

## Transcript of the Press Conference

START: [00:00]

1 **J Pesutto:** We all good to go?

2 **Unknown:** Yeah.

3 **J Pesutto:** Alright. Uh you've seen my statement from last night uh, regarding Moira  
4 Deeming. I have not taken this decision lightly but the events which were drawn to my  
5 attention over the weekend when not far from where we stand there was a protest which  
6 attracted Nazis on the steps of this magnificent Parliament. It will never be acceptable in  
7 Victoria for Nazis to get a platform [00:30] or anyone who shares their views or anyone  
8 who works with them to help them promote their odious agenda. This House stands for the  
9 people and the values I possess and the values that my party supports and advocates will  
10 always be to include all Victorians, no matter what their background, that's why I've taken  
11 this action today. What came to light on the weekend when seeing the awful circumstances  
12 on the steps of this Parliament [01:00] were that Moira Deeming, a member of the  
13 Parliamentary Liberal Party, had actively participated with and worked with the organisers  
14 of the rally. That rally was organised by people who have known and established links with  
15 people who have Nazi sympathies, promote white supremacist views and ethno-fascist  
16 views. That is odious. It is unacceptable.

[01:30]

17 I will never, ever accept any member of the Parliamentary Liberal Party under my  
18 leadership ever associating with anybody who shares a platform with people who peddle  
19 hate, division and attack people for who they are. As leader of the Victorian Liberal Party,  
20 as the alternative premier of Victoria, as somebody who leads a team, who wants to be an  
21 effective opposition focused on the priorities of the Victorian people and somebody who  
22 wants to lead [02:00] a government from 2026, I want to assure all Victorians that the party  
23 that I lead along with my colleagues, David Southwick, Georgie Crozier, and Matt Bach,  
24 and all of our other colleagues that we are totally committed to leading an inclusive Liberal  
25 Party in Victoria that is there for all people, no matter what your background. The Liberal  
26 Party I lead will always be a voice for you. I understand the significance of this matter and  
27 I want to assure all Victorians [02:30] I am a strong supporter of free speech, but free  
28 speech doesn't include hate speech. And the Nazis who turned up on Saturday and who  
29 said they had turned up to support the rally, peddle hate and I will never accept that. As  
30 leader, I will be moving the motion uh to expel Moira Deeming from the Parliamentary  
31 Liberal Party. The processes of that are dealt in the Parliamentary Party's constitution  
32 [03:00] and they will take place over the coming days, so they will be observed, and the  
33 party room will make a decision, but this is a necessary step, I believe, to making sure that

34 we are not only an effective opposition but ready to govern in a way that Victorians will  
35 embrace wholeheartedly in 2026. Uh I'll take some questions.

36 **Question:** Why haven't you done this earlier? Moira Deeming had expressed her  
37 views against the trans community well before the weekend.

38 **J Pesutto:** I've taken this step now **[03:30]** because the events of the weekend  
39 showed uh upon further investigation that the association between Moira Deeming and the  
40 organisers of the rally were that those organisers have shared platforms with fascists,  
41 ethno-nationalists, white supremacists and Nazis and it became clear to me on further  
42 investigation following the rally, and the ugly scenes that were seen on the streets of this  
43 Parliament, but just before it, on the steps of this Parliament were totally unacceptable  
44 **[04:00]** and that's why I've taken this action now.

45 **Question:** [inaudible] So, can we just clarify, would've – if she attended the event but  
46 the Nazis sympathizers didn't come, sorry about my voice, um would've that been  
47 acceptable? Was it the fact that she went and then came? If she had have [sic] left at that  
48 point – like, when did it cross the line exactly?

49 **J Pesutto:** Okay, so let me – let me go through a few of the facts here. Uh, it's clear  
50 that Ms Deeming, from social media, escorted uh, at least one of the organisers through  
51 this very Parliament, Kellie-Jay Keen uh through this Parliament.

**[04:30]**

52 Then attended the rally, stayed at the rally when Nazis attended and then celebrated with  
53 organisers of the rally, after the rally and ugly scenes had occurred on the steps of this  
54 Parliament and the street before it. One of the people with whom Ms Deeming was  
55 celebrating is Angie Jones and she tweeted on Saturday night, after the ugly scenes that  
56 we saw on the steps of this Parliament, as follows, quote **[05:00]** '*Nazis and women want  
57 to get rid of pedos, why don't you?*' That is totally unacceptable, and I don't think any  
58 reasonable, decent minded person would think that that is okay. That is all material on  
59 social media, it's publicly available. I should say this, free speech in a brilliant democracy,  
60 like Victoria's, must be able to accommodate different views. I strongly believe, and have  
61 always said, **[05:30]** that debate in our society must be civil, it must be respectful, it must  
62 be inclusive but never hateful, never speech that vilifies other people for who they are. And,  
63 that is possible in a democracy like ours. So, I'm not here to say that people can't have  
64 different views, I'm here to say it will never be acceptable in this state, Victoria, as a  
65 member of the Liberal Party **[06:00]** to associate with anybody who is connected with or  
66 shares platforms with Nazis, white supremacists, ethno-nationalists or whatever other  
67 odious agenda someone wishes to peddle.

68 **Question:** So, just to be clear, is it her actions after the um gentlemen that did the  
69 Nazi salute on the steps, is it Moira Deeming's actions after that that have prompted your  
70 actions to try and expel?

71 **J Pesutto:** Um, thanks Simon.

**[06:30]**

72 It's more than that. What Moira Deeming's actions both before, during and after the rally  
73 demonstrate is that she's had an association, upon further investigation it's clear, Moira  
74 Deeming has had an association with people who organised the rally, along with her  
75 assistance, who have shared platforms with and viewpoints with people who promote Nazi  
76 views or sympathies. That's the first thing. Secondly, Ms Deeming stayed at the rally  
77 **[07:00]** when the Nazis arrived. Thirdly, having seen the ugly scenes and having had an  
78 opportunity to disown and dissociate from those very people, Ms Deeming chose to  
79 celebrate as evidenced on social media. Now, as the leader, a responsible leader, of a  
80 major political party that wants to govern for all Victorians from 2026 and in the meantime  
81 be an effective, mature, responsible opposition **[07:30]** that can't and is not acceptable.  
82 We are a party for all Victorians and when I talk about opportunity, I want opportunity for  
83 all Victorians no matter what your background, no matter what your preferences or  
84 orientation. We all share an underlying humanity and in that alone our commitment as a  
85 major political party that wants to govern and govern well and responsibly for Victorians  
86 must be that we are there for everyone.

**[08:00]**

87 **Question:** What responsibility does –  
88 [inaudible questions]  
89 – the Liberal Party take for preselecting Moira Deeming, even after someone such as  
90 Bernie Finn was booted out in the same fashion you're trying to boot her out now?

91 **J Pesutto:** As talented as I would like to think I am, I can't change the past. I can only  
92 say that along with my colleagues, David, Georgie and Matt, we are a new leadership  
93 team. We've been in our positions for around about fourteen weeks and we're making  
94 changes to demonstrate to all Victorians that we will lead a – an effective **[08:30]** and  
95 responsible opposition and we want to be able to present in 2026 as the alternative  
96 government and to win government, to govern well for Victoria. That's what we want to do.

97 **Question:** [inaudible – journalists speaking over each other]  
98 But were you not aware –

99 **J Pesutto:** – Uh, one at a – sorry – I – I’ll get to all of your questions.

100 **Question:** Is what you’re saying though, just so I can get it straight, is that it’s okay  
101 for a member of the Liberal Party to be anti-trans as long as they express that view in a  
102 civilised way um that’s not hate speech?

103 **J Pesutto:** We have to be careful to make sure that in our [09:00] advanced  
104 democracy there is the capacity for people to disagree. That is going to happen. There are  
105 debates in this Parliament, in all major political parties, on these issues and what I urge,  
106 as one of our state’s political leaders, is that all of us, all Victorians, owe it to ourselves and  
107 particularly to each other to be respectful in the way we conduct debates. Now, what has  
108 prompted my action over night is that a member of the Parliamentary Party of the Liberal  
109 Party was working [09:30] with people who have shared platforms and promoted people  
110 who have Nazi views and white supremacist views. So, my point, Sharnelle, is that in our  
111 democracy we have to be able to accommodate different views. People are going to have  
112 different viewpoints. We have to respect that part of our democracy even though  
113 sometimes we may not like the views that other people have but we have to be respectful  
114 and that’s just not [sic] lip service to being civil and respectful, it conditions the debate,  
115 [10:00] so that we avoid incitement, we avoid actions that cause harm to other people. If  
116 we are true to that, faithful to the idea that we can live in a democracy where we respect  
117 each other, then we will find those debates won’t veer off so that Nazis can come and  
118 participate in protests like we saw on Saturday.

119 **Question:** So, were you not aware of the event, because she sent flyers to a number  
120 of MPs, she sent a flyer to me uh over a week ago and [10:30] if you didn’t know, I guess,  
121 is that something you’re disappointed that even other Liberal MPs or staff didn’t tell you?  
122 Because you seem to say that it’s not just her attendance, it’s that she also helped organise  
123 it. So, you know, she’s been organising this for a long time now, at what point were you  
124 made aware and why didn’t you know?

125 **J Pesutto:** Well, the events of Saturday drew my attention to the seriousness of the  
126 issue but let me say this, every person who is elected to the Victorian Parliament has to  
127 take responsibility for their actions. I’m not there and nor is Daniel Andrews [11:00] for his  
128 members or Samantha Ratnam for her members. We’re not there to babysit the activities  
129 of every MP. I have a lot of responsibilities with David, Georgie and Matt as the leadership  
130 team of the Liberal Party. I can’t babysit every MP. Every MP has a responsibility, not just  
131 to this Parliament but to the people they represent to – to conduct themselves in a way  
132 which respects our democracy and doesn’t provide an opening for Nazis or whomever else  
133 [11:30] who peddles odious and hateful views to jump into activities whether they’re

134 protests or public meetings each member of Parliament must take responsibility for their  
135 actions.

136 **Question:** Who else was there, from the Liberal Party?

137 **J Pesutto:** On the advice I have, I – I understand that Moira Deeming was the only  
138 person who participated in the rally, I'm not aware of any other MP who was there, from  
139 the Liberal Party, but that's the advice I have at the moment.

140 **Question:** Moira Deeming says in the video posted after that there [12:00] were other  
141 members of the Liberal Party there, they didn't join her on the steps but that they were  
142 there in the crowd. Have you actively spoken to your entire party to make sure no one else  
143 was there?

144 **J Pesutto:** Look, I will continue to look into the matter but my main concern and what  
145 has prompted my action over night to submit this motion to the party room is that it's clear  
146 on the evidence we've been able to gather overnight that Moira Deeming has worked with  
147 these organisers and that these organisers, [12:30] not talking about Moira, but these  
148 organisers have shared platforms, done videos with, worked with people who have Nazis  
149 views, white supremacist views, totally unacceptable in our state.

150 **Question:** Are you comfortable the motion will pass? Um, and is it a test of your  
151 leadership? You only won that by one vote um, there is one person that's now leaving the  
152 party, potentially. Um, you know, do you see it in that sort of context?

153 **J Pesutto:** I'm confident I'll have the support of the party room but you're all seasoned  
154 journalists, [13:00] every day is a test of leadership and I would consider it a great failure  
155 of leadership if I didn't take this action. I'm taking this action because it's necessary, it's  
156 right, it will tell Victorians that as new Liberal leader along with David, Georgie and Matt we  
157 are committed to providing Victorians with an alternative vision and a party that is ready to  
158 govern in 2026.

159 **Question:** There're MPs that are quite miffed by this action and haven't heard from  
160 you at all [13:30] – much at all in the last 12 hours, and frustrated that you're prosecuting  
161 this through the media before speaking with them, what is your message to them,  
162 especially trying to get them on side – on your side to vote for this motion?

163 **J Pesutto:** Well, between my leadership colleagues and I we have contacted every  
164 member of the Parliamentary Party. I spoke to many as I could uh overnight. Time didn't

165 permit me to reach everybody in the party room but that's why we shared that responsibility  
166 between us as members of the leadership team.

**[14:00]**

167 Can I say this? I have been speaking to the Victorian people through media this morning  
168 because I think the Victorian people need to know why I have put this motion forward. It  
169 will be for the party room and the party room alone, each member of that party room, to  
170 make a decision next week on this matter. It won't be my decision. I'm putting the proposal  
171 to the party room and I respect the fact that it will be every member of that party room  
172 voting as a group to decide **[14:30]** the outcome of that motion. I'm confident it will pass  
173 but I'm also respectful of the fact that they will decide the answer to that. But, I hope you'll  
174 all understand, as members of the media, it's important for me to explain to the Victorian  
175 people why I'm taking this action. I do respect that the party room itself will make the  
176 decision.

177 **Question:** What if –

178 – If it doesn't pass?

179 Yeah.

180 Yeah, if it doesn't pass what happens?

181 **J Pesutto:** I think, you all know me, I have a tendency to bounce back from anything  
182 but that's not a scenario **[15:00]** I'm particularly worried about. I'm confident the motion will  
183 pass. Politics carries with it great responsibilities and those responsibilities often involve  
184 tough decisions, but this is the right decision. It's a necessary decision and it will tell  
185 Victorians that we are serious about being a viable opposition and serious about forming  
186 government in 2026.

187 **Question:** Is it a simple majority that the motion needs to pass? And if it does just  
188 pass by one vote um, is it something, you know, do you think that's the **[15:30]**  
189 endorsement of your party room that they agree? What sort of the benchmark do you think  
190 you need?

191 **J Pesutto:** Oh, come on Annika. I won the leadership by one vote.

192 **Question:** [unintelligible]

193 **J Pesutto:** Uh, I'm not concerned about uh, the majority, I'm just concerned about the  
194 uh, process being respected and every member of the party room having an opportunity  
195 to consider my reasons, to hear in response from Moira, who obviously will have a chance  
196 to put her side of the argument to the party room as well. They'll decide it.

**[16:00]**

197 Um, and if a majority emerges, as I'm confident it will, we'll move forward to achieve the  
198 things I've outlined before: providing a viable opposition, forming government in 2026.

199 **Question:** Is this a big distraction for you in this parliamentary sitting?

200 **J Pesutto:** This will not be a distraction at all for my colleagues and I who will continue  
201 to pursue the Andrews Labor Government; it's corrupt, it's incompetent, it's exhausted.  
202 We're going to pursue the Robert Redlich Letter and we hope to establish a select  
203 committee in the upper house, if we can attract the necessary majority **[16:30]** in the upper  
204 house, as we are working hard to do that. We will also pursue the Minister for fiascos:  
205 Danny Pearson. Danny is in the media yet again giving Victorians yet another reason why  
206 he should be sacked from the Ministry. Let me just put this in context, in any other  
207 jurisdiction in this country if a minister sat around a cabinet table with a direct pecuniary  
208 interest in the matters he was helping decide upon, they would be sacked, in seconds flat.

**[17:00]**

209 That's happened in other states. Why is it that Victoria has become a state where you can  
210 be racked by a blatant pecuniary conflict of interest and keep your job? That is wrong, it's  
211 unethical, it's corruption. I say that deliberately. In my view, the reason we have conflict of  
212 interest provisions is to guard against ministers of the Crown **[17:30]** and other public  
213 servants from ever profiting or being seen to profit from their positions. You will all know  
214 that for weeks now, we have been peppering Minister Pearson with questions asking for  
215 basic information, even information about whether he ever recused himself from cabinet  
216 when decisions came up.

217 **Question:** When do you –

218 **J Pesutto:** – He's refused – He's refused to answer. If you look at his answers in the  
219 Hansard and I invite you, look at the Hansard.

**[18:00]**

220 See the questions I have been asking Minister Pearson, ask yourself first, "are they  
221 reasonable questions?" Then ask yourself second "is Danny Pearson hiding something?"  
222 I think you'll find the answer to both questions is "yes."

223 **Question:** When do you anticipate the vote will happen, to expel Moira Deeming?

224 **J Pesutto:** Well – well, the vote will occur early next week, I'll set a time I have to  
225 advise with notice so that will mean that the meeting will have to take place next week. I'm  
226 conscious **[18:30]** that MPs have other work to do in their communities as well so I will do  
227 my best to bring this on quickly subject to there being enough time for people to observe  
228 the notice period and prepare accordingly uh but it's an important meeting and it will occur  
229 early next week.

230 **Question:** And is there a path back for her? There's been other cases where MPs  
231 have left the party and, you know, made amends or whatever – is there a way that, I guess,  
232 this could be reversed down the track, before the next election? Has she made any  
233 indication to you that it's not something she wants and that she still wants to be a Liberal  
234 MP?

**[19:00]**

235 **J Pesutto:** Um, we thought as a leadership group, and myself particularly as leader,  
236 about whether there were alternatives to the course I've taken. I thought about that  
237 deliberately at length considering all sides of the question. It became clear to me that there  
238 wasn't really any alternative but to do this. The reason being, any question of an  
239 association, even indirectly, with Nazis, white supremacists, **[19:30]** ethno-fascists or  
240 whatever else is so odious in 2023, as it should be, that I can't see a way back and  
241 Victorians need to know we will just call it out. We will have nothing to do with it. Under my  
242 leadership we will never have anything to do with that and more to the point we will oppose  
243 it wherever we see it and that's why, albeit early in our leadership, we've taken a strong  
244 decisive step to say to Victorians and to say **[20:00]** to those mobsters, those Nazis on the  
245 steps of this magnificent Parliament on Saturday "you are not going to get a foothold in this  
246 state. We will oppose you wherever we can and we will stop you wherever we must."

247 **Question:** Some party members are threatening to walk out when you spoke  
248 [inaudible] is it a price you are willing to pay?

249 **J Pesutto:** I hope and trust that party members will see that the step I've taken is not  
250 about freedom of speech, it's about whether we will ever abide **[20:30]** by the odious tactics  
251 and measures taken by Nazis and white supremacists. We saw that on the steps of this  
252 Parliament, and I say to all Liberal Party members, understand why I have put this motion  
253 forward. We are a responsible party that seeks to govern for all Victorians in their best  
254 interests. We cannot and will never be able to do so if we are prepared to stand with those  
255 people we saw on the steps who peddle violence and hate.

**[21:00]**

256 The party I lead, the values we share as a party, the values and principles the party stands  
257 for mean that this action is necessary to tell Victorians we want to be a strong, effective,  
258 principled, ethical opposition that is ready to govern in 2026.

259 **Question:** Will you accept her uh if she is expelled from the party, Moira Deeming,  
260 will you accept her vote that – on matters the coalition is trying to get up in the upper house.  
261 For instance, her vote on Robert Redlich [21:30] – oh sorry, the select committee to which  
262 you're trying to get Robert Redlich?

263 **J Pesutto:** I – I don't want to get into those matters, only because I don't want to pre-  
264 empt the outcome of next week's vote, but we will endeavour at all times in the conduct of  
265 our strategy in the upper house to put issues on their merits and if people consider those  
266 on their merits, we hope that they will support us. We will always be considered and mature  
267 in the way we approach these things. With the Redlich Letter, we have worked  
268 constructively uh – uh and cooperatively [22:00] with the crossbench and we're confident  
269 that something may eventuate from that. That's an example of us working constructively in  
270 the upper house in the interests of all Victorians to make sure the truth about that scandal  
271 comes out and that Robert Redlich and personnel from Callida, the independent auditor,  
272 can appear before Parliament and under privilege, give evidence about what went on. They  
273 need to be given that opportunity.

274 **Question:** To clarify an earlier point, you were aware of the rally and her promotion  
275 of the rally prior to Saturday but you weren't aware of links [22:30] between some of the  
276 organisers and white nationalists?

277 **J Pesutto:** Uh no, I wasn't aware of those links and I uh didn't see her material on  
278 social media or the comments she – I – I understand she made in the Parliament. What  
279 drew my attention on the weekend were the ugly scenes at the protest and we immediately  
280 started investigating the matter, had a very lengthy meeting with Moira Deeming yesterday  
281 where we exhausted inquiries into all manner of relevant matters arising from that and then  
282 I made the decision following that [23:00] to bring on this motion.

283 **Question:** Do you think this will have any impact on the Aston by-election, some MPs  
284 are saying that it will um, I just wondered if you think it's a distraction and unfortunate, I  
285 guess, in its timing?

286 **J Pesutto:** I don't think this will have any impact on the Aston by-election.

287 **Question:** Is it plausible that Ms Deeming was unaware of the extremist links of the  
288 organisers and if she was unaware do you think it's fair to kick her out?

289 **J Pesutto:** I don't think it's open to me to be satisfied that Moira didn't know about  
290 their history.

**[23:30]**

291 Uh it took us all of about twenty minutes or so after the rally on Saturday to investigate the  
292 histories of these people uh Kellie-Jay Keen has a rap sheet of associations on the public  
293 record with people known to be fascists, including people like David Duke, former head of  
294 the Klu [sic] Klux Klan, took us only a few minutes. I – I just can't be satisfied that Moira  
295 didn't know **[24:00]** but can I make this other point? When we conducted our investigations  
296 into how the events of Saturday unfolded, it wasn't just that Moira had escorted uh  
297 organisers through the precinct of the Parliament. It wasn't just that Moira stayed at the  
298 protest when Nazis turned up, it was the celebration you can see on social media  
299 afterwards, which tells you perhaps all you need to know about why it's necessary to bring  
300 this motion. It's saying, **[24:30]** "I am prepared to associate with these people" and not take  
301 the opportunity to walk away from them and disown the odious things that they have shared  
302 with people I've described before.

303 **Question:** Once you've spoken to the entire party to work out if any other MPs were  
304 there, can you guarantee that you will publicly announce who those MPs were?

305 **J Pesutto:** Uh – I – uh of course, if information comes my way that suggests there  
306 are other people who had similar associations, then I would but I don't believe that to be  
307 the case on the advice I have at the moment.

**[25:00]**

308 **Question:** Do you believe it could just be members though, not MPs that were there,  
309 Liberal Party members?

310 **J Pesutto:** I – I don't have that information, Simon, uh – uh if there are Liberal Party  
311 members, I – I'm not in a position to know whether they went, my inquiries to date have  
312 been about whether MPs were there.

313 **Question:** And – was, when you did question Moira Deeming about the association,  
314 did she imply to you that she didn't know the links to Nazis and – and things like this and  
315 she was purely just organising it? What did she say when the claim was put to her that she  
316 should have known?

**[25:30]**

317 **J Pesutto:** Look, I hope you'll understand, I'm not going to go into the details of the  
318 meeting we had. I'm prepared to say it was a lengthy meeting, we went through a whole  
319 range of issues uh, and I was satisfied on reflection and consideration of all the matters  
320 we discussed, that this was the appropriate action to take and I think you can draw the  
321 relevant inferences from that.

322 **Question:** Moira Deeming boasted that she could secure a \$100,000 donation to the  
323 party if she was pre-selected. Did the party ever receive that donation and if it did will it  
324 pay it back if she is successfully expelled?

**[26:00]**

325 **J Pesutto:** I'm not in a position to know the details around that donation. I – I'm not  
326 aware of any uh anything other than compliance with the electoral rules around that but if  
327 information comes to light I will look at it uh, Mitch, but I have nothing to hand at the  
328 moment.

329 **Question:** If the government moved urgent legislation to ban the Nazi salute, would  
330 the Coalition support that?

331 **J Pesutto:** Uh yes. Yes. Can I acknowledge David Southwick behind me who was so  
332 instrumental uh in the last Parliament to ban the Swastika and given our position on the  
333 Swastika, **[26:30]** I can't see how you could rationally distinguish uh the salute, the Nazi  
334 salute. It is as much an incitement of hate and violence as the Swastika itself, maybe even  
335 worse because it is a gesture performed by a person and so we would not take a different  
336 view having led that process and then worked with the government on that. So, we are  
337 open to working with the government on this measure uh **[27:00]** we need to take this very  
338 seriously this threat as evidenced most recently on Saturday afternoon on the steps of this  
339 Parliament. And we will do so.

340 **Question:** I know you're not a fan of hypotheticals but if you were Opposition Leader  
341 and Moira Deeming was pre-selected and her views were made public would you allowed  
342 that that to go ahead?

343 **J Pesutto:** I can't change the past, uh Benita uh but what I can say, to reiterate, as a  
344 new leadership team, myself, David Southwick, Georgie Crozier and Matt Bach, we're new  
345 to these roles **[27:30]** and you will have seen over recent weeks decisive steps that we've  
346 taken to build an effective, strong, responsible Opposition that Victorians will embrace and  
347 hopefully in 2026, doing all the work we need to, to form a government in 2026.

348 **Question:** To be fair, David –

349 – You spoke about looking at vetting candidates better in the future, what– what has been  
350 done in that space so far?

351 **J Pesutto:** Given uh, the result in the State election last year, I think it's fair to say that  
352 we need to review a whole range of things in our process.

**[28:00]**

353 We know that. And vetting candidates uh making sure we have the best possible  
354 candidates who can connect with their communities and who can actually focus and do the  
355 work that their communities want them to focus on, cost of living, poor roads, lack of access  
356 to hospitals. Doing the work to focus on those issues everyday of every week, I'll be looking  
357 to support candidates who can commit to focusing on the issues that actually matter to the  
358 people on the ground.

**[28:30]**

359 **Question:** You say you have a new leadership team, David and Georgie were part of  
360 the leadership team that ultimately booted Bernie Finn out which then allowed Moira  
361 Deeming to be pre-selected so how can you use that argument that you have a new  
362 leadership team that is [inaudible]

363 **J Pesutto:** We're a new team uh we're a group of four, we work very closely together  
364 and people go through different phases of their career Simon. And uh I've been through  
365 that as you all know and all I can say is that there is an energy between the four of us  
366 **[29:00]** and we're working really well together and I'm just really proud of the processes  
367 we've gone through, particularly overnight, which is not easy, Simon. And we've made a  
368 decision which I think is responsible and which will connect with Victorians right across our  
369 state.

370 **Question:** Just on the Nazi salute um, when the Swastika debate was happening um  
371 the IPA was one of the groups that um recommended to the Liberal Party to oppose the  
372 bans, saying it was against free speech um there are Liberal members who are members  
373 of the IPA, **[29:30]** a lot of you have connections to the IPA, Evan Mulholland was there at  
374 the time, and was one of the people that –

375 **J Pesutto:** – Sorry. Sorry Anika was it –

376 **Question:** – Evan Mulholland –

377 **J Pesutto:** – Oh, yep. Yep –

378 **Question:** – who’s now an MP, was one of the people in the IPA at the time um, when  
379 they opposed that ban. Are you confident that everyone in the party room is on board with  
380 a – um the – the government’s proposal to ban the salute given some of the links towards  
381 um, the last debate when there was support for the free speech argument, essentially?

382 **J Pesutto:** Yeah. Evan Mulholland is a young up-and-comer, a rising star in the party  
383 and [30:00] I’m really excited that he’s a member of the team. He’s proving himself as  
384 Shadow Cabinet Secretary to be effective and responsible and he’s part of a team now.  
385 And we will go through robust debates internally, that’s a part of being in the Liberal Party.  
386 Uh we do have robust debates about issues, but we took a strong position on the banning  
387 of the Swastika, and as a party we made it clear, we were never going to countenance  
388 hateful uh gestures or symbols like that and having supported and led [30:30] the debate  
389 on the banning of the Swastika it is only consistent and it follows that of course we would  
390 ban anything else that had a similar effect and I think if you look at the effect and the  
391 potential ramifications of the Nazi salute it is perhaps even more prone to incite violence  
392 than anything else. So, there would be a consistency in our position, and I think Evan would  
393 get that, but we will have a debate and Evan, like everybody else, will have a chance to air  
394 their views inside the party room but once we have made a decision that’s what [31:00]  
395 we will prosecute outside the party room.

396 **Question:** Across 2020 and 2021 there were anti-lockdown protests organised by  
397 people with extremist links and some of those events were attended by Liberal MPs, I’m  
398 aware you weren’t in Parliament at the time but if you were leader and you were in  
399 Parliament would you have supported those Liberal MPs being kicked out of the party, as  
400 well?

401 **J Pesutto:** I’m not going to go into uh, what I would have done in the past. I think you  
402 can draw conclusions about what this new leadership team is trying to achieve [31:30] in  
403 the way we are going about this. We are making it clear to the broader Liberal Party that  
404 to be an effective opposition, to be able to govern from 2026, we need to take these strong  
405 and decisive steps to show that we will never support and that we will always oppose  
406 anything that is hateful or liable to incite violence. So that’s the approach we are taking  
407 now. I can’t change the past, but we can determine our future and that’s what we are going  
408 to do. Thank you everybody. Oh sorry.

409 **Question:** Sorry just –

410 **J Pesutto:** – One more? Yep.

[32:00]

411 **Question:** Uh, shouldn't someone in the leadership team have known that Moira was  
412 promoting the rally, she spoke about it in Parliament, two people in the leadership team  
413 are in that House, why didn't anyone warn her about her attendance?

414 **J Pesutto:** As I said before, we are the leadership team with a lot of responsibilities  
415 and we're not there to babysit every MPs [*sic*] – every MP. And we've got to be clear about  
416 this, every person in this Parliament, Liberal or otherwise, has a responsibility. And they  
417 can't shirk that responsibility by someone – by someone else saying **[32:30]** 'you shouldn't  
418 have done XYZ'. It was incumbent upon Moira as a member of Parliament to understand  
419 the dangerous consequences that can come when you are associated with people who  
420 share platforms with Nazis and white supremacists. Everybody must be responsible for  
421 their actions.

422 **Question:** Did she offer to do a blanket condemnation of Nazism and everything else  
423 associated with the salute and what went on that you didn't approve of and why wasn't that  
424 enough?

**[33:00]**

425 **J Pesutto:** I'm not going to go into the details of the discussion, suffice it to say, we  
426 explored all sides of the question and as party leader, having reflected on that discussion  
427 and considered everything that came out of that discussion, this was, I am completely  
428 satisfied, the appropriate action to take. Thank you very much.

END: **[33:19]**