

**Moira Deeming**

**1447570**

**Transcript – Victoria Liberal Party Press Conference – John Pesutto**

**Parties: John Pesutto MP (JP); David Southwick (DS), Matt Bach (MB)**

5

JP: No matter what their background no matter what their sexual preference you know what their race or their ethnicity we will listen and engage with people right across the board. That's the Liberal Party I'm gonna lead and today marks a turning point where we are on the road to choosing that in the lead up to the 2026 election in a few year's time. This is part of a changing culture that I want to secure for our country. Now today we have an extended very lengthy and very emotional party room meeting for a very long time and many members spoke and they were very emotional during that meeting. That meeting took place off the back of some new information that was provided by Moira Deeming early this morning at around about 6:30 in Melbourne time. That new information contained important concessions and those concessions were in the form of a condemnation of the types of conduct that were referred to in the dossier on which I have always sought from the very start and which had in fact been what prompted the notice of motion in the first place. So whilst it took a few days Moira actually provided the condemnation I'd been seeking all along and that provided an opportunity during today's meeting for me to propose a slightly different outcome given Moira had provided what I'd been seeking and recognised why we support to do that and having heard from Moira along with other speakers [?] where she amongst other things and I won't go into all of the detail but certainly called out Nazism and also called out any kind of bigotry against the LGBTI community. So in light of that I proposed an outcome. That outcome sees Moira being suspended from the parliamentary party for a period of nine months. She will lose the Whip's position an important position in the upper house. She will issue a statement later today and it will be for Moira to prove herself over the coming months during her suspension. What I can say is that the proposal I put to the party room was met with unanimous support. So out of this whole exercise which began last weekend we have a situation where the conduct I've wanted condemned has been condemned where there is a consequence that follows from not having condemned that when the first opportunity arose and certainly when my colleagues and I sought it from Moira and we've got a party where that's united behind the outcome. So I'm very pleased with that and I just want to reiterate for all Victorians under the Liberal Party that I'm leading my colleagues David Southwick, Georgie Crozier and Matt Bach all of our colleagues. We are committed to being a welcoming engaging and inclusive party there for all no matter what your background. For me you know my personal story. I'm the son of Italian migrants and the Liberal Party has given me a great opportunity to represent the people of Hawthorn as someone of that background but whatever anybody's background I want them to know that my colleagues and I will be that voice for you. I'll now take some questions.

10

15

20

25

30

35

M: So can you explain exactly what she provided at 6.30 this morning and how does that change your view that she should have been expelled from the parliamentary party.

40

JP: So in the absence of the condemnation which is contained in the material that she supplied she supplied a memorandum to the parliamentary members and when I read that I was pleased to see that it contained a condemnation of the types of conduct that's referred to in the dossier and which I'd been seeking all along, that was the reason for the notice of motion in the first place. So having provided that information it then provided an opportunity that I was able to identify to reach an outcome that would see a consequence that attached to not having provided that condemnation at the earliest opportunity but also providing a way back. So it's up to Moira to choose how she goes about that. But that information was contained and signed in a memorandum that Moira provided to the party. I won't provide that myself to you but I was satisfied that it contained a condemnation that I was seeking or ---

45

50

F: Did you walk---

M: On Thursday---

F: Did you walk into this---

© MinterEllison

[?] word/s cannot be identified

... dialogue trails away

--- dialogue is interrupted

\* denotes interviewee speaking without use of the interpreter

ME\_222863251\_1

Page 1 of 15

55 M: On Thursday sorry just following up on my question. On Thursday your deputy Matt Bach said at the backdoors of parliament there can be no compromise there will be no compromise. Clearly this is a compromise isn't it?

60 JP: In fairness to Matt please understand we had only two days before then had a party room in this room where the party room rejected a proposal to defer indefinitely today's meeting. That party room last Tuesday confirmed today's meeting. So what Matt was referring to in his comments and I've spoken to him about it, what Matt was correctly referring to was the fact that the party room had made a decision to proceed with [?] without compromise. Now understand what's happened here. I and my colleagues we had sought a, we had sought from Moira the concessions that she's provided us all. We sought that last weekend on a Sunday morning. Having received the material from Moira this morning which contains that condemnation I was satisfied that she understood why it was important to do that and also accept why it's important for there to be serious consequences and to understand a nine month suspension losing the Whip's position these are serious consequences. So I was satisfied with the condemnation which was the most important thing because I wanted the messages to come out of the party the Liberal Party I lead to be strong on this. We will condemn any kind of Nazi references. We will condemn any kind of bigotry and that's any member of the LGBTI and we will condemn any kind of attack on people who are vulnerable no matter what their circumstances.

70 F: Did you, did you---

75 M: You only condemn that for nine months. You stayed behind your leadership on this. You were trying to send a message to the community the Victorian Liberal Party is modern and moderate but you're only letting her [?] for nine months and the eleventh hour condemnation which no-one has seen yet so how can the Victorian public have confidence in that and this is a political solution for you because you didn't have the numbers.

JP: Let's be reasonable and let's be sensible. What's important here is that Moira understands now the need to condemn the types of matters here---

<overtalking>

80 JP: No no. It would be different if there were no concessions from Moira it would be different. If all that had happened was that Moira was given a nine month suspension I would agree with you that would not be sufficient. What makes this different and the most important part of this is we want to build understanding across our community, we want people to know why it's important to call out this sort of behaviour. So when Moira sent the material this morning and we'll look at trying to make that available to you but we'll need to consult with Moira but when she made those concessions that's the most important part because we want people to understand why we have to call it out when we see it. As for suspension that is a serious consequence and I want to be someone who's reasonable who's sensible. For me the most important thing to tell Victorian people is that under the party I lead we will call it out we will condemn it and that's what Moira's done. And she's also accepting a consequence---

90 M: Is that---

JP: They should also [?].

<overtalking>

JP: Hang on, we'll get to all of you, we'll get to all of you.

95 F: Can you---

JP: [?].

F: What did her concession involve and what specifically did she condemn?

JP: Okay so Moira condemned, the references to the Nazi material that you saw in Kellie-Jay Keen's references in the dossier and also the Angie Jones tweet. So you've seen that in the dossier and for me that's what I wanted all along, I wanted it to be condemned and she's done that.

100

F: And has she---

M: So she can---

F: ---condemned---

JP: We'll go and shut up and then we'll come [?].

105 F: That's alright my question is [?]-

M: Did she condemn Kellie-Jay Keen and Angie Jones specifically?

JP: Yes, yes she has.

F: Has she condemned---

<overtalking>

110 JP: She's condemned that the material in the dossier she's condemned that.

M: No no she hasn't that's a different thing, that's a different thing. Is there a specific condemnation of those two people?

JP: Well the condemnation relates to them as you'll see.

M: But not them specifically.

115 JP: Yeah them specifically.

<overtalking>

F: Do her views on the trans community remain the same?

JP: She has called out the tweet from Angie Jones which was a concern to me as leader and I was not going to accept, so she's called that out---

120 F: Sure.

JP: ---and she's condemned it so---

F: But her views on the trans community having less rights compared to a female in her eyes they still remain the same and she still remains in the party with those views?

JP: Well she's suspended from the party room and what she's accepted is that our discussions around this must always be respectful and inclusive even if people disagree. Remember we live in a democracy and the main thing is to make sure that people are engaged in public discourse and they do it in a courteous and civil way. They can disagree but what troubled me about what Angie Jones had tweeted and which Moira Deeming has now condemned she has now condemned. So I think that's appropriate.

125

F: Is the Liberal Party safe---

JP: So we'll take them one at a time[?].

F: Do you [?] yourself. Because previously said she'd said she'd done nothing wrong?

JP: She's certainly made it clear to the party room today that she has a lot to learn on these things and that's part of the process with the [?]. So she's condemned the material which was in the dossier which we wanted her to condemn. She will accept a punishment or a penalty a nine months' suspension in the party and losing the Whip's position. And she knows she's got a pathway back but she has to earn it too. So for me being a reasonable and sensible person who works with colleagues I had the unanimous support of the party room to do that and I think that's a sensible act.

135

140 M: Has she [?]---  
<overtalking>

M: Just so I'm clear. The condemnation there, are you saying there's a difference between her initial condemnation on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March where she did condemn the actions of the masked men I'm quoting from her statement "in black who later identified as neo-Nazis"? So at that point in time she condemned the neo-Nazis in saying there's now a further confirmation and that's what led to your compromising on the issue.

145

JP: Simon exactly. That was the reason for the motion. The reason I brought the motion forward is because I was concerned that just condemning the Nazis generally was not enough. What we needed and what I demanded as leader of the Liberal Party of Victoria was that we needed to see a condemnation specifically of the references in the dossier from both Kellie-Jay Keen and Angie Jones. Moira has now done that and she did that this morning and having done that I think the second good thing to do and I did this with unanimous support of the party room is to find a solution which recognises that the highest priority is to tell the Victorian people [?] but at the same time attach a serious consequence.

150

M: Did your original motion handle serving a party that [?]?

JP: It didn't [?] I decided that there was a better way in the circumstances. Bear in mind---

F: Did you walk in to the door at 10 o'clock with an idea to expel or to compromise? When you first walked into the party room this morning expel or compromise?

JP: I knew I was going to listen to the debate because I wanted to hear from members but I was also aware that only an hour a couple of hours before that Moira had supplied additional material.

160

F: Three and a half hours---

JP: Yeah---

F: ---and you met the leadership team.

JP: ---and there's a [?]. So---

165 F: Did you come in with an expulsion---

JP: ---I came in with a---

F: ---or a suspension in mind?

JP: ---view that that might be possible.

M: So did you know---

170 M: How did you---

M: Did you move a motion of expulsion?

JP: No there was no need to. I made the decision at the crucial end of the day. It was a long, understand this---

M: Did you move any other motion? Was there a debate over [?] or anything---

175 JP: I can't share, I can't do that [?]. So what happened with these sorts of meetings you open it for debate. I led the debate and there was a series of speakers, right. At the conclusion of the debate. I listened to it all particularly comments from Moira which followed on from her written statement earlier this morning and it was clear to me the combination of Moira's comments to the media which were I think it's fair to say very emotional. Her comments to the meeting, I won't go into detail, I hope you understand I'm not going to go into detail with that but I was satisfied after her address to the party following on from the new material she supplied earlier this morning

180

opened the doorway to a sensible proposal which I put to the party room that saw her accept the nine months, losing the Whips position [?].

F: Was it clear to you that you would lose an expulsion vote?

185 JP: No not at all. I've always felt confident that I had the numbers.

M: Was there a vote for anything today? Was there a vote?

190 JP: Yes oh there was a vote at the end when I put what I would call the amended proposal off the back of the new written information and the personal account given by Moira where she expanded upon her support for calling out behaviour that needs to be called out. I put that to the party room. It was met with unanimous support and I should say applause as well.

195 F: As you mentioned earlier Moira Deeming hasn't condemned either Kellie-Jay Keen or Angie Jones. Your dossier also says that one of the reasons why she brought this reput on to the Parliament or the parliamentary party is because she was associating with those two people where Ms Keen was known to be publicly associated with far right wing extremist groups including neo-Nazi activists. You now face the prospect to welcome back into your party room someone who according to your dossier has links with people who are closely associated with far right wing extremist groups including neo-Nazi activists. How do you justify that to the Victorian public?

JP: Because Moira has condemned it which is what I wanted---

200 F: But she hasn't condemned the people.

JP: ---[?]----

F: Part of your dossier in motion is also about them specific---

JP: Let me [?]----

F: ---and not just---

205 JP: ---I do need to go and explain these things to the Victorian people. So I can tell you we had Moira making concessions in the form of condemnation that we sought today plus a further comment to the party. I would not have needed to bring a notice of motion today. Having done those things I was satisfied that she accepts there must be a consequence. She accepts that under my leadership this will never be acceptable. That remains everything I said last week I can totally stand by because she condemns the conduct which prompted the motion I brought. She has accepted there must be a serious consequence for not having done that earlier and she accepts there's a consequence by losing the Whips position as well. What we want, remember we want people to learn from these experiences and if you've got someone who's new to the parliament who makes a mistake sure I would have preferred that Moira make these concessions and condemn the conduct last Sunday I can promise you that. It took more time than it needed to but she did it in the end and I need to build on that. So it's now in Moira's hands as to what happens over the next nine months.

F: It's---

220 M: She's still tweeting support of Kellie on the weekend. So it does look like that she's I'm about to be expelled so I better do what I'm told. You know like a little kid basically. The Leadership has twice counselled her about her language and now this and you're willing to accept something that drops at 6.30 three hours before expulsion [?]. I mean do you trust her?

JP: It'll be for Moira to prove herself over the next nine months.

M: Do you trust her?

225 JP: I'm giving her the chance and what I'd ask is we all give her the chance over the next nine months to prove herself. She's got a great opportunity to do that. I thought and still consider that it was a sensible and reasonable and fair thing to do having seen her condemn it this morning albeit many

days too late but nevertheless she's condemned it, she spoke further to that in the party room meeting today.

230 F: Are you confident---

M: Will she speak to the media, will she give this public condemnation on camera on radio on press? Will she do it today?

JP: We'll talk to Moira about that but she will be issuing a statement later today to confirm the sorts of things that we've discussed [?].

235 F: Are you confident in your leadership decision?

JP: Yes.

240 M: You've said multiple times that Ms Deeming may have to prove herself by earning her way back into the party in nine months. What does that look like? Do you sit with her in nine months and say well I'm happy with how you performed or not and therefore I'm gonna bring another motion against you?

245 JP: Yeah look Shannon I think the way that's going to play out is that there are going to be people who'll want to work with Moira to help her work her way through these issues. At the end of the day we want people to get to what we need them to get to. I'm outlining for you the principles, the values that will guide me as the Liberal leader. Parliament's inclusive and engaging. Well you know that I've spoken to you many times about that.

M: But what I'm saying is that---

JP: So I want to give her---

M: At the end of the nine months who's the judge of whether or not she's earned her position back into the party? Is it you, will it be the party, will it be the [?]?

250 JP: It will always be the party room. It's always in the hands of the party room. In the Liberal Party we have very democratic processes. So I'm the leader and I serve with the pleasure of the party room.

M: Do you think you'll still be there in nine months?

JP: Sorry?

255 M: Do you think you'll still be there in nine months?

JP: Yes.

F: A few of your colleagues have said that she was essentially ambushed on Sunday for that meeting. She was not allowed a support person there. Do you think that was appropriately handled and why couldn't that have been handled better?

260 JP: Look in the end what we've got, I think it was handled appropriately---

F: Even though she wasn't allowed to have a support person---

JP: ---by my leadership, by my leadership team---

F: If you had your time again?

JP: ---and me it was handled appropriately.

265 F: ---as a coalition team leader---

JP: Can I just remind you all. The thing that my colleagues and I and the leadership group sought from Moira on Sunday we got this morning and in today's meeting.

M: [?].

270 JP: Now, well it is Simon but let's look at it in perspective. She's made the concessions and she's condemned the conduct and she's accepting a nine months' suspension and losing the Whips position. So it's not like it happened without consequence and I get it. If she hadn't condemned it and had just received a nine month suspension I'd be asking the tough questions you're asking but understand she's made that acknowledgement now and she's done it in writing.

M: Where's the motion?

275 M: Did you think though you should have given her an opportunity that to think about her response and to have [?] instead of as Samaya just has described as I understand it railroading her in a meeting with the four of you and your staff?

JP: There were plenty of opportunities during the week to do that but we've reached a point we needed to today and I can say after a meeting that was exceedingly emotional for the party room members I can't describe it for you it was very tough.

280 M: Were people crying?

JP: Yes. It was very emotional.

M: Were many people crying?

JP: I know of a number I don't know the exact number but it was very emotional for people. This is people's lives and what you want people to do is you want them to learn and to grow. And what I'm offering Moira with the full support of the party room is an opportunity given what she's done today to grow and to learn and that's what I would prefer. I'd hope.

285 F: What were the tears for? What was, can you, I know you can't go to the detail of it specifically but generally what was the emotion? Why the emotion I mean?

290 JP: It's difficult to talk about that without going into detail but what I would say it's tough on people making decisions that will permanently impact on somebody's life and family. And in light of that when people are talking about issues they know that the outcome is going to be serious on somebody's family and they don't do it lightly. And I know we're in politics and we look at these things through a political lens but there's a human element and the human element is that you want people to learn and to grow. And sure I would have preferred in fact I demanded that Moira make the concessions and condemnations of this morning and today's address to the party room. I would have preferred she did that on Sunday believe you me but she's done it and she has an opportunity to work her way back.

295 F: Can I---

300 M: [?] human element. You talk about the human element out there of people who are so offended by what they saw, so offended by the comments of these people and the continued commentary around that. What about [?], what message does that say to voters that---

JP: I condemned it.

M: ---say everything on this expulsion and they go oh they sweep it under the carpet.

305 JP: But Richard in fairness remember I moved the motion of expulsion because I wanted it condemned. I wanted this conduct condemned on Sunday. Now it wasn't done on Sunday. I condemned it, all of my colleagues condemned it. We won't hesitate in doing that and we will never ever accept it but what changed this morning was the final realisation that it was wrong not to condemn it. That's what's important and with the punishment that attaches to that realisation is the opportunity to work her way back it's in her hands. So that'll be down to the party but that's what you want people to do to learn from these things and understand why it's important to condemn it. That's what I wanted last Sunday.

310

<overtalking>

JP: I'm sorry we'll just do one quick I'll do Gus then shortly.

315 M: Where's the line if someone goes on an anti-trans rally this weekend one of your other colleagues, is that okay?

JP: These things I think I encourage all people no matter what their political viewpoints and I've said this Gus many times. When you engage in debates particularly on important social and personal issues we should never dehumanise one another. When I talk about being civil and respectful you need to respect and appreciate the common bond of humanity we all share and that means that no matter what events you go to if you see violence against other people never justify it. If you see vilification that dehumanises others call it out no matter what side of the debate you might be on and those are my road marks for anybody engaging in public debate and entering the public square. When I talk about being respectful and civil what I'm really saying is respect everybody's underlying humanity. Debate the issues but do it in a mature and sensible way. Call out violence, call out vilification, call out any kind of dehumanising conduct whenever you see it.

320

325

F: Can I ask [?] David Southwick if I may---

JP: Sure.

F: ---just about how you feel about Moira Deeming remaining within the party and how you explain this decision to the people of Jewish faith going forwards?

330

DS: Yeah thanks Sharnelle. I wanted to firstly say that John has shown leadership today. John has shown that he's prepared to listen and he's prepared to take somebody at face value that they've made a mistake and they've admitted to that mistake and they're prepared to learn and work with the team. There was no question that what we're seeing over the last week or so for all communities certainly from my community it's been very hurtful and that was certainly part of the discussion but I think largely you've gotta take people on their face value. If somebody and others have said today that it's taken some time, well for me a real part of anything is actually getting people to admit their wrongs and to give them an opportunity to make them right and I think that's what it is. We need to give that opportunity to, for Moira to make it right. Let's see what nine months bring but it's a big decision it's a decision that we haven't taken lightly and John has shown true leadership that he's listened and he's given his colleagues the benefit of the doubt.

335

340

M: Can I ask Mr Bach a quick question? [?] your leader just confirmed before when you were talking about no compromise here you were referring to the original motion last Tuesday. Is that right or were you intending that there would be no compromise in this room this morning?

345

MB: No what John said right but for the most Simon I confess I didn't think we'd get to this much better position where very significant concessions were made by Moira. Milton Friedman's my favourite comments from last century. I'm not much of a Keynes man but he once said when the facts change I change my mind so like John I was very pleased to see those significant concessions and as a result I would agree this is the best way forward.

350

F: Did you expect to be voting on an expulsion today or a suspension compromise?

MB: We came in willing to listen willing to listen---

F: Not moving an expulsion motion?

MB: ---speak to, well I'll speak to myself Heidi. I was very pleased to see this significant concessions Moira made. I don't doubt that she'll make them again publicly in the statement she'll make today. So I came in as John said he did willing to listen.

355

F: So when you left the leadership meeting across the road this morning before you came over for this your intention was to walk in and offer a compromise or your intention was to walk in and pursue the leader's clearly stated plan for the past week which was an expulsion motion?

360

MB: We were moved, I was moved personally and we talked about the material that had come through from Moira and we came over very willing to listen [?].

M: Moved personally because of the debate or was this something that struck personally for you?

MB: No I was pleased. That's, pleased is a better expression, I was very pleased that we had the concessions that we just hadn't had earlier in the week.

365 M: How difficult is it, you worked with Moira in the upper house and Georgie and I know you're obviously[?], how difficult has this been for you to manage given that you manage obviously Ms Deeming in the upper house and you've worked so intimately with her and how emotional it is?

370 MB: It was a difficult meeting and a hard meeting but ultimately I'm pleased that Moira has conceded that she did some things very wrong last weekend and we've got those concessions. Now she's not going to be with us for the next nine months and as John said we'll see how that goes but I hope it's the right outcome.

M: You mentioned she can't be with us. She can't come into the chamber at all and how does that actually work that suspension?

MB: Well I might hand over to John to talk about the specifics [?] on that.

375 JP: She won't be a member of the parliamentary Liberal Party. So she'll still serve her constituents. She'll continue to work in the chamber, she'll work with people in that area and as a member of parliament so she'll continue to do all of that.

M: Can I just verify at the end of that nine months sorry---

JP: Who've we got?

380 <overtalking>

F: What's will happen if she in the next nine months she continues to make anti trans comments in the house. Is that something you're[?]?

385 JP: Well we'll be having ongoing obviously interactions with Moira along the way but I don't, I can tell you now there's no one in the party room that can misunderstand what I'm on about now as Leader with their full support. We are not going to accept any of the behaviour that vilifies and dehumanises members of the community. We simply won't so it's a very positive thing that we've come out of the meeting with and I'm confident that Moira has a great opportunity to prove herself over those nine months and through the suspension.

390 F: Are there conditions on the suspension like counselling she has to do, benchmarks she has to meet, statements she absolutely cannot make?

JP: Yeah, the Constitution's pretty bare in terms of the attachments to any particular outcome but she will, I guess I can say this, she will be working with people obviously because she's interested in her future and she knows what that requires in terms of being part of the team and she indicated that today in her remarks that she wants to learn, she wants to be a part of the team and it's really up to Moira now over the next nine months to work it out.

395 F: Does she have to run her statements---

M: Just on that nine months I just want to really nail down what happens at the end. Does the nine months end and she's just welcomed back in the room or does there have to be a vote for that?

400 JP: Well whilst there strictly won't need to be a vote the party room is very if you like alert to the issue and over the next nine months there's gonna be a lot of work put in. I mean ultimately---

M: But being[?]-

JP: ---as a leader what I want to see from all people in parliament including members of my own team I want to see people learn and grow and Moira has a great opportunity over the next nine months to learn from this experience and a range of things out of the experience not just what's acceptable. It's not but also working with colleagues as part of the team so she has that opportunity it's in her hands [?].

405

- M: But if you and the party are not happy at the end of that nine months just to clarify this, she will come back into the party room unless there's a motion to expel her again is that right?
- 410 JP: That would technically be correct but let's be positive about this. We've gone through a very emotional exercise for many members over the last week and particularly today. No one wants to revisit this. I'm pretty satisfied that Moira understands the seriousness with which I brought this motion and I've already addressed that at length. So she understands that the party room knows and have backed me fully on this. This is really important. We've gotta be a party that's there for all Victorians no matter what your background we want to be a voice for you.
- 415 F: Does she have to [?] if she votes against opposition amendments for example is that a black mark against her name?
- JP: Not necessarily. There may be issues that come us---
- F: How did you find---
- JP: ---but look---
- 420 F: ---it's acceptable conduct and what is acceptable conduct [?]
- JP: She's not a member of the Liberal party room so she not strictly bound by the votes of the party room but I think that might miss the point. I think the point is that Moira has in making the concessions today in accepting the penalty that we've imposed I think she's indicated that she wants a pathway back. So I think you're going to find off the back of the last week and in particular today's meeting that she's going to be working towards that. And there'll be people who will be working with her to try and make sure she can do that.
- 425 F: Well we've been told that you opened the meeting pushing for an expulsion. If you received this email at 6.30 why would you move the meeting, why did you open the meeting moving for her expulsion?
- 430 JP: That was the technical requirement. You don't have a meeting unless you move the motion. But as in the nature of these things Moira had an opportunity to speak personally further to the material she brought. Now she was someone who spoke at the very end of the meeting and I then made a decision that I would reflect upon the discussion taking into account everything that had been said, the earlier material, Moira's personal contribution to the meeting itself and
- 435 I wanted to synthesise all of that information. A lot of it was new, I can't go into all of it but a lot of it was new and very important information and I'm satisfied, I am satisfied that I am now leading a party where everybody understands we are there for everyone no matter what's your background.
- F: So did you put the amended motion essentially after Moira Deeming had spoken?
- JP: It---
- 440 F: And how did you come to that decision for a nine month suspension plus remove the upper house Whip?
- JP: Look I'm not gonna go into all of the activities that went on in the party room. Suffice it to say that at the end of the discussion I reflected on all of the things that had happened this morning including the written material, Moira's personal contribution but also the contributions of other
- 445 members as well. They were very emotional and I think it would just not be fair and it would not be reasonable to simply say I'm not going to take into account any of this material. I'm a leader I'm premise into par terms I'm first among equals and I will consider what they say. I have an obligation to the party room. So I heard everything out and I made a decision that there might be a better way to proceed and there was and it had unanimous support at the end of the day.
- 450 M: What's the point of having a [?] in relation to [?] elements of extremism in the Liberal Party?
- JP: People grow people can learn and I think what we saw today is that Moira understands now why it's important to call out this kind of conduct. That's better than someone who refuses to. She's taken some positive steps towards that there's a way to go but she's taken some positive steps

455 and that's why I thought that it was important for an alternative outcome which as I said had unanimous support.

<overtalking>

460 JP: Yes. I believe that we can win an election because of the high leadership of the Liberal Party. As you're seeing now we will call out that sort of behaviour we're gonna be an inclusive and welcoming party and we're going to focus on issues that matter to the Victorian people. That was one of my messages today was that we can win the next election in 2026 and we will do it by being disciplined by being focused in everybody operating as part of a team and I'm convinced that although Moira has accepted the punishment and penalty that attached to what's happened over the last week I'm keen to see how she goes over the next nine months and being part of that team.

465 M: Do you fear that your actions have further divided the party room? There's already so many tensions you only just won the leadership ballot initially. Does this further you know have a party [?]?

470 JP: I can say that at the end of today's meeting there was unanimity behind what I proposed after all sides of the debate. Remember that people have different views on how this debate should unfold and at the end of the day having gone through a very emotional experience for everybody in the room some more than others but it was very emotional and taxing for people. To have unanimous support says something and ---

475 M: [?] that's the way of getting to it isn't it? Like I mean you staked your leadership on the expulsion and then at the eleventh hour you're basically forced into a significant compromise. It just looks so messy.

JP: Can I take issue with being forced into a compromise John because

M: what else can it be [?]?---

<overtalking>

M: What else can it be I mean [?] so stupid?

480 M: You tell everyone you're gonna expel and then you go through a completely different strategy.

JP: After information come, John after information comes to light which is the very information I'd been seeking last weekend. It may have been late---

F: But why didn't you walk into the meeting and just say---

JP: ---but it came.

485 F: ---let's go this way instead.

JP: That's what I wanted, that's what I wanted all along and that's why colleagues were sticking with me because they knew it was important to seek those concessions and see a condemnation of that behaviour that was so important on the steps and elsewhere. So---

490 F: But which she won't really condemn it this morning not before that. She's had days to condemn it she never did it but you accepted it at the eleventh hour.

JP: But Sharnelle remember Moira, I accepted the material Moira put at face value with penalty. There is a penalty here you're forgetting that. The penalty is a nine month suspension losing the Whips position and showing to her colleagues over the next nine months that she's gonna be a team player in the future. She's got a lot to prove over the next nine months---

495 F: I [?]?---

JP: ---so it's not just about, sorry Simone, don't worry you'll get your chance. But as I said before if all you were looking at was a suspension without any other information I get it, I share your view but when you've got someone---

M: Actually your view it's not our view.

500 JP: No no---

F: It's not much.

M: It was what about the question you gave us.

JP: Let me speak. The important point is that she's recognised the wrongdoing in not condemning it. She's done that now but she accepts that by waiting she now has to accept the penalty. Now remember as I've indicated during the last few days had those concessions being made last weekend there would have been no motion that's what I have been seeking all along. I wanted the condemnation of the material that was in the brief.

505

F: But you didn't give her a lot of thinking time about it did you really between the meeting and putting out a media release saying you were going to expel, she didn't have a huge amount of thinking time. Was it a known, was it a step too far? If you had your time again because you've waited a day or two to talk about that motion to make that decision to give her more time to reflect and reach this point?

510

JP: This was too important and I wanted to send a strong message that this kind of behaviour Nazi references or whatever else it might be has no place in the Victoria I want to lead with my colleagues in 2026. So it was absolutely necessary to bring the notice of motion.

515

F: That night---

JP: It wouldn't have been necessary---

F: ---like that same night within hours of that meeting?

JP: I didn't need any further convincing about the urgency of the matter. I will not tolerate it that's why I brought the motion. When I was satisfied on Sunday that there would be no concessions forthcoming I moved quickly because I wanted to assure the Victorian people that under my leadership with the Liberal Party will never ever tolerate that. But although several days had to pass once the concessions came in for Moira and she condemned it I felt as leader of the party that with a further contribution of the meeting today it was an appropriate step to take to propose a different outcome and it had the unanimous support of my colleagues.

520

525

F: At what course over the weekend did you realise that you don't have the majority of your colleagues' support for an expulsion motion?

JP: There's little to be served in speculating over recent days about that suffice it to say I always felt that my colleagues would back me in my decision. And they saw in me today somebody who was prepared to listen and look for an outcome when we'd got what we needed to get which was a condemnation of the behaviour that's outlined in the brief.

530

M: Can you say or confirm whether the matter of the Aston by-election on Saturday was brought up in this party room meeting [?]?

JP: I'm not gonna go into the specifics. All I can say is I have no concerns about what we've gone through over the recent days in the Aston by-election none.

535

M: Do you think that the Liberal Party can win Aston---

JP: Yes---

M: ---by-election?

JP: ---of course it can win Aston.

540 F: Will Moira Deeming attend any more rallies?

JP: You'll have to take that up with Moira but---

F: But that's not something you [?]?

JP: ---I think our of, I think if you look at what we've worked through over recent days and particularly today given what's happened today Moira will know what the party room's concerns were. There was broad acceptance that we can't and will not ever tolerate the sorts of things that drove me to bring the notice of motion.

545 F: So if she attends one more rally, an anti-trans rally or as she calls it women's rights rally that's it she's done?

JP: I think we've gotta be, await the facts in each matter.

550 F: Don't you have the set of rules if you [?] around the suspension?

JP: Well we want Moira to make sure that she's part of it you know she's part of the process that doesn't see the sorts of behaviour that would lead to similar outcomes like we saw here last weekend. So I should emphasise because I've seen some references to it in the media. This was never about freedom of speech, this was never about any particular issue. It's about how we go about conducting public debates. People are free to have different views but they've gotta treat others with respect. I will never ever accept or tolerate dehumanising behaviour of anyone or delegitimising behaviour for who they are. That's never gonna happen under my leadership and we've take a big strong step today, it's a turning point for us and a strong discussion. Everybody now knows what under my leadership is required in terms of embracing all Victorians no matter what their background.

555 F: Her core value and her main point is to have trans women not use female bathrooms. Isn't that dehumanising behaviour?

JP: There is a discussion going on around the world and I'm not here today to go into a debate about those issues. International sports federations are grappling with this, schools are grappling with this. It's a very sensitive and complex discussion and I'm not going to allow it to be you know easily and politically talked about in these sorts of environments. They need careful consideration and people working through the communities, leaders, parents, families and children. What I would say is that it is really important for everybody who wants to engage in that debate to understand and appreciate the sensitivities of the debate. That's my main call. People will have different views on very different aspects of the issue but let's be reasonable and respectful and always understand that we want to embrace each other even though we might disagree with each other. And that's what my message is to the Victorians.

560 F: Her core value and her main point is to have trans women not use female bathrooms. Isn't that dehumanising behaviour?

JP: There is a discussion going on around the world and I'm not here today to go into a debate about those issues. International sports federations are grappling with this, schools are grappling with this. It's a very sensitive and complex discussion and I'm not going to allow it to be you know easily and politically talked about in these sorts of environments. They need careful consideration and people working through the communities, leaders, parents, families and children. What I would say is that it is really important for everybody who wants to engage in that debate to understand and appreciate the sensitivities of the debate. That's my main call. People will have different views on very different aspects of the issue but let's be reasonable and respectful and always understand that we want to embrace each other even though we might disagree with each other. And that's what my message is to the Victorians.

565 F: Her core value and her main point is to have trans women not use female bathrooms. Isn't that dehumanising behaviour?

JP: There is a discussion going on around the world and I'm not here today to go into a debate about those issues. International sports federations are grappling with this, schools are grappling with this. It's a very sensitive and complex discussion and I'm not going to allow it to be you know easily and politically talked about in these sorts of environments. They need careful consideration and people working through the communities, leaders, parents, families and children. What I would say is that it is really important for everybody who wants to engage in that debate to understand and appreciate the sensitivities of the debate. That's my main call. People will have different views on very different aspects of the issue but let's be reasonable and respectful and always understand that we want to embrace each other even though we might disagree with each other. And that's what my message is to the Victorians.

570 F: Her core value and her main point is to have trans women not use female bathrooms. Isn't that dehumanising behaviour?

JP: There is a discussion going on around the world and I'm not here today to go into a debate about those issues. International sports federations are grappling with this, schools are grappling with this. It's a very sensitive and complex discussion and I'm not going to allow it to be you know easily and politically talked about in these sorts of environments. They need careful consideration and people working through the communities, leaders, parents, families and children. What I would say is that it is really important for everybody who wants to engage in that debate to understand and appreciate the sensitivities of the debate. That's my main call. People will have different views on very different aspects of the issue but let's be reasonable and respectful and always understand that we want to embrace each other even though we might disagree with each other. And that's what my message is to the Victorians.

M: Labor spent the last two weeks talking about V/line tickets and attracting more Chinese and international students where you guys are talking about neo-Nazis. Can you understand the voters are agreeing with this [?]?

575 F: Her core value and her main point is to have trans women not use female bathrooms. Isn't that dehumanising behaviour?

JP: I'm committing to focusing on the needs of the Victorian people and dealt with this issue now. It needed to be dealt with and it's part of the values and principles that I offer as Victoria's alternative Premier that we are going to be inclusive welcoming and engaging. Yes we will be focusing on the Andrews' Labor government, it's corrupt it's incompetent and it's exhausting. It's out of ideas. We will be focusing on those and over the period as we lead up to the budget you'll see a lot from us on the scrutiny we're applying to the budget amongst other things. So we are focused on those issues but I've made a decision that it was important to deal with this issue deal with it now and not let it sit on the shelf. So I apologise if it's taken your attention off those issues but it was important to deal with this issue now and we have.

580 F: Her core value and her main point is to have trans women not use female bathrooms. Isn't that dehumanising behaviour?

JP: I'm committing to focusing on the needs of the Victorian people and dealt with this issue now. It needed to be dealt with and it's part of the values and principles that I offer as Victoria's alternative Premier that we are going to be inclusive welcoming and engaging. Yes we will be focusing on the Andrews' Labor government, it's corrupt it's incompetent and it's exhausting. It's out of ideas. We will be focusing on those and over the period as we lead up to the budget you'll see a lot from us on the scrutiny we're applying to the budget amongst other things. So we are focused on those issues but I've made a decision that it was important to deal with this issue deal with it now and not let it sit on the shelf. So I apologise if it's taken your attention off those issues but it was important to deal with this issue now and we have.

585 M: Is it exhausting to the Liberal Party to [?] remain days without [?] what issues we can and can't debate about and have freak issues crop up all the time? This is not a new phenomena. How do you actually reset and get the party as you've talked to the centre talked to the [?]? How do you actually do that because you know it's not happening.

590 JP: We've got to work methodically through it. So today marks a turning point. We had a really important discussion about the importance of teamwork, about being disciplined and being focused and having had that discussion after a long week and a very emotional meeting for many today my message to the party room which is behind me in terms of the outcome that came out my message to the party is we need to start doing cost of living, energy prices and energy security and supply, on integrity on governance of our State, on budget mismanagement. All of those things you will see us focus on and focus on energetically.

M: Do you think---

JP: Take one more?

DS: Yeah.

600 M: Just on that you mentioned well Gus mentioned Labor and the international students the first opportunity we've had to ask you about your thoughts on the Premier heading to China, what do you make of that and so share his view from your deputy that there needs to be more transparency around this trip and who the Premier is meeting given that we don't know that yet and [?].

605 JP: Look I, what David Southwick said yesterday is correct. I fully support any Victorian leader subject to consultation with the federal government and in particular the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade working on our operations particularly with our largest business partners for trade. But David's right. The Premier does need to show some transparency. Why is he going, who's he meeting with. Is it to build relationships made to [?] but is it to talk about Victoria's debt profile to companies based in China? Is it to talk to bondholders or our creditors? If so what are they talking about and why not bring the media. I have to say I was a little concerned to read the Premier thought it's not going to bring media because there are no picture opportunities. Well forgive me but I thought your job was to apply scrutiny and to ensure that there's transparency. So you're not there if you don't mind me saying, you're not there to accompany any Victorian leader on an international trade trip for pics. You're there for the facts. What's going on, why is he there, who's he meeting with? I don't object to this subject to conferring with DFAT and other federal authorities. Absolutely don't, we've gotta work on that. But it is totally unacceptable that the Premier should go there and not be upfront with the Victorian people about what he's going there for, what's he going to achieve, who he's meeting there. [?] question.

620 M: So do you commit if you're elected in 2026 that you will take, that you will apply or take the media with you on any overseas trade mission you may have and be transparent about who you're meeting?

JP: Yes to the latter part and to the former part I can say you won't be able to get rid of me. I'll be with you everywhere okay.

<overtalking>

625 F: Does Moira Deeming have to run her statement past you and any other media appearances that she does?

JP: Look I'm happy to say that we'll work together on that one.

F: So yes she has to run it past you?

JP: Yeah well we'll work together on that.

630 F: No, no does she have to run it past you or can she put it out by herself or do---

JP: I don't expect that to happen. I expect that there'll be some collaboration. There was a lot discussed at the meeting and we want to make sure that in terms of things I spoke about before growing in the job, learning about the importance of these things I think it's good to be working together at least on that to make sure the State does what it needs to do.

635 F: So there's no gag?

© MinterEllison

[?] word/s cannot be identified

... dialogue trails away

--- dialogue is interrupted

\* denotes interviewee speaking without use of the interpreter

ME\_222863251\_1

JP: That's not a gag.

M: Will she be moving [?] to stand up before the cameras?

JP: That will really be a matter for---

M: I mean would you encourage her to do that?

640 JP: Look I'm going to leave that to Moira.

M: [?]?

JP: Moira's not [?] in the party room as we speak.

*<overtalking>*

JP: She might have to run. If she wants to appear before then, then do what she dares.

645 F: The VEC---

JP: Thank you very much everybody.

F: [?] the VEC Commissioner if that's okay.

JP: Sorry?

650 F: The VEC Commissioner. He appeared at a parliamentary committee enquiry this morning essentially defending the VEC's decision to make referrals to IBAC over the [?] saga. I think I had this called [?]. Can you share some more sentiments?

JP: Look I've been tied up this morning so I haven't seen to investigate these evidence. I want to be satisfied that he acted appropriate. I'm not saying he didn't but I want to be satisfied he did so I'll be [?] I can certainly assure you of that. Thank you very...

655

**[End of recording]**