



Analysis / Politics

Why is Dan Andrews so popular? Allow us to introduce Victoria's opposition

With yet another IBAC report impugning yet another former Labor minister, why can't the Victorian Liberals make any headway?

CHARLIE LEWIS FEB 23, 2023 25

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MOIRA DEEMING (IMAGE: LIBERAL PARTY)

This week the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) investigation released a report that found [former Victorian Labor minister Theo Theophanous](#) “improperly” lobbied government ministers and public officials to support a developer’s failed proposal for a \$31 billion precinct in Melbourne’s outer south-west, while he was also on the board of the Victorian Planning Authority.

IBAC found that Theophanous’ daughter Kat’s ultimately successful campaign for Northcote benefited from donations from her father’s unregistered client. The company, the Australian Education City (AEC), made a \$10,000 donation to her state election campaign in 2018 and provided other in-kind donations.

The commission found no evidence to suggest she knew of the relationship between her father and the developer. Theophanous denies the allegations and a government spokeswoman insists the report “made



no adverse findings against any current or past government ministers or MPs”.

Still, it is yet another scandal for the pile.

The Andrews government in Victoria is relentlessly afflicted with scandal, one given to letting down its progressive voter base. And yet, coming to the end of a term during which it imposed one of the strictest lockdowns in the world, it still came out of November’s state election with an increased majority.



How is this possible? Allow us to introduce the Victorian opposition.

We’ve long catalogued its beautiful dysfunction, its leadership oscillations between someone no one had heard of and someone who people had heard of for almost exclusively bad reasons, its public disunity, and its interesting preoccupations and interesting people touted as future leadership material.

The past two weeks have raked all this to surface again — first through the public airing of a scathing report by party president Greg Mirabella, which argued former opposition leader Matthew Guy was so unpopular and the Liberals’ election campaign so negative that Victorians had no “reason or moral permission” to vote for them. Guy publicly shot back that Mirabella was “factional and juvenile” and that he should resign.

And then finally this week we got the maiden speech of Moira Deeming, a pulsing, radiating sign of



everything wrong with the party; parliamentary referred pain.

In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, Deeming announced what she was motivated by: winding back equality “taken to extremes”, picking up armfuls of culture war pointers — climate change, history and curriculum battles, COVID-19 restrictions, sex workers and abortion — and jamming them together like ill-fitting puzzle pieces:

“ The final straw which compelled me to challenge the government head-on was discovering that school policies and curriculums had been radically altered. Instead of being inspired by history’s heroes, students were being chastised and even told to stand up in class and apologise for historical crimes they had neither committed nor condoned. They were told that the physical world is on the brink of doom.

You may recall the party bravely expelled anti-abortion warrior Bernie Finn in the lead-up to the last state election, after Finn put out a series of posts “praying” for abortion to be banned in Australia following the US Supreme Court’s overturning of the *Roe v Wade* precedent. As an immediate demonstration of the party having learnt its lesson, it selected Deeming to take his place.

And it’s not as though the sentiments of the speech will shock anyone in the party.



The former Melton City councillor had attempted to gain preselection in the seat of Gorton in the last federal election, but was deemed “[too extreme](#)” for the liking of then prime minister Scott Morrison — yep, Morrison, who bet the house [on Katherine Deves](#), found Deeming’s views a bit alienating.

She had used her time as a councillor to move motions regarding single-sex bathrooms, and may have [breached COVID restrictions](#) to attend a “pro-life warriors” meeting with a leading anti-marriage equality voice [during the 2017 plebiscite](#), Karina Okotel.

Elsewhere in today’s *Crikey*, we delve into the newly revealed emails of her time on council. Her appointment caused the former occupant of the electorate she’s running for, Andrew Elsbury, to [quit the party altogether](#).

Victorian voters may want to get used to the idea that Dan Andrews may end up qualifying for [a second statue](#).

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Charlie Lewis pens *Crikey*’s Tips and Murmurs column and also writes on industrial relations, politics and culture. He previously worked across government and unions and was a researcher on



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Graeski 

🕒 1 year ago 


There's a lot not like about Vic Labor and, yes, they sometimes do things for their mates – but they occasionally do things for all Victorians too. Every time I drive over my new neighbourhood rail overpass, I have reason to thank the Andrews government for returning several hours per week of my life to me.

The level crossing removal project is something that would have never, never, NEVER got off the ground if left to the Libs. They are constitutionally incapable of doing something that benefits all of society as opposed to individuals within it – usually in proportion to those individuals' wealth.

If I designed Victoria's government it would bear little resemblance to the current one, yet for all of that, at least they get some stuff done. The Liberals are so far behind them that any sort of comparison is laughable.

↑ 35 ↓  Reply

MJM 

🕒 1 year ago 

... [the maiden speech](#) of Moira Deeming, a pulsing, radiating sign of everything wrong with the party....



Succinct summary.

↑ 20 ↓ [Reply](#)

Hmmm 

🕒 1 year ago [🔗](#)

A good thing she's out of the classroom!!

↑ 17 ↓ [Reply](#)

Frank Dee 

🕒 1 year ago [🔗](#)

At last, we have in Moira Deeming a righteous warrior fully prepared to take a stance against the ultimate horror of unisex toilets.

↑ 14 ↓ [Reply](#)

AP 7 

🕒 1 year ago [🔗](#)

It is an irony of history that the DLP, deftly puppeteered by B.A. Santamaria, wreaked havoc on the ALP's electoral chances for nearly a quarter of a century. The Party faded, Vatican 2 made inroads, despite the efforts of Opus Dei and George Pell, and the remnants and heirs began their long March into the Liberal party, the worm turned. Finn and Deeming are perfect examples of the process, as is Tony Abbott. Their vanguard is being joined by a cavalcade of other reactionary Christianist cranks. The white Protestant public school boys within the Party are struggling to hold the reins. Which is a shame, since they have so much to offer...

When others turn up offering a rational political option in which the wealthy might invest to protect their interests (hello Teals), the weird Liberal DLP hybrid of the poorly educated and bigoted is really in trouble. Should do ok in Aston, still has a large rump of older working class, poorly educated Catholics, who will tune themselves to 3AW and flock to the Party one more time. But in the wider 21st C world, havoc awaits.

↑ 14 ↓ [Reply](#)

Ohwellohwell 

🕒 1 year ago [🔗](#)

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Complete misreading of Aston which has more than its fair share of Evangelical and Pentecostal mega-churches. The highest cohort in the population are still of working age. Many people in that neck of the woods are concerned for the environment but it is possibly Scomo's tradie ute drivers that gets the Liberals in each time. They might not warm to Roshana Campbell though they would be readers of the Herald-Sun where her husband works and it will be no doubt be flogging her case day in and day out.

↑ 8 ↓ [Reply](#)

AP 7 

🕒 1 year ago


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Fair enough points and thanks for fleshing out the profile. I did say rump not majority. I see them as having been Liberal ballast in Aston and Deakin for many decades. Do take your points though re evangelicals etc. Other demographics doubtless shifting as well, including in diversity, youth and education level. All likely negatives for the Libs. Though who can successfully leverage housing and youth may be a contest.

↑ 6 ↓ [Reply](#)

Drew 

🕒 1 year ago 

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With the same Evangelical and Pentecostal mega-churches, with much media platforming &/or passivity, mainstreaming the imported US culture wars, that are implicit.....

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