

From: Ben Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 21 June 2023 6:50 PM
To: Committee, PJCIS (REPS)
Subject: Anti Nazi bill

Categories: [REDACTED]

To Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

Department of the House of Representatives

Dear Parliamentary Joint Committee members,

I am writing to you in relation to the Anti Nazi Laws that are going to be introduced by you into Federal Parliament.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Ben Smith and I am a licenced second hand militaria dealer here in Victoria trading as ANTIK with an ABN. This is a retail antiques and collectables business that I started in 2014 after 15 years working as a professional dealer and auctioneer within the antique industry. I now run my own retail business for a living as a sole trader. I am also a certified practicing valuer of antiques goods and chattels and have worked as a consultant to the Australian War Memorial, the RAAF Museum, the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne and numerous TV and movie productions. Let me just add most importantly that I am in no way a Neo Nazi or a Nazi sympathiser or condone in any way the Nazi ideology, in fact my grandfather suffered during WW2 under the Nazis as a prisoner of war in Germany from 1941-1945.

As a full time professional militaria dealer I buy and sell military artefacts from every time period and country and this of course includes items pertaining to the Third Reich period. The clients whom I sell to are not neo Nazis in nature and they do not solely collect items as part of an anti semitism campaign or agenda. Some are collectors of particular fields such as edged weapons, headgear, paper related items such as postage stamps and postcards, medals and badges, uniforms and equipment, etc, the list is extensive. These collectors are ordinary mum and dads with families, with ordinary jobs and lifestyles that go to the supermarket, to the coffee shop and sports days but who also have an interest in interest in history and the facts of history, the technology of conflicts over the years and unfortunately WW2 Germany forms part of that history. Their collections range from small to very large and they are worth multi millions of dollars collectively. I myself have invested considerable thousands of dollars into the hobby as both a collector and to my business accumulative to my life savings. Please let me just say simply that this bill will not stop the average neo -nazi from buying his /her Eureka flag from ebay and saluting at the next rally on the steps of pariloamnet. No it will not, this bill only effects drastically the livelihood of business like mine and legitimate collectors of history.

As a long standing professional militaria dealer a can say that the average neo nazi does not collect historical artefacts, I know because I never see any in my business dealings. None at all!. I deal with ordinary day to day law abiding people. I am personally against the neo -Nazi moment in Australia but see

no justification in banning the sale of Third Reich historical artefacts as a tool to stop the rise of the neo nazi movement in this country. I personally understand and accept the the steps that you are taking on banning the public display of the swastika, but with respect sir, would like to point out that there is a significant impact on the collectors who wish to continue growing their collections for historical interest and of course the legitimate tax paying dealers like myself who have invested hundreds of thousands of hard earned dollars and rely on their sales for a sole living income. I don't just sell my items within Australia I sell them overseas also and wish to continue my livelihood into the future. I have a shop front and also work from home as many other dealers do in this modern world on the internet and would like to expand that side of the business in the post covid world.

By introducing this bill we would also be trying to modify the telling of history in its raw form to the next generations of historians and collectors alike. There is also the case of where does this stop, do we then start looking at the atrocities of the Japanese during WW2 especially to Australian servicemen, or even a look at a more recent conflict of Russia in the Ukraine? Are we to ban the sale of Russian items as well??

Yesterday I was legally allowed to spend money investing into my legitimate ABN registered, law abiding, tax paying business only to wake up this morning and be informed that through a government bill to parliament I am now to loose all my investment? Just like that... I woke up this morning to a sea of aggravation and personal stress in the thought of loosing my livelihood, future income and personal collection accumulated over my lifetime due to the introduction of this bill. I am particularly concerned with my current stock holdings and investment and ask will there be any compensation to dealers or a buy back situation as in the 1996 gun amnesty, or an extended time frame of the disposal of stock to dealers? Have dealers been consulted or considered in the outcome of the introduction of this bill?

I would also like to recommend a balanced approach to this issue by having a license or a register of bona-fida militaria dealers who after passing an application and under strict control are allowed to buy and sell WW2 German items to only serious collectors and historians and perhaps limit it to closed sections of their websites where they must register with the website and provide a declaration that they are not in any way a neo Nazi or a sympathiser. It could go as far as the dealers keeping a register of their clients and items they purchased. If this was considered I could then continue to sell internationally and within Australia to the serious collector.

In finishing this letter I would like to state that if the legislation is passed in an un- modified version I would personally stand to loose hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost sales and investment. I am not alone i this situation as there is a number of other dealers across the country in that same unexpected situation. I am not against tightening the ban on the public display of the swastika but I am against denying the right of the serious collector and historian continuing with their passion and the right of an established dealer to continue earning a living, If the legislation is passed un-modified how would I be able to control the sales through my business.

I do hope you receive this submission in a positive way and understand the impacts it has on collectors, historians and dealers alike

Regards

Ben R Smith

Owner/Operator

ANTI-K

8th June 2023

Sent from my iPad