Tuesday, 18 February 2025

GUTLESS LIBERALS OPPOSE TOUGH NEW LAWS TO FIGHT HATE

The Government's Anti-Vilification and Social Cohesion Bill is all about protecting Victorians from hate – whoever they are, whoever they love, whoever they pray to.

Last week the Liberals said they opposed the Bill based on concerns expressed by Jewish and Muslim communities, and other groups, about a political purpose defence.

That defence is now no longer a part of the Bill.

So, what a surprise that the Liberals have now invented another reason to oppose it.

Today the Liberals are exposed, and it's time for these gutless wonders to admit the truth.

They don't oppose the Bill because of a political purpose defence, or a subjective test. They oppose the Bill because it extends equal protection to LGBTQIA+ people. And the hard-right wing of the Liberal Party who control Brad Battin won't allow that.

Let's be clear what is on the line here – this Bill delivers tougher new laws to crack down on people who want to whip up racism and hate against their fellow Victorians, just because of who they are.

It's a Bill whose genesis was an Islamophobic act at a mosque, being debated in a week when the Muslim community is rocked by an act of violence against two women in Epping Plaza.

It's a Bill that will protect people with disabilities from vilification for the first time, in a week when we've heard allegations of disgusting acts perpetrated against vulnerable people in taxis.

I am proud that a wide range of community groups are backing this bill – including Victoria's Jewish community who have asked for new tools to fight the cancer of antisemitism.

I am confident we can get these laws through the Parliament if it means working with other parties.

The Liberals will have a choice when this Bill arrives in the Legislative Council.

They can stand against antisemitism, racism and hate, pass these tough new laws and help protect all Victorians. Or they can side with the hard-right of their party who are on a crusade to sink them.