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Daniel Andrews chastises Essendon Bombers over church 'firestorm'

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has taken a swipe at the football club he supports over views described as a "fire-starter".

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Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has torched the Essendon Football Club over its appointment of Andrew Thorburn as its new chief executive.

Andrews on Tuesday made a stunning attack on the team he is a paid-up member of after public commentary surrounding Thorburn's links to a conservative Christian church in Melbourne.

Thorburn, 57, is chairman of the City on a Hill church, which has previously condemned homosexuality and holds divisive views around abortion.

Thorburn is taking up his first role in professional football after resigning as National Australia Bank (NAB) boss in 2019 during the banking royal commission.

Thorburn defended his appointment and his Christian faith in a radio interview on Tuesday morning before Andrews faced the media, declaring Bombers fans have another reason to be "somewhat disappointed" with the club.

[Essendon has lurched from one disaster to the next on and off the field this year](#) with the club at breaking point following board member and club icon Kevin Sheedy's extraordinary decision to slam his own club for last week appointing Brad Scott as its new senior coach, overlooking club legend James Hird.

According to AAP journalist Callum Godde, Andrews was asked directly about the Church on a Hill's divisive views and responded by saying: "Those views are absolutely appalling. I don't support those views, that kind of intolerance, that kind of hatred, bigotry. It is just wrong.

"To dress that up as anything other than bigotry is just obviously false."

He said he will remain a member of the football club.

The church has an article on its website from 2013 titled 'Surviving Same Sex

Attraction as a Christian’.

Thorburn distanced himself from those views and said he anticipated the public backlash after “little firestorms” surrounding his faith in his previous jobs.

Footy legend Garry Lyon said in an interview with Thorburn on SEN Breakfast that Thorburn’s connection with the church was a “fire-starter” for friction among fans.

“My faith is a very personal thing, and my faith has helped me become a better leader,” Thorburn said.



07/02/2019: NAB CEO Andrew Thorburn has resigned as a result of the Banking Royal Commission. Stuart McEvoy/The Australian.



Newly appointed Essendon Bombers AFL coach Brad Scott and club President David Barham.

Photo by Robert Cianflone/Getty Images.

“At the centre of my faith is the belief that you should create community, care for people, help people’s faith and respect them as humans.”

He said his record in his previous roles as chief executive of NAB and Bank of NZ showed he is “inclusive and welcoming, caring and diverse”.

Thorburn joined City on a Hill in 2014 and was appointed to its board two years ago. He suggested the church has a broad range of views on the divisive societal issues.

“I understand that some of these views, and I’ll come to them, are offensive to some people and upset people and I really respect that,” he said.

“Firstly, my faith is a very personal thing. I think my faith has helped me become a better leader because at the centre of my faith is the belief that you should create community and care for people and help people be safe and respect them as humans.”

He also distanced himself from the 2013 article.

“I’ve never heard these things expressed in my time, I’ve been on the board two years,” he said.

“I’m not a pastor, my job in a governance role is to make sure it’s run well, I don’t always agree with what’s said.”



Victorian Premier Dan Andrews. Picture: Ian Currie.



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