



Victoria

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Daniel Andrews says Nazis 'aren't welcome' as Victorian government considers 'further action' following salutes

Comments follow protests in which anti-transgender activists performed Nazi salutes on the steps of the Victorian state parliament

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Victorian premier Daniel Andrews has said the human rights of trans people are “not negotiable” and that “Nazis aren't welcome” after a group performed the Nazi salute on the steps of the state's parliament on Saturday.

Anti-transgender activists clashed with pro-transgender rights activists outside state parliament on Saturday after an event held by controversial UK gender activist Kellie-Jay Keen. A group of men from the Nationalist Socialist Network marched along Spring Street, repeatedly performing the Nazi salute.

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Victoria police said they made three arrests over the protests, which it said involved at least six groups. A 22-year-old man was arrested for allegedly putting a female officer in a headlock, and a 23-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly slapping a police officer on the neck. Neither police officer was injured.

The third person was arrested for unlawful assault. Police said they will review CCTV, body-worn camera and social media footage to determine if further offences occurred.

On Sunday, Andrews said anti-transgender activists “gathered to spread hate”.

“I wish it didn’t have to be said, but clearly it does: Nazis aren’t welcome. Not on parliament’s steps. Not anywhere,” he said on Twitter. “They were there to say the trans community don’t deserve rights, safety or dignity ... their evil ideology is to scapegoat minorities - and it’s got no place here.”

Deputy premier Jacinta Allan on Sunday said the government would consider “further action” to address the behaviour of protesters who performed Nazi salutes.

“Victorians, clearly, have demonstrated that they don’t have any tolerance for this sort of behaviour. The government has absolutely no tolerance for this sort of behaviour,” she said.

Police said some of the groups failed to engage with police in the lead-up to the protest, or altered their plans without notice, resulting in the “potential for multiple clashes between the opposing groups”.

“Consequently, officers were required to form many lines between the different groups to protect the safety of all involved, stop breaches of the peace and prevent any physical violence,” police said in the statement.

Deputy opposition leader David Southwick said there may be a need for legislative change to better respond to inciting of hatred.

Pressed on the attendance of first-term Liberal MP [Moira Deeming](#) at the anti-transgender event, Southwick said “her views are not my views”.

“We’ll have discussions with Moira,” he said.

Deeming - who spoke against gender affirmation practices for transgender people in parliament last month - spoke at the Let Women Speak event that was led by Keen, who is touring Australia.

Deeming has been contacted for comment.

Keen’s events in Sydney and Adelaide this week were met with clashes between anti- and pro-trans rights activists. Keen is due to travel to Hobart on Tuesday and Canberra on Thursday before heading to New Zealand.



📷 Trans rights supporters during a rally on Saturday outside the Victorian parliament. Photograph: AAP

In January, federal Queensland Greens MP Stephen Bates wrote to Australia’s immigration minister asking him to revoke Keen’s visa, arguing she posed a “significant risk” to members of the transgender and gender-diverse community.

Federal Labor MP Josh Burns on Saturday called for “tougher laws” to be considered, saying the “brazen marching with neo-Nazi salutes in front of the Victorian parliament is unacceptable”.

Victorian’s multicultural affairs minister Colin Brooks said on Sunday the state needed a “broader suite of legislation” that dealt with the motivations behind actions. He said police were in a “difficult situation” due to dealing with “counter protests taking place”.

Last year, Victoria became the first Australian jurisdiction to [ban the public display of the Nazi swastika](#).

Queensland last week vowed to [make it illegal to display Nazi swastika tattoos](#) as part of its ban on hate symbols that it says will be among the strongest in the country.

With AAP

This story was amended on 20 March 2023. The group involved in the protest at parliament house was from the National Socialist Network, not the National Socialist Movement, which is a separate and unrelated group.

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