



Victorian politics

🕒 This article is more than 2 years old

'Out of step': Victoria's first openly gay MP slams Liberal party leadership over Moira Deeming preselection

Former Liberal MP Andrew Olexander says he is 'angered' and 'disappointed' with party

[Follow our live blog for the latest updates](#)

Get our [free news app](#), [morning email briefing](#) and [daily news podcast](#)

Benita Kolovos

Thu 28 Jul 2022 03.30 AEST

Victoria's first openly gay state MP has slammed the leader of his former party, Matthew Guy, for failing to condemn a newly preselected Liberal candidate who has a history of attacking transgender rights.

Moira Deeming, a teacher and Melton councillor, was [preselected at the weekend](#) to replace the [outspoken upper house MP Bernie Finn](#) ahead of the November state election.

[In a 2020 interview](#), Deeming described [Victoria's Safe Schools program](#) as created by "pedophilia apologists", claimed teachers were actively trying to change

children's gender and sexual identity and criticised initiatives aimed at celebrating gay and transgender students, saying they were "teaching them to be really narcissistic".

Deeming also said [she was "very disappointed" in changes to the law in Victoria](#) which allow transgender people to change the sex on their birth certificate without having to undergo reassignment surgery, as well as the recent ban on conversion practice.

Asked about Deeming's comments on Wednesday, Guy told reporters: "I didn't see those and she certainly hasn't made those comments as a candidate.

"I'll make sure that any of my candidates and MPs have respectful comments on any of these issues. That's what we're focused on. People want to have discussions and debates, sure, but they must be respectful," he said.

Andrew Olexander, who was the first openly gay MP in Victorian parliament when he was elected to represent the [Liberal party](#) in the upper house in 1999, said Guy had the opportunity to condemn Deeming's views.

"I'm not surprised he didn't, given my understanding of what the Liberal party in Victoria has become, but I'm deeply angered and so very disappointed," he told Guardian Australia.

"I feel that the preselection of Ms Deeming is confirmation that the party is completely out of step with modern, progressive values here in Victoria."


Olexander likened Deeming's views to those of [Katherine Deves, the Liberal party's federal candidate for Warringah](#), who became a lightning rod for criticism over her comments about transgender people.

"In many respects it's worse than what Katherine Deves said about trans women in sports, because what Ms Deeming is doing is blaming the victim - and the victims here are schoolchildren," he said.

"She's blaming gay and trans kids for not being liked. She's calling them narcissistic. It's outrageous."

[Sign up to receive an email with the top stories from Guardian Australia every morning](#)

Sign up to receive the top stories from Guardian Australia every morning

 Enter your email address

Sign up

We operate Google reCAPTCHA to protect our website and the Google

Olexander was expelled from the Liberals in 2005, after he publicly spoke out against the party, describing it as [run by homophobic extremists who were trying to purge it of moderates](#).

At the time, he had lost Liberal endorsement after being involved in a drink-driving crash the previous year. Olexander has since worked on the Greens leader Adam Bandt's 2010 campaign and assisted in the drafting of LGBTQ+ policy for the [newly elected independent MP for Goldstein, Zoe Daniel](#).

He denies his comments - both in 2005 and now - were retaliation for being dumped by the party.

"I stand by what I said then and I would argue that it's actually gotten worse. The Liberal party has been taken over by religious fundamentalists, extreme conservatives and conspiracy theorists, similar to the Republicans in the US," Olexander said.

"The ordinary Liberal voter out there is seeing the Liberal party moving further and further to the right and not representing them and what they believe in. It's little wonder we saw seats like Goldstein and Kooyong go to the teals [independents] and Higgins to Labor [at the May federal election]."

Quick Guide

How to get the latest news from Guardian Australia

Show

He put some of the blame on the branches, who he said consisted of older, more conservative Liberals.

Tony Barry, a former senior Liberal staffer who is now with political consulting outfit RedBridge, agreed, pointing to previous failed attempts by Liberal leaders to sway the result of preselections.

In 2014, the then premier Denis Napthine wrote to every local branch member pleading with them to vote for cabinet minister Mary Wooldridge for the seat of Kew. She lost to Tim Smith.

He urged branch members to be more responsible.

"Branch members should know better than to preselect a candidate like Moira Deeming," Barry said.

"It is not the first time they've given the leadership team a club-shit-sandwich, and then they'll be the first ones to complain if we lose and blame everyone but themselves."

The Victorian minister for equality, Harriet Shing, has called on Guy, and her opposition counterpart, James Newbury, to publicly condemn Deeming's views.

"It is the height of hypocrisy that so-called LGBTIQ+ allies like Matthew Guy and James Newbury refuse to condemn the Liberal candidate's vile, targeted and vicious attacks on already marginalised Victorians," Shing said.

“If Matthew Guy is not prepared to oppose his candidate’s constant attacks on LGBTIQ+ people then he is no ally - he’s just part of the problem.”

This article was amended on 29 July 2022 to clarify the role Andrew Olexander had in the development of Zoe Daniel’s LGBTQ+ policy.

In Australia, the national counselling and referral service for LGBTIQ+ people, [QLife](#), is 1800 184 527. The crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. In the UK, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123. Other international suicide helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](#)

Most viewed