
MEDIA RELEASE - Dear Media: What is the big deal about being a witch?

Friday 30th July, 11am AEST

"The media seems more willing to burn a witch at the stake than to throw Christians to the lions." That's the view of David Garland, President of the Pagan Awareness Network.

This follows the guilty plea this week of Melbourne Pagan Eilish De Avalon on serious traffic offences, including dragging a Police Officer nearly 200 metres when his arm became caught in her car window. Media reports state that Ms De Avalon told the Police she didn't need a driver's license and that she was "a being from another world". Ms De Avalon has denied saying that she was from another world.

"These are really serious offences and people need to be aware that the laws of the land apply to us no matter what our beliefs are," Mr. Garland said. "We have an obligation to treat our fellow human beings with care. I hope the Policeman concerned makes a full recovery."

He added: "The media has done its best to put Ms De Avalon on trial in the court of public opinion for her beliefs as well as her actions. I doubt they would bother if she were a Catholic or a Hindu or practically any other religion. What is the big deal about practicing an indigenous European belief like witchcraft? When it comes to the law, people's actions are what matter."

Mr Garland also expressed concern over comments from the public that the media coverage has generated. "We've seen suggestions that people should be targeted for violence because of their religion," he said. "One instance of this is a charming individual on Andrew Bolt's blog who suggested we should be burnt at the stake the way we used to be. The comment still hasn't been taken down more than 24 hours later. It is totally inappropriate for a mainstream news outlet like the Herald Sun to be publishing hate speech - especially that which advocates violence."

He added: "We will be looking at this instance to see if it contravenes Victoria's anti-hate laws."

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