

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Extremism in Victoria

Melbourne—Tuesday, 14 June 2022

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WITNESS (*via videoconference*)

Mr Michael Stanton, President, Liberty Victoria.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into Extremism in Victoria. All mobile phones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to begin by respectfully acknowledging the traditional custodians of the Wurundjeri land we are gathered on today. I am joining from Wurundjeri land and pay my respects to First Nations lands that we are variously meeting from at this online meeting. I pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families past and present and Aboriginal elders of other communities who may be here today.

By way of introduction, I am Dr Samantha Ratnam. I will be chairing these hearings today. I am joined by Deputy Chair, Ms Nina Taylor, and Ms Cathrine Burnett-Wake, and we do have other committee members who will be joining us likely later on during these hearings.

By way of explanation around parliamentary privilege and the Hansard transcript, all evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will be ultimately made public and published on the committee's website. For the Hansard record can you please state your name and your organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

Mr STANTON: My name is Michael Stanton, and I am the President of Liberty Victoria.

The CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Stanton. It is a pleasure to have you joining the hearings today, and we look forward to your evidence and thank you for your submission on behalf of your organisation. I would like now to invite you to make an opening statement of up to 10 minutes, after which the committee would love to ask you some further questions. So over to you, Mr Stanton.

Mr STANTON: Thank you very much. I would like to thank the committee for inviting me to speak today. I would also like to acknowledge country. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners from where I am connecting, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, pay my respect to their elders past and present and pay my respect to any First Nations people that are logging on today, and I acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

If I can just begin by providing a brief background in relation to Liberty Victoria. Liberty Victoria is also known as the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties. We trace our origins back to 1936 and we are dedicated to the protection and promotion of civil liberties and human rights. We have committee members from across the political spectrum, and that includes, for example, late Liberal senator for Victoria Alan Missen, who took a stand on principle and crossed the floor regarding the proposed prohibition of the Communist Party. At the outset I note that that is particularly relevant when we are considering today what might be described as 'dangerous ideologies'. He famously said:

Have we so little faith in our ability to defeat Communism in a free encounter that we must employ totalitarian methods against them?

I would ask a similar question in relation to extremist ideologies, whether religious extremism or far-right extremism.

By way of introduction I would like to ask a few questions. How have we got to a place where in our community we have a large group of young white men making Nazi salutes in the Grampians? How have we got to a place where the Australian mass murderer who perpetrated the Christchurch mosque shooting on 15 March 2019 and killed 51 people was in communication with far-right extremists in Victoria? How have we got to a place where there are gallows erected outside Parliament? Is there a link between any of these things, and if so, what do we do about it?

The emergence of far-right extremism is real, but we must be careful that we do not respond in a way that expands executive power, surveillance and censorship. We need to repair faith in our institutions, in government and in the media. We need to address social isolation, growing economic insecurity, racist scapegoating and echo chambers that drive people towards extremist groups. I would also like to begin with a quote. It is slightly lengthy, but if you would just bear with me. It is this:

In an ever-changing, incomprehensible world the masses had reached the point where they would, at the same time, believe everything and nothing, think that everything was possible and that nothing was true ... Mass propaganda discovered that its audience was ready at all times to believe the worst, no matter how absurd, and did not particularly object to being deceived because it held every statement to be a lie anyhow. The totalitarian mass leaders based their propaganda on the correct psychological assumption that, under such conditions, one could make people believe the most fantastic statements one day, and trust that if the next day they were given irrefutable proof of their falsehood, they would take refuge in cynicism; instead of deserting the leaders who had lied to them, they would protest that they had known all along that the statement was a lie and would admire the leaders for their superior tactical cleverness.

Now, that is not about the 6 January attack on the Capitol in the United States; it is from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt.

We need to be conscious of the lessons of history about the danger of demagogues and extremism, those who would foster extremism, usually involving the scapegoating of another that people can blame for the conditions of their life. They also demonstrate that this is not a new problem. It has been a problem in Australia that we have been dealing with since the 1930s and the emergence of the Australia First movement. What is new, however, is the internet, which is an incredible technological advancement that promises so much, but it has also allowed the creation of echo chambers for people to gravitate to like-minded people where they would not have previously been able to speak so openly in the town square.

In response to far-right extremism, though, we need to be very careful about—again, a lesson from history—the expansion of executive power, the expansion of censorship and the expansion of surveillance. Since September 11, 2001, we have responded with a succession of draconian legislative responses to the threat of terrorism. Tranche upon tranche of legislation, mostly at a federal level, have been introduced and passed. We now have control orders, controlled undercover operations, mandatory sentencing, post-sentence detention and supervision, citizenship-stripping laws, increased surveillance, data interruption and modification laws.

The question all that raises is: are we safer? We have a political response that understandably focuses on risk. In Victoria we now have the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Amendment Act 2021*, but again: are we safer? There is a real risk here that in the diminishing foundational legal norms we are eroding the rule of law in Victoria and in the commonwealth of Australia, and paradoxically that achieves one of the aims of those who want to undermine our democracy in the first place.

We need to make sure that in responding to those confronting scenes in the Grampians, whether it be Nazi salutes or the display of a swastika or the erection of gallows outside Parliament, we do not have a legislative response that throws the baby out with the bathwater. Sometimes that involves tolerating speech that we find offensive or humiliating—and I am reminded of John Howard, who famously of course introduced gun control but also strongly opposed flag burning becoming a criminal offence, despite pressure from his own backbench. He said that while repugnant to him, the act was clearly free speech and that a law prohibiting such conduct would not give rise to greater respect for the flag.

Now, I am not suggesting that we should not prohibit forms of hate speech. We do currently, and it is powerfully demonstrated by the case of *Cottrell v. Ross* in the County Court and the application of section 25 of the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act*. But it is a careful balance, as identified by Chief Judge Kidd in that case, that must be struck between balancing people's right to live without discrimination and be free from invasions of privacy and hateful speech and freedom of expression. And that is a challenge that you all face in legislating in this area. At Liberty Victoria we are very concerned about mission creep. We are very concerned that new powers are introduced, and granted, to the executive. They are justified in the worst cases and then are expanded out to become normalised across other categories of cases. We have seen that, for example, with post-sentence supervision and detention orders in Victoria that initially were purported to apply to the worst of the worst sexual offenders and then now have been rolled out to apply to some categories of violence offences, where people even after they have served the sentence imposed by the judge or magistrate as the independent umpire can find themselves detained post-sentence or subject to very arduous supervision orders. At the same time the threshold for making those orders has been significantly reduced. There is a real risk that in responding

to what understandably is the concern of extremism and particularly far-right extremism norms will again be broken and then these powers will be expanded in other categories of cases and affect more Victorians.

Our concern as an organisation is also that some of these responses are based on a myth that there is an inevitable conveyor belt from exposure to extremist ideology to radicalisation and then to engaging in violence. The research is clear that an infinitesimally small number of people who are exposed to extremist material—and unfortunately we are exposed to it almost daily—will then radicalise and then will engage in violence. Some of the legislative responses cast the net incredibly wide in circumstances where risk assessment methodology is flawed, and that has been recognised by the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Fardon’s case and also by Justice Kirby in Fardon’s case.

The real issue here is: when we want to stop violence, are we really casting the net so wide that we want to stop people being exposed to any form of extremist ideology, and what are the consequences of that in relation to free speech, in relation to privacy? And what powers are we willing to tolerate as a society in relation to increasing surveillance, in relation to increasing censorship? In our view, Parliament needs to be very careful that despite the laudable aims of wanting to address the emergence of far-right extremism it does not result in casting the net too wide, and the focus should be on those people who are directly likely to be engaged in committing violent acts. To cast the net more broadly risks increasing stigmatisation, the kind of stigmatisation faced by the Muslim community or parts of the Muslim community in Australia for almost two decades now, and risks being counterproductive. As Conor Gearty said, and I will finish with this—he is a professor of human rights and co-founder of Matrix Chambers in London:

The danger of the counter-terrorism discourse is that it leads to a collapse of all these tensions in the direction of security and away from civil liberties. A tranquil state that is rooted in fear is not a free society.

In Liberty Victoria’s view, whilst the threat posed by far-right extremists is real and perhaps has been magnified during COVID-19, we must be very, very careful that we do not encroach on our fundamental civil liberties and human rights.

The CHAIR: Fantastic. Thank you so much, Mr Stanton. It is a very illuminating submission you have provided us here today as well as the submission that you have tabled with the committee. We really thank you for those insights and the work that Liberty Victoria has been doing for a number of years. If I could begin the questioning along the theme that you have highlighted in terms of the kind of established response to the threat of violent extremism that we have documented and you have documented over a number of years, and you have highlighted today, and the cautioning, in some sense—what I gleaned from your presentation was the cautioning of governments and parliamentary responses in terms of the lessons that we have learned over a number of years about the erosion of civil liberties and mission creep, as you described it. From Liberty Victoria’s vantage point, I am interested to know what your perspective is on the threat that far-right extremism poses to Victoria and what you think the meaningful intervention measures should be from a government, parliamentary perspective.

Mr STANTON: The threat is real. We saw that all too clearly in Christchurch, and that was an Australian. The inquest findings are important to read in relation to the Christchurch shootings, because there was a clear connection between the shooter and far-right movements in Australia and particularly in Victoria. So the connections are real, and the problem of course is that it only takes one person to commit the most horrendous act. So the difficulty is how we provide security and safety to people in a way that still protects and safeguards fundamental norms of our democracy and our systems, including our criminal justice system.

Over the last 10 or so years, perhaps longer, there has been a shift from focusing on criminal punishment for individual acts towards trying to mitigate risk, and that has involved both ends of the spectrum, both control orders, supervision orders and also, in relation to post-sentence supervision, detention, citizenship revocation and those kinds of steps. But the problem with all of those measures is that we do not know—and the experts agree that it is impossible to profile the person, that potential lone wolf—who will transition from radicalisation to violence. So if you are not able to know who that person is, then there is a pressure—or it is understandable—that you cast the net as wide as possible, because it could be anyone who is exposed to extremist ideology. The problem with that approach is that it is used to justify what can be quite incredibly draconian surveillance and censorship in order to achieve that end point.

So our view is that the focus needs to be on those people who are most likely to engage in violent acts as opposed to casting the net so broadly that it would potentially capture anyone who is exposed to extremist ideology because of that myth. There is no conveyor belt from exposure to extremist ideology to violence, and unfortunately in our view the countering violent extremism measures adopted by the Parliament last year are premised on that idea of radicalising to violent extremism which is unable to be profiled. The risk assessment methodology is flawed, and there is a danger of overprediction of dangerousness, and that is recognised by Justice Kirby in Fardon's case. So, understandably, everyone wants to keep the community safe—everyone wants to stop something like Christchurch happening in Australia—but at what cost and at what point are we willing to say, 'You know what? People still need to have freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom to be exposed to ideas that some might regard as being noxious or offensive or even highly offensive'. But we are not willing to prevent all exposure to such ideology in the name of protection, because we do not want to live in a society with that level of censorship and surveillance.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Stanton. I will hopefully come back with some further questions should we have time. Over to Ms Taylor. And welcome to Dr Bach, as well, who will ask questions a bit later. Sorry, Nina.

Ms TAYLOR: No, all good. Thank you for your contribution, and you certainly are outlining the very nuanced challenges of this whole issue. So if I just take you a little further, how do you draw the balance between the rights of individuals who should be protected from the harm, on the one hand, and the liberties of the extremists—not that you are wanting that to flourish, obviously; we would rather people have a more balanced space of mind et cetera, but how do you strike that balance, because you are talking about legislation, and it may be hard to use definitive words in this context? But I am just wondering how that balance is struck.

Mr STANTON: In Liberty Victoria's view, our current protections are robust and so are the current powers, particularly at a federal level, in relation to surveillance. It should be remembered that not all of those capabilities or methodologies are known to the public, and the committee should be very slow to conclude that there are not real and powerful tools at the disposal of those agencies tasked with keeping us safe.

The issue of how you balance competing rights is obviously a difficult one, but history also demonstrates that in prohibiting speech, that can have a perverse effect or create a pitfall in that it can amplify those who are purportedly being repressed. In prohibiting certain forms of speech, people who particularly in the online environment want to raise their own profile as part of extremist groups, particularly the extreme right, who are quite capable in terms of using social media, are in some respects amplified by being made martyrs, for want of a better word, in terms of limitations to freedom of speech, and they will use that to communicate to their followers that their message is being repressed or suppressed. Why? Because the government does not want the 'truth' to come out. This leads to a kind of conspiratorial rhetoric, terms such as 'fake news' and that kind of ideology, where people in a perverse way, some of these extremist actors, want to position themselves as being the enemy of institutions to convey to others that their speech is being repressed because that allows them to amplify their message. It is a bit of a cliché that sunshine is the best disinfectant. Generally—not always, but generally—our view is that with regard to offensive speech, that should be in the public square and debated openly.

Now, there are limitations to free speech already in Victoria, but in our view the balance is already correct in relation to racial and religious vilification laws. That was powerfully demonstrated in the Cottrell case, and the rationale for that balance was carefully explained by Chief Judge Kidd in his reasons for judgment in that case—that there is a balance to be struck, that there is obviously a level of particularly hateful speech or other examples, such as incitement to violence, where obviously as a society we are not willing to permit that kind of speech. But there is a danger if censorship is expanded too widely that radical ideas that are not always necessarily hateful or extremist ideas will be caught up in the censorship and that it will have that paradoxical effect of potentially raising the profile of those who want to set themselves in opposition to the state.

Ms TAYLOR: The only other thing was, if I go on another tangent, just before you were talking about the history of extremism and then just now with social media that it is much easier for like minds, so to speak, to connect. Do you actually think there is a rise in far-right extremism? I am just wondering, because you were talking about it being easier to amplify their voices and to connect with each other, people of that similar mindset, and I do not want to typecast people, because everyone is an individual and has a different perspective. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr STANTON: The research would seem to suggest that there has been, and that is not just in Australia, it is across the globe. In Germany, for example, there has been the re-emergence of the extreme right. Despite longstanding prohibitions on things such as the swastika there, that has not prevented the re-emergence of the far right and some of the difficulties experienced there. It is a significant problem. Anyone that watched the emergence of the alt-right in the United States saw how extremist groups were able to use new social media tools to amplify their message. But in response to that emergence, or re-emergence, prohibition and censorship are likely to be very blunt tools. In our submission we refer to the Hydra—that you cut off one head and two emerge—and that is highly likely to be the case in trying to regulate the online environment. What we need to do, in Liberty Victoria’s view, is address the drivers as to why some people are attracted to extremist ideology in the first place, and that involves addressing issues of social isolation, economic insecurity and matters that are preyed upon by those who want to expand their ranks in terms of extremist groups, including far-right extremism. We need to repair and build faith in institutions, government and the media so that people cannot be so easily preyed upon by these actors who are acting with what would appear to be malevolent intent.

It is a real challenge, but I note, for example, the Christchurch Call, which is an important document, in our view at Liberty Victoria. After Christchurch, Australia is now a signatory to the Christchurch Call. Whilst there is a call for there to be better regulation in relation to extremist material online, there is also a very clear recognition in that document of the need to preserve freedom of expression and of the potential of the internet to be an incredibly helpful, beneficial resource in terms of education and awareness raising. So that just, in our view, shows the delicate balance that must be struck, and it is a quite powerful document in our view.

The CHAIR: Thanks so much, Ms Taylor and Mr Stanton. Ms Burnett-Wake.

Ms BURNETT-WAKE: Thank you. Thank you so much, Michael. In your submission you stated that:

Extremism is a symptom that something in society is not right.

I would like to know your views on, if a government lacks transparency and integrity, how that actually plays into it.

Mr STANTON: Faith in institutions, including government, is absolutely fundamental, and the emergence of this concept of fake news and preying upon suspicion in relation to government are used by extremists across the spectrum to attract people to their respective causes. So transparency and building social cohesion are absolutely fundamental. Having faith in institutions, protecting the rule of law, protecting the separation of powers—these are, in our view, fundamental. And in some respects they are conservative principles of our system of government that need to be protected because of the emergence of what is a populist rhetoric that would seek to undermine the integrity of those institutions—so not only Parliament, not only the media, but the judiciary. The legislative response to that penal populism is itself potentially concerning because it undermines people’s faith in our institutions. So Liberty Victoria has long opposed mandatory sentencing, noting as the Law Council of Australia does how that undermines our separation of powers and confidence in our judicial arm. When the rhetoric is emboldened by aspects of the media, of penal populism, of a lack of faith in our institutions—whether it is government, the judiciary or the media—that can be used as an effective messaging tool for those that would seek to radicalise people.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. Dr Bach, do you have any questions?

Dr BACH: Yes. Thank you, Chair, and thanks, Michael. Following on from where Cathrine was going, you spoke at length about some of the legitimising factors of extremism. We have heard from other witnesses about some other potential factors. I was really interested when you said it was a myth that there was a conveyor belt, and you discussed that. The last witness spoke about a focus on certain types of extremism—obviously we are doing an inquiry into so-called far-right extremism—and he went so far as to say that when those in power focus on one element of a problem like that, it is actually a boon to the recruitment of extremists, because it legitimises, in some people’s minds, the idea that those in positions of power are only focused on one element—are ‘biased’, to use the word he used. Would you mind speaking to us about your views there? Would you be in agreement with him that that is one of undoubtedly many legitimising factors for extremism?

Mr STANTON: As I said at the outset, the emergence of far-right extremism or ideological extremism is real and needs to be addressed. Islamist extremism is real and needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, and this is outlined in our submission, there has been a myopic focus on Islamist extremism over the past 20 years in

Australia at the cost, in our view, of focusing on other areas, including the emergence of the far right or Neo-Nazis and the danger that they present to the community. So I would be slow to conclude that now there needs to be some focus on the emergence or re-emergence of the far right that itself will be used as a marketing tool or an emboldening strategy, because something has to be done about it. I do not take issue that given Christchurch, given the scenes in the Grampians, there needs to be. And to be fair, this Parliament has taken steps to address already some of those issues. So, no, I do not accept that in focusing on far-right extremism as a necessity because of particular issues such as that, that can itself be used to embolden or recruit. It needs to be done. The drivers need to be addressed, because as we have seen with the emergence of the alt-right and as we have seen with some—and only some—of the people present at some of the anti-COVID restriction rallies, there is a real presence, and something needs to be done about it in a practical and pragmatic way, in our view.

Dr BACH: Yes. Thank you. And I certainly agree with that. Just quickly, your comments about the great value of babies in comparison to bathwater very much chimed with me, as did some of the remarks that you made about how it is that people come to feel isolated, and you focused in particular on legislative mechanisms and how you have a particular view that is consistent with Liberty Victoria's view over a long period of time. It is a view to be respected, and we do. I wonder if you could talk about perhaps the speech and actions of those in power as well, noting my wholehearted agreement—I would not want to talk for other members of the committee, but I am sure they would agree too—regarding our abhorrence at the different actions that you just outlined and the movements that you outlined. I find it a very difficult thing when, for example, we have demonstrations or protests that have an element that is undoubtedly absolutely unacceptable and behaves in a totally unacceptable way but then also includes other people who I daresay are mainstream people with mainstream concerns. I personally find that very difficult, because I want to come out hard to say what an element of a group is doing is totally unacceptable and at the same time say I validate, however, how other people are feeling, because I do not want to push them further away. Would you mind speaking to us about your views regarding the speech of politicians in an era where across the board we are seeing more protests and demonstrations?

Mr STANTON: Thank you. We have addressed that in part in the submission, and it is important to remind perhaps all of the people that are watching or reading this that a vast majority of those present at the anti-lockdown protests or rallies would not support far-right extremism. There is no doubt also an element that is using those rallies to try to increase membership, drive messaging and expand. So it is unhelpful in our view to have any kind of stigmatic rhetoric that lumps protesters in general in with extremist groups. That can have a perverse outcome of driving those people at protests, some of which had very legitimate concerns, who were concerned about things like the curfew, who were concerned about loss of employment, income and not being able to see family. It is unhelpful to stigmatise that entire and disparate group as being in some way connected to far-right extremism, and it can have the opposite effect to the intended effect, which is that—and I am influenced here particularly by the caution of Braithwaite in relation to stigmatic shaming—if you lump those people in with extremists and if they feel disrespected, then this only will reinforce the messages of those extremists that the government is not to be trusted, and that cannot be helpful. Liberty Victoria has spoken for an extended period now about the need to protect freedom of expression and peaceful assembly during the legislative response to COVID-19, and rhetoric does have an impact. Those quite sophisticated members of extremist groups who know how to use social media will use that kind of rhetoric that lumps everyone in the same boat. They will use that to be a driver to increase their reach.

Dr BACH: Thank you very much, Michael.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. I might ask another question, and I just invite other members, if you have further questions, to please raise your hand. We have got a few more minutes; I think we can squeeze in a couple more questions. I was interested, Mr Stanton, and you talked about it in your submission as well—it is a complex balance to get right, and that is why it is worth having these discussions and unpacking what is going on. You talked in your submission about the need in terms of the early intervention and the mitigation strategies around building trust back, particularly in institutions, and addressing social isolation and cohesion, addressing the real structural inequalities that give rise to people feeling really detached or disengaged from the system, which makes them more vulnerable, for example, to recruiters, and then also, like we have been talking about, misinformation and conspiracy theories, when you have got times when they are flourishing and they can be used to take advantage of people by people who want to recruit them for their own ends. Feel free to take this on notice should you not have the information on hand; that is perfectly fine. I was interested to know if you all had done any work about some potentially international examples where some jurisdictions had got the balance

better, for want of a better form of words. You talked about cautioning us against censorship and those overreach of government and draconian measures that we have seen have been symptomatic of our response to the counterterrorism issues. Are there any jurisdictions, do you think, that have done it better from your perspective? What lessons are there for us essentially is what we are looking for.

Mr STANTON: In our view it is a common experience, particularly in comparable jurisdictions, that there has been an expansion of executive power and surveillance and censorship in a way that the civil liberties communities across the United Kingdom and the United States have spoken out about, and it is difficult to think of a jurisdiction that has got the balance right. I do look to New Zealand and look to the Christchurch Call, and that is an example of a careful balancing in relation to protection and extremist content and the need to preserve what is good about the internet and freedom of speech. Perhaps I will take it on notice, if I may, and respond after today, but I would just note that in some respects it should not be thought that we have the balance necessarily wrong in Australia. We have so many different heads of power and protections in relation to the powers that our security agencies are given in relation to powers now to interrupt and modify data, a warrant granted by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. We have control orders; we have example upon example of post-sentence detention citizenship stripping, although that is slightly more complicated now because the High Court has just found part of that regime to be unconstitutional. But it is not that in our view we should be looking to other jurisdictions to increase powers, to increase surveillance, to increase measures that can encroach on civil liberties and human rights; what we need to do is focus on measures that are preventative rather than responsive—so what actually stops people from being attracted to some of these snake oil salesmen that you see who are willing to drive this extremist rhetoric or the demagogues that are in other jurisdictions and could very well emerge here. So how do we strengthen our civil society and remedy the dislocation and isolation of people who are attracted to these ideologies? Because that is the real preventative approach, and a punitive approach—including, in our view, the countering violent extremism regime that was introduced last year—does not get the balance right because it casts the net too wide. It is based upon this idea of a conveyor belt towards radicalisation, and it is so far reaching, it has a potential punitive, criminogenic impact and it can itself become susceptible to racialised enforcement over time. So it should not be a punitive approach, it should be addressing and strengthening the fabric of our civil society, and again that is what the Christchurch Call emphasises.

The CHAIR: Thanks so much, Mr Stanton. My fellow committee members, do you have any further questions? All good. We will draw this session to a close on that note. Thank you so much for your evidence. Mr Stanton. It has been thoroughly illuminating and so too your submission and the work of Liberty Victoria. Thank you very much, and we will draw this session to a close. The next session also will be a public hearing. We will have a short adjournment and be back with the next session in a few minutes. That draws us to a conclusion. Thank you very much.

Witness withdrew.