

The Daily Telegraph

Gabrielle Upton U-turn on backing laws to 'disarm' hate preachers

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PREMIER Gladys Berejiklian has thrown her support behind crucial laws to stop hate speech inciting terrorism that were voted down by Cabinet a fortnight ago.

The Daily Telegraph today revealed Gabrielle Upton spoke out in cabinet the proposed laws despite calling them a "necessity" when she was Attorney-General.

In an interview with Ray Hadley on 2GB this morning, Ms Berejiklian confirmed reports that she supported the laws that would crackdown on hate preachers encouraging racial violence.

"I tend to be quite moderate on these issues in so far as wanting to make sure we always protect the community first and I'm someone who will compromise my own civil liberty if it means keeping everybody else safe but not everybody has those views," she said.



NSW Police employee Curtis Cheng (left) was shot dead teenager Farhad Jabar. Picture: Toby Zerna

“There is as you know there’s ongoing debates between what’s perceived to be freedom of speech and what’s perceived to be causing other people angst or worse inciting violence.

“It is in relation to how do you protect the community but at the same time make that sure people don’t feel that we’re impinging on their free speech.”

Ms Berejiklian declined to comment on the conservative politicians who opposed the laws, saying “I love all those men very much. I do. I do.”

Just two years ago, then attorney-general Ms Upton announced she would crack down with laws to “disarm” hate preachers and violent extremists who preach violence, saying the killer of civilian employee Curtis Cheng would have been incited to commit the act of terror.

“Recent events have reinforced the necessity of being vigilant to and guarding against the spread of racial vilification,” Ms Upton said in October 2015. “We cannot allow violent race hate speech to fan flames of division and tear our community apart.”

But at a cabinet meeting just two weeks ago, Ms Upton spoke out to stop the very same laws being introduced by her replacement Attorney-General, Mark Speakman.

A number of cabinet ministers have confirmed the former attorney-general blocked her successor’s laws, leaving Mr Speakman “bewildered”.

In the meeting, Ms Upton is understood to have argued it was not the time politically to introduce the laws, after the controversial decisions to build two new sports stadiums and the recycled bottle fiasco.

Now Environment, Local Government and Heritage Minister, she also claimed community groups advocating the law had gone quiet on the issue. Mr Speakman is understood to have replied they had not gone quiet, they were speaking to him because he is now Attorney-General.

Conservative ministers including Treasurer Dominic Perrottet, Planning Minister Anthony Roberts and Corrective Services Minister David Elliot also objected to the change of the Anti-Discrimination Act, saying laws to stop people inciting violence impeded on free speech, and it was thrown out of cabinet.

“Speakman was a bit bewildered, he was confused as to how people have confused free speech with racial vilification,” one cabinet minister said.

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies chief Vic Alhadeff said the government was allowing people such as extremist Islamic leaders to incite violence against

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Mr Alhadeff said the Berejiklian government is allowing people, like extremist Islamic leaders, to incite violence against other Australians.

More than 30 groups, including Islamic associations, the grand mufti and NSW Labor all support the changes.

“If a religious leader can publicly call for the murder of people of another faith on the streets of Sydney, and the law is powerless to respond, it puts every one of us at risk,” Mr Alhadeff said.

“There is in fact no group which opposes this change, so we cannot understand what the government is afraid of.

“The only people in NSW who don’t want to make the promotion and advocacy of violence on the basis of race illegal appear to be in government.”

Ms Upton would not answer The Daily Telegraph’s questions, saying only: “I have always been and will remain a strong supporter and advocate for the Jewish community.”

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/gabrielle-upton-uturn-on-backing-laws-to-disarm-hate-preachers/news-story/9d115fed50339ce5c441d4a9361603d5>