

# **ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

## **Inquiry into the Impact of Social Media on Elections and Electoral Administration**

Melbourne—Tuesday, 17 November 2020

*(via videoconference)*

### **MEMBERS**

Mr Lee Tarlamis—Chair

Mrs Bev McArthur—Deputy Chair

Ms Lizzie Blandthorn

Mr Matthew Guy

Ms Katie Hall

Ms Wendy Lovell

Mr Andy Meddick

Mr Cesar Melhem

Mr Tim Quilty

Dr Tim Read

**WITNESSES**

Mr Dinesh Mathew, 2018 election candidate, and

Ms Jessica Wheelock, Communications Director, Australian Greens Victoria.

**The CHAIR:** I declare open the public hearing for the Electoral Matters Committee Inquiry into the Impact of Social Media on Elections and Electoral Administration. I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands each of us is gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings.

I welcome Dinesh Mathew, and Jessica Wheelock, Communications Director for the Australian Greens Victoria. I am Lee Tarlamis, the Chair of the committee and a Member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region. The other members of the committee here today are Bev McArthur, Deputy Chair and a Member for Western Victoria; the Honourable Matthew Guy, the Member for Bulleen; Katie Hall, the Member for Footscray; the Honourable Wendy Lovell, a Member for Northern Victoria; Andy Meddick, a Member for Western Victoria; Cesar Melhem, a Member for Western Metropolitan; Tim Quilty, a Member for Northern Victoria; and Dr Tim Read, the Member for Brunswick.

All evidence taken by this committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action in Australia for what you say here today. However, if you repeat the same thing outside of this hearing, including on social media, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript for you to check as soon as available. Verified transcripts, PowerPoints, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible. I now invite you to proceed with a brief opening statement, which will be followed by questions from the committee.

**Mr MATHEW:** I might go first. Is that okay, Jess? My name is Dinesh Mathew. I was a candidate at the last state election for the seat of Caulfield, and I have also previously submitted to the Electoral Matters Committee on the conduct of the election. This is specifically in regard to social media and my experience, what I saw. Obviously if you have read the former submission, you would know that there was a huge campaign, a social media campaign, which led to death threats et cetera towards me. I believe that this was due to me being a person of colour. These were far-right people, people with swastikas et cetera, in the heart of Caulfield, which is the largest Jewish electorate in Victoria.

My submission on this is that recording outside a polling place actually worked to basically make people feel fearful. A lot of voters recoiled at being filmed; it was being live streamed. This live streaming and the commentary by a candidate—not just someone else, but by a candidate—meant that death threats et cetera were received by me. In fact there were so many people coming from this person's group that I had to escape the actual polling place through the back of the electoral commission office and go home, essentially, with the fearfulness of actually being followed home. I believe that recording and live streaming actually led to a really horrible intimidation of candidates—not just me, but in particular these were homed in on me because they asked me the one question, which was, 'Are you Muslim?'. I am not, but I refused to answer that question because I believe that every single Australian, regardless of religious faith, has the opportunity and should be allowed the opportunity to stand for Parliament and not be bullied.

I do believe that there should be a ban on live streaming and filming as people are going in to vote. Voters did complain about that because they were fearful of being on websites et cetera. I do believe that candidates and political parties who intimidate other candidates should be given penalties. They should be not allowed to hand out outside polling places et cetera. There seemed to be no penalties for this person to stop doing it. The electoral commission did not step in, the police did not step in, so therefore they felt that they had licence to do everything. In fact on election day, I as a candidate could not hand out at polling places except for 1 or 2 minutes and then leave. With one of the electoral commission managers, we had to go inside because there was a swarm of people who ran up. We were fearful, so we ran into the offices, and then we had to be escorted through the back of the offices and be picked up.

I did not go back into a polling place that day in the electorate, until for the last hour when I went to St Kilda town hall, at which point Sue Pennicuik, who is a former MLC, was there with me. These people turned up and we both went in. That was the only time the police I feel actually took us seriously—when Sue Pennicuik was also intimidated and had to go inside. Basically they blocked off the exits. These people blocked off the exits so we could not leave through a back entrance. So we had to stay in, and we could not talk to anyone for the last hour of the election.

I really do think that we need to take this seriously. If we allow this sort of behaviour to continue, people of colour are really going to be targeted, and it is not a good thing for our democracy. I am not a new candidate. I have been in politics since I was 14. That is more than 25 years ago. I have been a national campaign manager, a state campaign manager, and I have been a candidate at federal, state and local—run so many campaigns. I am not an inexperienced person in campaigning, but this is the first time I have seen this amount of bullying. On the last day of the election campaign they live streamed this particular candidate—I will not mention their name because I do not want to give them publicity—and they said, ‘We’re hunting Dinesh’. They actually said the words, ‘We’re hunting Dinesh’. It was really quite scary for someone who lives in a house in a suburb. We were really fearful that we were going to be targeted, that people were going to find our address, we were going to get doxed, all that sort of stuff. So it was a really scary moment for me personally, and it was a really scary moment for a whole lot of people who were involved, including some voters, who recoiled and actually left without voting because there were people filming as they were going in to vote.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Dinesh. Jess.

**Ms WHEELLOCK:** Thanks for sharing that, Dinesh. I am Jessica Wheelock. I am the Communications Director with the Victorian Greens. I have been working with the party for only about six months now, so I was not working with the party during the 2018 state election. I am referring to a separate submission that we have made that included a number of matters, but we had a section around social media authorisations.

Quite briefly, obviously political discourse online is a really important way for people to access political information and to be able to connect with candidates and with other people interested in political issues. One of the big challenges of course is that misinformation can spread so quickly and especially when there are paid advertising posts. It is very easy to just put up a lie and put a lot of money behind it and for it to get an enormous amount of traction before anyone is able to take action to remedy that. The experiences that happened during the 2018 state election were that there were a lot of posts that were spreading misinformation or that were quite harmful and some that were quite nasty in their nature and inappropriate, and because they were posted anonymously there was no way for them to be able to be taken down quickly or for that misinformation to stop spreading. Of course authorising political advertising is a really important way to enforce that, but our experience was that there was not enough capacity within the VEC to enforce the really important truth maintaining that needed to be done during that period.

We do not necessarily have a preferred model for how to address that challenge. One suggestion is for the VEC to have a bigger team, to have more authority and to have more ability to enforce taking these posts down when the misinformation does start to spread. There may be other channels that we can do that through and other ways that we can do that, and we are really keen to explore what that could look like and how we can make sure that truth in political advertising is enforced for the benefit of everybody.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Jess. I might kick it off quickly with a question for Jess. Just in relation to your last point around truth in advertising, would the Greens party be supportive of truth in advertising legislation similar to that which operates in South Australia?

**Ms WHEELLOCK:** Yes, we would be.

**The CHAIR:** No worries. I might go to Katie Hall. Do you have a question?

**Ms HALL:** Thank you, and apologies that I do not have my camera on; I am having some internet issues at home. I am very sorry to hear about your situation, Dinesh, and the circumstances where you were threatened both physically and I suppose online, and Jess, thank you also for your contribution. I am particularly interested in the impact of trolling on women and people of colour, as you were saying, Dinesh. Have the Greens developed any sort of proposal, any sort of legislative changes, that you would like to see I suppose so that police and the electoral commission can respond in a more meaningful way?

**Mr MATHEW:** If I can respond, thank you so much for your question, Katie. We did have the legislation, so the first thing I did when this was starting to happen quite regularly—by the way, this was happening at the pre-poll booths so it was going on for three weeks. It was not just one or two days; it was happening every day for three weeks. We had the legislation which basically says that intimidation is punishable by such and such—four years or something like that was the maximum term. The Victorian Electoral Commission manager at the Caulfield pre-poll booth did not know what the legislation was so I showed it to him, and he refused to read it for the first few days. Then when he did read it, he said, ‘That’s not intimidation’. No matter how many times this happened he kept coming out and saying, ‘This is not intimidation’. In fact he told me that the last time that he had been threatened was by a black man. He actually said that to me and I just recoiled, and I said, ‘Well, that’s not the issue here. The issue is that there are three big guys standing around me stopping me from talking to voters’. Really these are not just big guys. I am 6 foot 2. Like, I am pretty big. But these are guys with—like, you know, this is Caulfield—swastika tattoos et cetera. They are intimidating. We have, pre-poll, obviously people of the Jewish faith who do not vote on Saturday because it is Sabbath, so they came to vote at pre-poll, which is why we have such a large pre-poll in Caulfield. These are older people et cetera, or people who either had grandparents or parents in the Holocaust, walking in and seeing people with swastikas standing around a candidate—actively stopping me, standing in front so I could not actually walk up and talk to people et cetera. It is not just the talking to people that I am worried about. It is actually that it is intimidating voters.

**Ms HALL:** Yes. What did the police do?

**Mr MATHEW:** The police said filming was okay because it is in a public space, which is why I think we should have a specific clause not allowing filming, because filming is a form of intimidation at a polling place. If you followed the American election, that is something that was part of the intimidation—filming as people were going in to vote—especially if it is a private video. The police did not step in. They wanted to act if the electoral commission manager actually made a call, and he refused to make a call that it was intimidation. By the way, I found out after the fact, after the election day, that the police had a unit at the electoral commission who worked with the electoral commission on these sorts of issues. I was never told that. I called the electoral commission plenty of times, the Greens called the electoral commission plenty of times. We were not even told that the police had a unit that was specifically working on elections.

**Ms HALL:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Mrs McArthur.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Thank you, Chair. Dinesh, have you contacted the electoral commission since the election? What is their response to these various issues you have raised—the fact that they do have a unit that you were not told about that they obviously did not put into action? Have you had any further conversations with senior police officials as to why they could not act unilaterally anyway without the rather recalcitrant-sounding electoral officer not responding to your concerns?

**Mr MATHEW:** The police did take action on the election day about what happened because the St Kilda police were fantastic. The Caulfield police were not as fantastic. They were actually quite rude to me for making the complaints, which was weird. But the St Kilda police actually read the legislation. It was the first police officer that actually read the legislation that we kept presenting, and said, ‘Actually I think that this is intimidation’, so they took action. There was a court case. They did charge the person in question. I believe that court case was dropped. Because of COVID, they said, ‘We don’t want to talk to you over the phone on why that case was dropped’. So the electoral commission did not talk to me much because they said the court case was ongoing. I did suggest to them that they need to teach their electoral commission staff about the legislation itself, because all of this could have been solved if the electoral commission manager had acknowledged that this legislation existed. I wanted them to improve their training of the managers and also make sure that they had cultural training.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Can you also tell me: did this intimidation also occur through social media, and if so, what action did those organisations take to put a stop to it or what recourse did you have in that department?

**Mr MATHEW:** Unfortunately, most of it happened on Facebook, and Facebook, as you would probably be aware, is very, very bad at even recognising death threats. I reported them. We actually shut down our Facebook page about two weeks before the election because we sort of made the decision that it was not helpful

to have a page that would sort of—I do not know if it was antagonising, but it just seemed to motivate people to hate more. It also meant that my photos were on there, even though I had been a candidate many times and my photos are everywhere. But it just became a point where people could target, so we closed it down. Twitter is fantastic at these sorts of things, so there were no attacks on Twitter, but on Facebook we had to shut it down. So with social media orgs, not all of them are very responsive.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** So my understanding with the police is if you can actually cite an actual death threat, they have to take action, and did that not occur.

**Mr MATHEW:** I said it in my police report. When I made the report, part of the problem was that a lot of the threats and the horrible stuff was coming from overseas. We did actually shut down overseas views of the page, but it still kept continuing a little bit, so that is why we shut it down. But yes, it is really hard. I work in communications as well as social media. It is really hard to find out who these people are, especially with Facebook if they have a fake account. And on Facebook they do not really even bother with that.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** With the people at the polling booths who were intimidating you, did they actually threaten you with death at any time? Because that is also something the police have to immediately take action on, as I understand it. Because I have made complaints, but if your life has not been threatened they are not interested.

**Mr MATHEW:** Well, they did not do it to me face to face. They stood, you know, in intimidation in terms of standing around you and stopping you talking to people, blocking your path et cetera. The YouTube video should still be up of this person actually saying, ‘We’re hunting Dinesh’ on election day. That is pretty easy to find; that is there. That would have been part of the court case that police were considering when they charged this person.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Quilty.

**Mr QUILTY:** You are talking about a ban on live streaming or filming at polling places. I feel that is probably a step too far. I am a big fan of transparency and allowing people to do that, and I think filming is part of free speech as well. Surely if you are able to film, you would have evidence of intimidation and attacks. It is more of an opinion, but you can comment on it. But I feel like it would be a definite retrograde step to ban people from being able to film and photograph at polling places.

**Mr MATHEW:** Sorry, if I can respond. Thank you, Mr Quilty. I think the point is: with permission. I think a lot of people—voters in particular who were feeling threatened or intimidated—did not give permission and they were actively saying, ‘I don’t give permission; I don’t give permission’, and this person would keep saying, ‘We are allowed to do this any way we want. You’re in a public space’. It was within 5 to 10 metres of the polling place that they were filming. There were long queues of 2 hours sometimes. But I think the key to it is: with permission. Generally people are okay, but when it is someone who is intimidating and actually coming up close to you and asking you questions which are really quite offensive sometimes, I think that is the distinction.

**Mr QUILTY:** Okay.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Meddick.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Thanks, Chair. Thank you, Jess and Dinesh, for coming. I know it is not an easy thing to do. I have read quite substantially the submissions that you have made, Dinesh, and I am absolutely appalled at some of the behaviour that you have been describing. It is absolutely terrible. It seems as if it is one of those areas where there is not just a philosophical objection to a particular candidate or what they stand for as a party but there is clear, in my mind at least, out and out racism that has been conducted in these particular incidents.

I am just wondering, because there are several of these types of groups out there—you know, United Patriots Front and there are a number of others, and a number of these gentlemen, I will call them hesitantly, that front these types of groups are known for this exact type of thing—are you happy to identify to us any of these particular groups that you feel might have been doing it? I mean, to stand in the middle of Caulfield with a swastika on your arm to me is inherently, in and of itself, a deliberately antagonistic act and one of showing just, ‘I am a racist person; here I am’. And then to intimidate people at an election booth is beyond the pale in

that respect. My father was a soldier in World War II and fought exactly against that type of thing, and I think it is absolutely appalling in this day and age they are out there and trying to resurrect that type of thing. Would you be prepared to identify to us any one of those groups that we might be aware, because my concern here is that while this is an inquiry into the use of social media in an election, this is a clear case of where social media is being used as a tool to spill into the physical area and to motivate people to do things that could potentially be violent and physically threatening, as you felt physically threatened. Once upon a time ago there might have been delineation between the online world and what actually happens, but as we have just seen in the US election as well, various groups are using social media as a tool to motivate people out on the street, and that seems to me a very clear situation. Would you be prepared to name any of those groups to give people an indication?

**Mr MATHEW:** Thank you, Andy. It was not any group as such; it was the actual political party. I cannot remember the name now. I am so sorry, I have forgotten the name of the political party that—

**Mr MEDDICK:** It is not okay. Feel free to answer that on notice if you like.

**Mr MATHEW:** Yes. This person was a candidate for Southern Metro in the upper house, which is why I say if candidates themselves are breaking the law, there should be penalties for them during the election so that they are not allowed to be around polling booths, something like that, because essentially in a lot of ways they were chasing another candidate and stopping them from talking, well from electioneering. I am just trying to quickly google because I cannot remember—

**Mr MEDDICK:** That is okay. While you are looking for that—Jess, I have a question for you, too, just on some of the things that you were talking about before. These personal attacks that were occurring on social media: were they put out on social media—say, Facebook, for instance—in the guise of a political advertisement by a particular political party? You know, like, ‘X political party authorises this’ and ‘Did you know that this other candidate was this or that and the other’? Was it done in that way or was it just these random posts that you could not really attribute to any party?

**Ms WHEELLOCK:** Thanks, Andy. I do not know if ‘random’ is the right word to describe it. They were certainly targeted and very strategic, but they were not openly affiliating with any political party or with any natural person and there was no address attributed to them, so they were clearly breaching the Act. So they should have been authorised because they were advertisements that were running about political issues during an election. The problem was that even though they were doing things incorrectly—they were breaching the Act—there was no real way to take action on that and to get them to actually come down, certainly not within the scope of the actual election period.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Yes. And did they use rhetoric or, like I say, cut-and-paste slogans from any of the other parties that then might have led a reasonable person to believe that they might have been affiliated with a party?

**Ms WHEELLOCK:** Not being around at the time, I am not sure I could confidently answer that. My understanding is that the volume of these kinds of posts was quite large, so I would imagine that some of them could have been like that, but I just could not say for certain.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Sure.

**Ms WHEELLOCK:** But there were certainly ones that pushed the rhetoric beyond what we would consider reasonable political discourse.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Okay, thanks.

**Mr MATHEW:** Andy, I have got the name of the political party. I just googled it. It is the Australian Liberty Alliance.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Okay. Thank you, mate. I appreciate that. No other questions, Chair. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Lovell.

**Ms LOVELL:** No, I do not have any questions but, yes, just to say it is not acceptable for anyone to be intimidated or threatened. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Guy.

**Mr GUY:** Yes, thank you. I just wanted to talk about, Mr Mathew, your points around intimidation of polling booths and particularly videoing—filming—those at polling booths. Are the Australian Greens affiliated with the group called Colour Code?

**Mr MATHEW:** Not affiliated. I personally know of them. I do not think there is any affiliation. I know them.

**Mr GUY:** They seem to have a large number of reposts of Australian Greens members on their social media and a large number of posts attacking the Liberal Party in their social media. One of the things they also have in their social media, for instance, is exactly what you mentioned, which is intimidating at polling booths—videos from the 2018 election, where after people have taken how-to-vote cards they then begin intimidating people to give back those how-to-vote cards that they have taken. They also have on their Instagram intimidation of political candidates, and one of the people they have actually videoed is me.

Now, exactly what you said before—I completely agree with you about the intimidation at polling booths of candidates and particularly intimidation of people who are in line at polling booths. These people would not go when they were asked to go by the Electoral Commissioner—people in charge of the booth. They blatantly refused. They blatantly refused until the police arrested them. Roj Amedi, who was affiliated, I understand, with the Greens and also in a range of other ways as a campaigner, just refused to go. Now, they filmed at Bulleen Heights primary school. They filmed at The Pines polling booth. They filmed at The Pines shopping centre. These people did absolutely everything that you guys have mentioned, and I just want to put on record: I support your calls about those who are intimidating people at polling booths—particularly elderly people who are in line. I do not care what they look like, what the colour of the skin is or what their racial background is. I do not care. No-one should be intimidated at polling booths. But this group did it, and they make an art form of it and put it on their social media, which I am actually looking at right now. So I just want to again put on record that this group, Colour Code, which has made an art form of this right across its social media, is one of the worst offenders.

I do think straight out that if we are going to have a debate about this—and I am very, very sorry to hear what you went through; I think that is completely and utterly unacceptable—I will say I did not go through it to the same extent, but I did have, and I know Kevin Andrews did have out here in Menzies, these people stalking others at polling booths, intimidating people who were taking how-to-vote cards, intimidating candidates, videoing it, filming it and live streaming it. They would refuse to go when asked by the Electoral Commissioner. It was completely unacceptable. I would also ask again, for the record, whether or not they are affiliated with the Australian Greens in any way. Because your evidence is good; however, these people, if they are affiliated with the Greens, are doing exactly the things you guys have given evidence to say should not occur.

**Mr MATHEW:** Thanks, Matthew. Sorry, Mr Guy.

**Mr GUY:** You can call me ‘Matthew’. Do not worry.

**Mr MATHEW:** It is just my ‘Mathew’ and your ‘Matthew’. Look, Colour Code has obviously no affiliation with the Greens. There might be members of the Greens that are part of Colour Code. I am not sure. I know one person from Colour Code, and that is because they applied to live with me, at some point, at a flat share. But, no, I am unaware. But I am glad to hear your support on that intimidation at polling places, I think, of voters. If what you say is true, that I would class as intimidation. Yes, and candidates—

**Mr GUY:** It is still on their social media. It is still up. It is all there to see. It is on theirs, not mine.

**Mr MATHEW:** Yes. I will have a look. It is something that I think stops democracy from happening as it should happen in Australia, where we are allowed to talk to people and we are not impeded in doing what we are meant to be doing.

**Mr GUY:** Okay. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Dr Tim Read.

**Dr READ:** Thank you. Thank you both, Jessica and Dinesh, for appearing. Dinesh, I have a couple of quick questions first just about filming. I imagine that the filming you described was probably at close range, with people coming quite close to you, based upon reading your submission. Given that Mr Quilty has expressed some concerns about how we might restrict this—perhaps something like a distance to separate so that if the ABC turns up and films from across the street the queue at the polling booth, that might be less of an issue than someone shoving a camera in your face—would that be a fair comment?

**Mr MATHEW:** Yes. I think the key to this is permission. I work in communications, so I understand the whole, ‘If you’re in public, yes, there is a chance that you may appear in video on the news or whatever when they pan’, but I do think that at a polling place it is a special place. We should be feeling safe there, and people should not feel intimidated there. I think that is a special case. We have this rule now where when voters are going in there is a 5-metre rule or something like that where you cannot walk up and talk to someone. I think that is fair, but I think when it comes to polling lines, especially during pre-poll, as we have encountered, where more and more people are voting, I think that should be actually—you know, in the pre-poll line they should not be hassled. People should not be hassled by people shoving mobile phones in their faces.

**Dr READ:** The other question I have is whether you think the problem might require further legislative change around the rules around harassment or inciting violence and/or whether the problem, as you described it, might be more one of resources and motivation to enforce existing legislation?

**Mr MATHEW:** I agree with that, Tim, but at the same time I think it is basically the electoral commission staff not knowing the actual law and the police not knowing the law to the extent that we were trying to show it to them and they were refusing to read it. I think that was the main thing. The law is there. The law specifically mentions intimidation. I acknowledge that Matthew said that he was intimidated. He felt intimidated and they took action. That is the difference in this case—they took action. In my case they never took action. So they refused to read the legislation all the way through. For three weeks they refused to read the legislation. The Victorian Electoral Commission did not even tell us that there was a police unit waiting with them when we called them.

**Dr READ:** You were a candidate in Caulfield. From memory, that was a pretty close result. I do not want to minimise what you went through at all, but just thinking more broadly, if this sort of thing happens, do you think it could impact on an actual result in an electorate, even though it is obviously unpleasant for the individuals concerned?

**Mr MATHEW:** It can. There was 400 votes difference between the two major party candidates. I have got to say that I was not in the running to win, just to make sure that that is out there—

**Dr READ:** That is very modest of you.

**Mr MATHEW:** But our preferences could have had a crucial impact on 400 votes. There was three weeks of not allowing—or roughly two weeks of that where I was impeded in chatting to voters, and then on election day I could not really be at any polling place for more than 10 minutes. That is what we were doing. We were going and visiting and motivating people, talking to a couple of people and then jumping in a car and driving to the next one. That is how we kept ahead of these people following us. And we heard halfway through the day that they actually said, ‘We’re hunting Dinesh’. I have forgotten the question now; I am sorry.

**Dr READ:** No, do not worry. It was about the electoral impact of this sort of thing.

**Mr MATHEW:** Yes. I really do think it does have an impact. I am local. I have lived in this area for nearly 20 years. I know a lot of people and I know the local area and local issues, so stopping me from talking to people about issues that concern them or from giving an alternative viewpoint to the other candidates—one of the candidates was not from the area. One of the lead candidates was not from anywhere near the local area, so I could answer a lot more questions on the local area than they could. Stopping a candidate from talking does have a massive impact because people are still deciding when they are going in. We know from research that there is 10 to 15 per cent of people deciding while they are waiting.

**Dr READ:** All right. Thanks very much for having the courage to tell us about all of this today. So a quick question for Jessica, if I may, Chair?

**The CHAIR:** Do it quickly, because we are running out of time.

**Dr READ:** No worries, thanks.

**The CHAIR:** We are well over time. Thanks, Jess and Dinesh, for participating today. I know that we still may have had some questions we missed out on. Would you be open to taking some questions on notice and some follow-up questions if the committee members had some as well?

**Mr MATHEW:** Absolutely, and thank you so much to the committee for having us.

**The CHAIR:** No worries. Thank you. And thank you, Dinesh, for sharing your very personal experiences today as well. I think it is important that we are aware of these when we are considering what changes will be made or what recommendations we will be making in our report as well. So thank you for that and thank you for coming along today.

**Mr MATHEW:** Thank you. I would just like to say that it is easier to do this two years on.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Witnesses withdrew.**