



## Victorian politics

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# Victorian Liberals have 'no plans' to change abortion laws despite MP's claims, leader says

John Pesutto refused to condemn Moira Deeming over speech and comments contained in emails released under FoI

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## Benita Kolovos

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Victoria's opposition leader, John Pesutto, says he has no plans to make changes to the state's laws on abortion or its ban on gay conversion practices, but has refused to condemn a [Liberal party](#) MP's views on the issues.

Moira Deeming on Tuesday gave her maiden speech to parliament's upper house, in which she called for an inquiry into transition practices in [Victoria](#) and railed against Covid-19 restrictions, Safe Schools, sex work regulations and measures to include trans women in female-only change rooms and sports.

The speech was followed on Wednesday night by [the release of hundreds of the former Melton city councillor's emails obtained through a freedom of information request](#) by advocacy group Sex Work Law Reform Victoria.

The emails, from Deeming's council email address, detail her successful pitch for preselection for the western metropolitan region upper house seat.

In a speech purportedly contained in her emails but does not mention her by name, she is described as someone who can "attract funding".

"My work in the media and on council has attracted proven, long term financial backers who are already known to many in the Liberal Party. To date they have raised almost \$1.5m for the party," the document reads.

The document then includes what it describes as an excerpt from a donor's letter promising to donate a "minimum of \$100,000 to the state secretariat" and to pay for printing of Liberal materials - but only if Deeming is preselected.

In another speech that also doesn't name Deeming, her preselection is characterised as an act of divine intervention.

"I did not win on merit, I did not win because I was popular in the party, I did not win by being a part of a faction. I won because God arranged it, and because Christians joined up and voted according to their consciences," the speech read.

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In response to questions about the contents of the emails, Deeming declined to say if she authored the speeches.

The emails also show the extent of Deeming's campaigning against sex work and opposition to the transgender community while a councillor.

Asked if he condemned Deeming's views on Thursday, Pesutto said he did not agree with them.

"I'm progressive, I'm modern, I'm inclusive, I love everybody and want everybody to have opportunities in our great state," he told reporters.

"I say this to every Victorian, the Liberal party I lead is one that wants to be a voice for everyone."

Pesutto said he didn't support Deeming's push to hold an inquiry into transition practices and had "no plans" to change the state's laws banning gay conversion practices.

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“We supported the legislation at the time and that matter has been settled,” he said.

He also ruled out changes to abortion laws.

Pesutto said he had spoken to Deeming about “working as a team”.

“I’ve had some good discussions with her today and I think she understands the importance of us working as a team, and I look forward to having further discussions in the future,” he said.

He said he hadn’t read all of the FoI documents but did not believe Deeming’s suggestion she could attract a \$100,000 donation was akin to buying her seat.

The Andrews government used question time on Thursday to spruik its record on LGBTQ+ issues and its support for the transgender community.

“Our support for the trans community is not negotiable and settled,” the premier said.

“We will not weaponise these issues to make challenging times and challenging experiences all the more difficult.”

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