taken her into league with people, with
31 views I cannot accept –

32 **N Mitchell:** – Okay –

33 **J Pesutto:** – as consistent with Victorian values. Can I just say a couple of things at
34 the top, Neil?

35 **N Mitchell:** Yep.

36 **J Pesutto:** First of all, this is not about free speech I am perfectly comfortable with
37 people debating issues [02:00] they feel passionately about, even Moira. Absolutely
38 people can have that. I've always said debate must be reasonable, respectful, inclusive,
39 you can do that even in a robust setting. The problem here is that Moira just didn't turn up
40 to this rally, she had helped organise and promote it with people who had known
41 associations. It's not about free speech, it's about people whose values are not consistent
42 with mine –

43 **N Mitchell:** – Okay –

44 **J Pesutto:** – not consistent with the Liberal Party or Victoria's values in my view.

45 **N Mitchell:** Well did you tell her not to go?
[02:30]

46 **J Pesutto:** Uh no, but I don't expect any member of the Liberal team to be associating
47 with people who have long rap sheets of association with these people –

48 **N Mitchell:** – But why didn't you tell her not to go? Why didn't you say this is wrong,
49 don't do it?

50 **J Pesutto:** Well, Neil, I don't have a problem with people airing their views and the
51 neo-Nazis who turned up to the rally had made it clear that they were there to support this,

52 as we later found out. And we later found out that one of the organisers, Angie Jones, who
53 did a video with Moira and [03:00] two other people including Kellie-Jay Keen later on, on
54 Saturday, actually posted this Neil, and I quote the tweet: “Nazis and women want to get
55 rid of pedo filth, why don’t you?”

56 **N Mitchell:** Oh, that’s garbage. That’s garbage.

57 **J Pesutto:** Now Neil, is that acceptable in 2023?

58 **N Mitchell:** No, of course not.

59 **J Pesutto:** Is that acceptable?

60 **N Mitchell:** Of course not.

61 **J Pesutto:** And that’s what it’s about –

62 **N Mitchell:** – But I get back to the point, why didn’t you avoid all this and just tell her
63 not to be part of it?

64 **J Pesutto:** Well Neil, I have that expectation of all members – but –

65 **N Mitchell:** – But did you know she was – she even raised it in the [03:30] Parliament
66 last week.

67 **J Pesutto:** I – yeah, I’m aware of these values that she’s had and as I’ve said –
68 although I don’t share those values –

69 **N Mitchell:** – Yeah, but did – were you aware that she was – were you aware that she
70 was promoting this rally in the Parliament and on Twitter and intending to go? Were you
71 aware of it?

72 **J Pesutto:** I was aware that she’s active in this space, right? I don’t –

73 **N Mitchell:** Were you aware she was going to this rally and promoting this rally?

74 **J Pesutto:** Well, I wasn’t aware that she was going to be going to a rally at which Nazi
75 activists would turn up, at which videos would be posted and –

76 **N Mitchell:** – No, no, but that’s not her fault. That’s not –

77 **J Pesutto:** – Well, well she's **[04:00]** associated with it and as you say, when the neo-
78 Nazis turned, up did she leave?

79 **N Mitchell:** Well, actually you could ask Matthew Guy the same thing about certain
80 dinners he's been to. But it's a fair point she should have left.

81 **J Pesutto:** Well, those are different. So –

82 **N Mitchell:** Did she?

83 **J Pesutto:** – So, I just want to emphasise this –

84 **N Mitchell:** – Did she?

85 **J Pesutto:** Sorry?

86 **N Mitchell:** Did she leave?

87 **J Pesutto:** I don't understand her to have left. I don't believe she left.

88 **N Mitchell:** She didn't. Okay. Okay, but I won't leave this point about she, five or six
89 days ago, was telling the world she was going, she was promoting the rally. Why didn't you
90 sit her down and say this is wrong, don't do it or else? Did you know? Did you know she
91 was promoting it and raised it in Parliament?

[04:30]

92 **J Pesutto:** Neil, I know she's passionate about these issues.

93 **N Mitchell:** No, but did you know she raised it in Parliament?

94 **J Pesutto:** I didn't know she had raised the rally in Parliament, no.

95 **N Mitchell:** Were you aware she was tweeting urging people to go?

96 **J Pesutto:** No, I didn't see her tweet.

97 **N Mitchell:** Well, you know, you could have avoided it all if you knew that.

98 **J Pesutto:** Well, but – but, nevertheless Neil, we're left with a situation where you
99 have a member of the Liberal team associating with people with these associations. Known

100 public associations with these – and I just can't – I can't let it stand. **[05:00]** I'm a party –
101 I'm leader of a party that wants to govern for all Victorians and the values that I'm espousing
102 as Liberal leader are not consistent with those Nazi activists. I know Moira's not a Nazi,
103 but my point is that she's associating with people who are. And that brings them into a
104 place where it's unacceptable for me as a leader and I believe unacceptable for the party.

105 **N Mitchell:** Well, a member of the Greens who was Jewish went ahead and didn't
106 have any problems.

107 **J Pesutto:** Well that, that's a matter for them. I think in terms of the overall issues
108 about what Nazism means **[05:30]** and what white supremacy means, it is odious. And I'm
109 not prepared as leader of the party to abide by any of it.

110 **N Mitchell:** Alright, so you're saying – I'm sorry

111 **J Pesutto:** We want to govern in four years.

112 **N Mitchell:** So, you're saying Kellie-Jay Keen is a sympathiser of Nazis, correct?

113 **J Pesutto:** Yes.

114 **N Mitchell:** And others are there as well?

115 **J Pesutto:** Well certainly her, Angie Jones with whom Moira posted on social media
116 about, after the rally on Friday, posted what I said before, I won't repeat it. So, it's not as
117 **[06:00]** if any of this is in doubt it's on the public record. They're not Moira's posts, granted,
118 but we've got a Liberal member having done that and I just don't think that's acceptable.

119 **N Mitchell:** Did she object to what you told her?

120 **J Pesutto:** Oh, look I won't go into the details of the discussion. You can imagine how
121 someone would react to the news that I'm going to bring this application but I believe it's
122 the right thing to do, Neil. Right, we've got a government in Victoria which is corrupt,
123 incompetent, and clearly exhausted. I want to be able to present an alternative.

[06:30]

124 And as alternative Premier I want to make it clear to Victorians that my values, the values
125 of the party I lead are not consistent with Kellie-Jay Keen, never will be. Not consistent
126 with Thomas Sewell or the Nazis who turned up on the steps of Parliament, never will be.

127 I will fight hate speech like that wherever I see it. And the party wants to govern in 2026
128 and beyond because our state needs it.

129 **N Mitchell:** Did you –

130 **J Pesutto:** – This is not going to help us get to that goal.

131 **N Mitchell:** Do you, you know, do you accept that the organisers of this rally and Moira
132 Deeming had no idea the Nazis were turning up?

[07:00]

133 **J Pesutto:** I'm not in a position to say that I can accept that because – and the reason
134 I say that is I'm not saying Moira necessarily knew, is that these people have known
135 associations with Nazi sympathisers and white supremacists given their history and
136 Thomas Sewell posted on social media that they were there to support that rally. So, my
137 point is, I'm not saying Moira necessarily knew that, but I find it hard to believe that the
138 other organisers didn't.

139 **N Mitchell:** Okay. Um, it says something about your preselection processes doesn't
140 it, if Moira Deeming **[07:30]** got preselection?

141 **J Pesutto:** Look Neil, as talented as I like to think I am, I can't change the past, I can
142 only assure all of our listeners of a couple of things. I do support free speech but I believe
143 this – this position that I am taking is consistent with that. I can't support, and never will,
144 hate speech. As to preselection processes, I am committed to making sure the party has
145 better processes in place going forward. But again, free speech is an important part of what
146 the Liberal party advocates. But hate speech is not and never will be.

[08:00]

147 **N Mitchell:** Under your leadership would you hope to avoid the uh preselection of a
148 Moira Deeming?

149 **J Pesutto:** Well, again, I just want to indicate, people are entitled to have a broad
150 range of views across any political organisation, that is going to happen. I don't have any
151 objection to that at all. I have an objection and will act where anybody's activities take them
152 to an association with either right-wing extremists or left-wing extremists. Either way, it's
153 not what Victoria is about –

154 **N Mitchell:** – Okay –

155 **J Pesutto:** – and it's not the Victoria I want to lead.

[08:30]

156 **N Mitchell:** Do you want her out of the party?

157 **J Pesutto:** Uh I think it's consistent with the position I'm taking that the party will need
158 to consider what it does if the motion gets up. I expect it will, but the party and the members
159 will need to make a decision about that. I really need to be careful of the processes as they
160 are for the members of the party to decide.

161 **N Mitchell:** Are you –

162 **J Pesutto:** But – I think they'll see – they'll see obvious conclusions uh if the motion
163 succeeds.

164 **N Mitchell:** When's the parliamentary party meeting?

165 **J Pesutto:** I have to give a period of notice so I would expect that that would be very
166 early next week.

[09:00]

167 **N Mitchell:** Look a bit silly if you don't win it, won't it?

168 **J Pesutto:** Well, I can only do what is right, Neil.

169 **N Mitchell:** Okay.

170 **J Pesutto:** I think this is the right thing to do.

171 **N Mitchell:** Just quickly, the other thing, the Nazi salute, ban it or not?

172 **J Pesutto:** I'm certainly open to it. I do understand the free speech arguments which
173 are compelling and which I normally advocate myself and would, but I also have always
174 understood that there need to be reasonable limitations on free speech. And anything,
175 whether it's a salute or a symbol **[09:30]** that has the potential to incite violence and, you
176 know, injury I think then engages a serious question – so, I'm very open to it and we'll work
177 constructive with the government I think most sensible decent people are on the same
178 page here.

179 **N Mitchell:** But that's interesting, you're open to it, do you want it or not?

180 **J Pesutto:** I do.

181 **N Mitchell:** Good.

182 **J Pesutto:** But I'm conscious that there'll need to be – there'll need to be a discussion,
183 you know the normal careful drafting processes, to get that balance right. But I do think the
184 potential and what we saw, I mean you talked about it at the top, [10:00] about you know
185 what those salutes mean and what they have the potential to incite is a very serious thing
186 and I believe it's justified as a limitation on free speech.

187 **N Mitchell:** Do you want to ban the hammer and sickle too? The hammer and sickle's
188 killed a few million people over the years.

189 **J Pesutto:** Well – well true and I think the discussion always has to be a mature
190 discussion about does it have the potential to incite or cause such disorder in our
191 community that the public interest must prevail to the point of placing reasonable limitations
192 so that's [10:30] always the question. It's not the same for every issue. Some issues might
193 be offensive without being inciteful and so that for me is the crux of the question you have
194 to answer.

195 **N Mitchell:** Okay, by the way, Angie Jones we've spoken to she says that tweet you
196 referred to is right out of context and she had a history with the person tweeting it.

197 **J Pesutto:** Hmm do you – do you buy that?

198 **N Mitchell:** I don't know, I'll have a speak, I'll speak to her.

199 **J Pesutto:** You know, please do but I can't interpret it any other way.

200 **N Mitchell:** Thank you very much for your time.

[11:00]

201 **J Pesutto:** Pleasure, Neil.

202 **N Mitchell:** John Pesutto, state opposition leader.

END: [11:02]