

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



Wednesday, 11 May 2022

NATION-LEADING REFORM BANNING HATE SYMBOLS IN VICTORIA

Victoria will become the first Australian state or territory to ban the public display of the Nazi symbol in recognition of its role in inciting antisemitism and hate.

The Andrews Labor Government today introduced the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022, which makes it a criminal offence for a person to intentionally display the Nazi symbol (the Hakenkreuz, often referred to as the Nazi swastika) in public.

The Hakenkreuz is a symbol of hate and causes division and significant harm to Victorians, particularly to the Jewish community. The harm caused by hate conduct and vilification can be profound, affecting people's physical and psychological wellbeing.

Once in effect, anyone who intentionally displays the Nazi symbol in public faces penalties of up to almost \$22,000, 12 months imprisonment or both.

This landmark reform sends a clear message that the dissemination of Nazi and Neo-nazi ideology through the public display of the Nazi symbol has no place in Victoria.

Importantly, the Bill also recognises the cultural and historical significance of the swastika for the Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and other faith communities as an ancient and sacred symbol of peace and good fortune. The Bill does not prohibit the display of the swastika in such religious and cultural contexts.

The ban will be supported by a community education campaign to raise awareness of the origins of the religious and cultural swastika, its importance to the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain communities and its distinction to the Nazi symbol. The legislation will come into effect a year after passing to allow for time to implement this campaign.

The Government undertook extensive consultation with religious, legal and community groups on the offence, including to understand the religious use of the swastika and ensure exceptions are in place for appropriate displays of the Nazi symbol, such as for educational or artistic purposes.

The Government will continue to monitor the use of hate symbols and may consider the inclusion of additional symbols at a later stage.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"The Nazi symbol glorifies one of the most hateful ideologies in history – its public display does nothing but cause further pain and division."

"As a Government we want to do all we can to stamp out hate and give it no room to grow – banning the Nazi symbol sends a clear message that this vile behaviour will not be tolerated in Victoria."

Quote attributable to Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence

"We're working to protect the rights of all Victorians to be free from racism, vilification and hatred, and to ensure all Victorians feel welcome and accepted."

Media contact: Casey Lodge 0410 964 928 | casey.lodge@minstaff.vic.gov.au