

Transcript of Deputy Leader of the Opposition David Southwick statement

Parties: David Southwick (DS), Unidentified (U)

- 5 DS: So the government has effectively cut a \$2.7 billion cheque to Metro to effectively do what they like. It's a blank cheque to look at upgrading and maintaining the network without any oversight. This is a bit like somebody building a house and not having a contract. It's just not good enough for Daniel Andrews to go out with a hard hat and high viz and cut ribbons on his big bill when we know we have big issues with the infrastructure of our basic network, getting the network right.
- 10 We know that certainly in terms of reliability and punctuality, the network's not meeting that for Victorians. Victorians are struggling to get home on time because of punctuality and reliability targets. The government needs to get the basics right and the Auditor General's report is very damning to show between 2017 and 2022 the government have failed to actually deliver and Metro have failed to deliver on those basic targets. There is no measure on a plan. It's a plan with no detail and to have a situation where people are not able to have the basic infrastructure for the 15 rail networks right is a failure of the system. We've got to have a plan and Metro needs to have proper accountability. You can't have a situation where the government cuts a cheque to Melbourne Metro to deliver up a project and not have the proper oversight and that's what the government needs to do going forward when it comes to delivering on our transport system.
- 20 In terms of yesterday, can I say how disappointed, upset and angry what we saw on the steps of Parliament made me feel yesterday. This is a blight on Victoria when we have a situation of Nazis standing and effectively Nazi saluting on the steps of Parliament House. It's really unacceptable for that to happen. Today we're in Elsternwick in, where the largest Jewish community reside. Across the road we have In One Voice which is the largest Jewish community festival celebrating life within the southern hemisphere and we have Nazis trying to end life on the steps of Parliament. It is unacceptable and Victoria Police need whatever powers they need to ensure that those Nazi sympathizers do not get away with what they have yesterday and we don't have a repeat of what we saw yesterday happen again in Victoria.
- 30 We celebrate multiculturalism and we celebrate diversity. That's what, who we are, that's what we're about and we just can't have this type of behaviour. It's unacceptable, it's sad and unfortunately it's also unsafe. For me, if this isn't something that is absolutely very, very scary for everybody. We have the largest population of Holocaust survivors here in Caulfield and the last thing that they want to be confronted with is Nazis saluting, Heil Hitler salutes and goose - stepping outside the front of Parliament House. It's got to stop, we've got to have the laws and whether it's a change of police laws, whether it is more resources or more training for Victoria Police, we will stand, the Liberal Nationals will stand side by side with the government to ensure that the police have the powers that they need to ensure that there are consequences for those people that actually behave in this way.
- 35
- 40 U: Do you think it was good enough yesterday that the police were there just to simply keep the peace and manage the crowd? Should they have done more? I mean the behaviour was offensive that they could do...
- 45 DS: I was really disappointed with yesterday and what happened. I think that most Victorians looking at that footage would have expected more if it is a situation and I know Wayne Gatt out from the Police Association also really disappointed with what happened. We've got to give police whatever powers that are needed to ensure that there are consequences. If people behave in this way they need to understand that there are effectively laws to, and ramifications for doing this and we work very closely along with the government on banning the Nazi swastika and I think we've already seen a reduction of that symbol being used but these guys are no better. Quite frankly this is incitement of hate and violence. This is quite frankly worse than a flag. If somebody is using an act like they do of saluting a Hitler, Heil Hitler salute, goosestepping outside the front of Parliament House, that is offensive, that is inciting hate and violence and we need the laws to protect those people from this kind of outrageous behaviour.
- 50

55 U: A member of your own party, Moira Deeming was there, she was supporting the anti-trans movement, the neo Nazis say they were there aligned with that movement, what do you make of that, do you support the [?]

60 DS: Yeah, look, I've had some initial discussion with Moira and I'll have more. I'm told that many of those that were at the protest yesterday also felt very unsafe from these neo-Nazis. At the end of the day, I think those neo-Nazis, it's one step, one thing about protesting, it's one thing about inciting hate and that's what those protestors were doing yesterday and quite frankly it's unacceptable and no one should be allowed to do what those neo-Nazis did yesterday on the steps of the Parliament House.

65 U: Do you think its appropriate that the Liberal Party member was there supporting the anti-trans movement?

70 DS: Well, her views are not my views and I don't think the views of the Liberal Party and most of mainstream Victoria but she has a right to her views and at the end of the day, it is one thing about expressing those views and expressing them peacefully but those neo-Nazis, they're the focus for me and that's where the laws need to be there to ensure that those people who behave that way, that there are consequences for that behaviour.

75 U: Do you know if there's any internal discussions in terms of her being appropriate to continue as a Member of Parliament?

80 DS: Look, we'll have discussion with Moira, that's all I'll say. We were all very, very disappointed with what we saw yesterday and particularly with the neo-Nazi behaviour. It's unacceptable. People have a right to protest. No one has the right to incite hatred and violence like those neo-Nazis did yesterday.

85 U: Don't you agree, it seems to have, I guess have linked the anti-trans rally with, I guess you know, inciting hatred in terms of the nazi salute. Do you see the link that he's making there [?]

90 DS: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I mean we're standing here where Nazis targeted Jews but they target those from LGBTI communities and that's very much where these people are at. Anybody from any other background other than white is who these Nazis target and we've got to protect everybody including those from the LGBTI community and I think, and we saw what those neo-Nazis, the signs that they were holding up and the horrific language that they were using, that's appalling. No one should be called that. We have a fantastic inclusive society in Victoria. We celebrate diversity inclusion. We had the multicultural dinner last night with thousands of people attending from all different communities. That's what we're all about. That's who Victorians are. That's what Victorians are and that's what make us so different and we've got to ensure that we harness that and that's not easy. The multicultural and diverse nature of Victoria is something that we all work very, very hard to protect and when those that seek to damage it, we've got to call that out and ensure that there are laws to protect those people against those people from behaving that way.

95 U: In terms of broadening those laws and the anti-swastika laws to improve the [?] is that the right course of action or is there some other course of action that's [?]

100 DS: Yeah look, I think our general hate laws, I've always been told that the bar has been very, very high to get a prosecution so police have not wanted to go down that path because quite frankly a lot of people get off and that's why we were very prescriptive in the Nazi swastika ban. I don't think we want to get a situation where we have to ban each and everything, we've got to look at behaviour and whether behaviour is acceptable or not. That behaviour yesterday was unacceptable. It was incitement. Incitement is against the law. Incitement of hate is against the law and I think that's where we need to be. We need to look at these behavioural actions of individuals. When they incite hate and violence, there needs to be consequences and the laws, they need to change more broadly to include more issues around that incitement of hate and violence, that's where we need to go. These people's behaviour, that's what we need to call out and we need to protect those Victorians that want to go about their daily life from those people that behave in this particular way.

U: Did police fail the public yesterday?

105 DS: I think we all failed quite frankly. I think it was a failure that we don't have, we don't have a system that actually has the consequences. We're certainly a lot better than so many other places but we can't stand on our laurels. You know the fact that we were one of the first to ban the Nazi swastika, I'm very proud of that but we've got to do whatever we possibly can to ensure people are safe and at the end of the day, I don't think most people would have felt safe yesterday having

110 Nazis parade outside the front and on the steps of Parliament House. Here behind us we've got people celebrating Jewish life and we've got Nazis that want to end Jewish life and end the life of anybody that they don't agree with and that's effectively white supremacy that has no place here in Victoria.

U: Have you heard from members of the community, like how are they feeling?

115 DS: Oh I mean, I've had people contact me today in tears, absolutely in tears. No one could believe the footage existed. We thought it was made up. I mean to see the way that they choreographed their march on the steps of Parliament and stood on the steps of Parliament is just horrific. It's horrific. You know, people escaped Nazi Germany for a better life and they have found a better life here in Victoria. They don't need to be reminded of the past by having these fringe

120 anti-Semites neo-Nazis effectively behave in this poor manner that they did yesterday.

[End of recording]