

Statement from the Leader of the Opposition



Friday, 17 May 2024

Kellie-Jay Keen and Angela Jones are passionate women's rights activists with long histories of advocacy in Australia and internationally. I agree with them that genuine community concerns regarding women's safety and access to single-sex spaces, services and sport warrant meaningful public discussion.

I strongly believe in the inherent dignity and worth of all people, as expressed in the Liberal Party's We Believe statement and Platform. A Liberal Party I lead will never tolerate hateful and divisive rhetoric, nor abide by Neo-Nazism, white supremacy or other extremist ideologies.

I also believe that all public figures have a responsibility to denounce such extremism in all its forms. I do not believe that it is appropriate to knowingly associate or share platforms with individuals who hold or express these extremist views. I also believe that there is no room to be blithe or cavalier in the face of Neo-Nazism.

I have never believed or intended to assert that Kellie-Jay Keen and Angela Jones are Neo-Nazis. It is also now clear from public statements made by Ms Keen and Ms Jones that they share my belief that Nazism is odious and contemptible.

People engaged in robust public debate do not always have the ability to express themselves perfectly. This is one reason that we should give those we may disagree with some benefit of the doubt.

I recognise that there have been times when my comments could have more clearly differentiated between the organisers of the 18 March 2023 Let Women Speak Rally and the Neo-Nazis who attended the steps of Parliament House on that day.

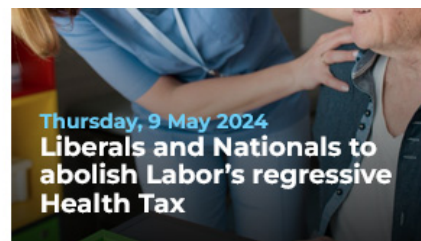
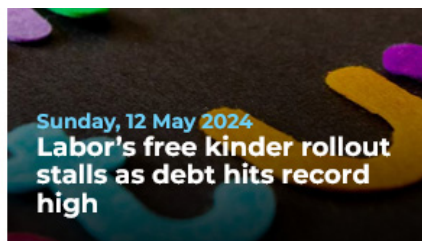
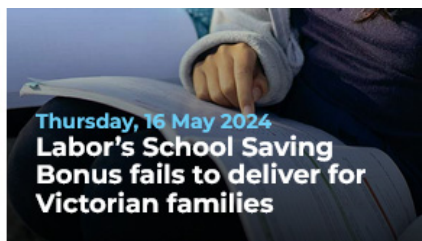
It has never been my intention to convey that I believed Ms Keen and Ms Jones to be Neo-Nazis, or that they were members of Neo-Nazi groups. As far as my comments may have been misunderstood as conveying that I believed this to be the case, I apologise for any hurt, distress or harm that has occurred.

I also implore all participants in public debate, including online, to behave with respect and decency towards others. I condemn the use of threats, intimidation and abusive language, particularly misogynistic, vile and explicit language that has no place in our society.

I reiterate my condemnation of the Neo-Nazis who attended the steps of Parliament House on 18 March 2023. There is a place for meaningful and sincere public discussion of women's safety and women's rights, but there is no place for Neo-Nazis in Victoria or the Victorian Liberal Party.

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