

Politics Victoria [Liberal Party](#)

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Deeming vows to fight move to expel her from party room

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Liberal MP Moira Deeming has vowed to fight her expulsion from the party room in a vote that MPs are billing as a major test for leader John Pesutto.

Pesutto, who was elected state Liberal leader in December by a margin of one vote, said he was confident his expulsion motion would receive majority support in the party room following Deeming's attendance at an anti-trans rights rally that was crashed by neo-Nazis.



Moira Deeming speaking at the anti-trans rights rally at Parliament House on Saturday. [YOUTUBE](#)

The Age spoke to a dozen Liberal MPs on Monday, most of whom expected Deeming to be expelled when the 31 members of the parliamentary party consider the motion, but some said

they were undecided on how to vote.

The party's leadership team has compiled a dossier on Deeming that they believe will convince the undecided Liberals to expel the upper house MP when the vote takes place next Monday. Pesutto said the party needed to "take these strong, decisive steps to show that we will never support and that we will always oppose anything that is hateful or liable to incite".

One Liberal MP, commenting on the condition of anonymity, described the situation as a "proxy leadership vote" for Pesutto, while another said they would be supporting the motion because they did not want to "hang the leader out to dry" just three months into the job.



Opposition Leader John Pesutto announced he would move to expel Moira Deeming from the party room.
SIMON SCHLUTER

Deeming said she was blindsided by the party leadership's move to expel her and was attempting to unite supporters behind her on a freedom-of-speech platform.

She condemned the men who performed Nazi salutes on the steps of the state parliament at the Let Women Speak rally on Saturday that was organised by British anti-trans rights campaigner Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull.

"I intend to fight the unjust motion to expel me from the parliamentary Liberal Party," she said in a statement. "I condemn the actions of the masked men in black who were later identified as neo-Nazis, who gate-crashed the Let Women Speak event."

Pesutto moved against Deeming for promoting the event and attending a post-rally karaoke night with the organiser, who, he argues, has shared platforms with white supremacists. In an

interview with a far-right media outlet on Sunday, Keen-Minshull threatened Pesutto with a defamation claim.

About 20 people from neo-Nazi group the National Socialist Network attended to support Keen-Minshull, held up a sign with offensive anti-trans language and repeatedly performed Nazi salutes, prompting the government to [strengthen its anti-vilification laws](#).

On Monday, Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes condemned the behaviour at the protest as “disgraceful and cowardly”, and confirmed the government would expand its legislation banning Nazi symbols to include the Nazi salute. Symes said this would probably take months. The Liberal Party has been at a crossroads over social issues as it struggles to bridge the internal divide between its socially liberal and conservative members, and bring the party back to the centre of mainstream Australia.

After wresting the leadership late last year by one vote, Pesutto vowed to appeal to modern Victoria and lead an inclusive Liberal Party that, “no matter what your background, the Liberal Party I lead will always be a voice for you”.



Moira Deeming with activist Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull. TWITTER

Deeming last year won preselection for a safe spot on the Western Metropolitan Region upper house ticket, with the backing of the “Moderate” faction of the Liberal Party.

Her views on transgender rights have been well canvassed since her preselection, but Deeming insisted on Monday that the values espoused at the Let Women Speak event were mainstream and global.

She said she was horrified to see masked men inside the buffer zone, and thought they were going to attack her, adding she “completely rejected” the beliefs of the National Socialist Network.

“While attending an event focused on women’s rights, a small minority hijacked the top of Bourke and Spring St and performed the infamous salute that tarnished the good intentions of the majority. Our shared Liberal traditions ensure robust freedom of thought and speech in our pluralist society but not at the cost of public order and/or an incitement to violence such as this.”

Deeming claimed counter-protesters supporting trans rights were themselves violent and condemned the “extreme left”.

“The Let Women Speak event saw a number of women injured by the extreme left counterprotesters who infiltrated the event,” she said in a statement.

There are Liberal MPs who, on principle, oppose the move to expel her, saying Deeming is entitled to her views as long as she expresses them respectfully. They said they had not seen any evidence that directly tied her to neo-Nazis.

Several federal MPs told *The Age* there was a frantic text exchange on Sunday night, with some MPs fearful the expulsion motion would cause a distraction from the Aston byelection and could hurt the party’s chances of holding the conservative outer-suburban seat.

But others say expelling Deeming would be a “line in the sand moment” to be an inclusive and reasonable party of government.

The leadership team – made up of Pesutto, David Southwick, Georgie Crozier and Matt Bach – were incensed by Deeming’s actions before, during and after the rally, particularly her failure to leave once neo-Nazis arrived, and later celebrating with rally organisers and participating in conversations in which Keen-Minshull devolved into conspiracy theories about the identities of the men.

Pesutto said Keen-Minshull had previously shared platforms with white supremacists and Deeming should have been aware of those associations. Her planned expulsion, he said, was not about restricting free speech, but denouncing the actions of a Liberal MP who associated with people whose views were “abhorrent” to his, the party’s and the wider community’s values.

“Moir Deeming has had an association with people to organise the rally along with her assistance, who have shared platforms with viewpoints with people who promote Nazi views or sympathies. That’s the first thing. Second, Ms Deeming stayed at the rally when the Nazis arrived. Thirdly, having seen the ugly scenes and having had an opportunity to disown and dissociate from those very people, Ms Deeming chose to celebrate [with organisers], as evidenced on social media,” Pesutto said.

He said he was not aware of Deeming’s promotion of the event until it took place, even though she had promoted it in parliament and on social media. She also addressed the rally on Saturday.

A source close to Deeming said she believed her potential expulsion was because of her anti-trans views, rather than any perceived associations with neo-Nazis, and that she has no interest in joining another party.

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