# Elderly woman confronts gatecrasher at Melbourne candidates forum amid election tensions



An elderly woman physically confronted a gatecrasher who disrupted a candidates forum in Kew, north-east Melbourne, in the Kooyong electorate on Wednesday evening, the Daily Mail reports. The event, attended by around 60 voters, was organised by Friends of the ABC and featured Teal independent MP Monique Ryan as well as her Labor and Greens opponents discussing Australian media and funding for the national broadcaster.

Footage from the forum shows that about 30 minutes after the event began, three protesters entered the room uninvited. One of the men was identified as Matt Trihey, associated with the Lads Society led by neo-Nazi Thomas Sewell, though Trihey denies being a neo-Nazi himself. He vocally criticised the attendees, shouting, “You people are destroying this country because you will not address civic safety.”

Following calls from attendees to leave, an elderly woman approached Trihey and punched him in the face. Ms Ryan intervened to console the woman soon after. Police were called and arrived shortly after the men left the venue, initiating an ongoing investigation. A police spokesman said, “At this stage no further complaints have been made to police.”

Ms Ryan told The Age that the disturbance was unexpected and upsetting for attendees. She added, “I was also concerned that things could potentially get out of hand if someone felt the need to [physically] intervene. It's unfortunate … I've not heard of that sort of thing [happening at other forums].”

The incident follows two other confrontations during pre-polling in Sydney earlier the same day. There, a man was arrested after damaging election signage and intimidating party volunteers outside a pre-polling booth at Dunmore Lang College in Macquarie Park, an area in the north-west Sydney seat of Bennelong.

Video footage captured the man kicking down Liberal Party posters promoting local candidate Scott Yung and shouting aggressively at volunteers. At one point, he yelled, “Don't put your f\*\*\*ing hands on me,” to a female volunteer, adding, “Because you're a woman, yeah, you're allowed to?” The situation was defused when a Greens supporter intervened and escorted the man away. No injuries were reported.

Police arrested a 30-year-old man at his Macquarie Park home around 1pm on Wednesday. According to a police statement, “The man allegedly intimidated a 32-year-old female volunteer and acted in an aggressive manner towards two other volunteers.” He was charged with intimidation and is due to appear at Burwood Local Court on 2 June. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) stated that while aware of the incident, it occurred outside the polling venue and did not involve AEC staff or affect polling operations. An AEC spokesperson said, “Destruction of property or intimidatory behaviour is potentially a police matter but not one for the AEC.” The spokesperson also said, “The AEC has been consistent throughout the election in calling for lawful and respectful campaigning to occur. It's disappointing to see any violent or intimidatory behaviour.”

A local resident named Steve told the Daily Telegraph he was left feeling frightened by the episode. “(I'm) still a bit traumatised to be honest,” he said. “Thankfully I wasn't in his way but I was fearing for the guy in the Liberal shirt.”

Further unrest occurred earlier on Wednesday outside a pre-polling booth at Ashfield Civic Centre in Sydney’s inner-west, within the electorate of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. A 79-year-old man was hospitalised in a serious condition after reportedly being assaulted. Emergency services rushed him to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital following reports of an incident outside the venue.

According to Nine News, the elderly man was wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat and allegedly became aggressive towards a volunteer handing out how-to-vote pamphlets. The man was then said to have approached a Labour candidate’s corflute poster with the intent to deface it. He was confronted by a woman, after which a 17-year-old boy crossed the road and struck the man, causing him to fall to the ground.

The teenager was arrested at the scene and has been charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm. He was refused bail and is set to appear before a children’s court on Thursday. Police noted the two individuals were not known to each other.

These incidents across Melbourne and Sydney reflect a week marked by heightened tensions and security concerns surrounding political events and pre-polling activities ahead of the federal election.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/elderly-woman-punches-protester-at-kooyong-candidates-forum-20250423-p5bd9x.html> - This article reports on the incident at the Kooyong candidates forum in Melbourne, describing how an elderly woman physically confronted a gatecrasher who disrupted the event, corroborating the initial claim about the disruption and the woman’s response.
2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-23/political-forum-disrupted-in-melbourne-by-neo-nazi-protester/13976632> - This source confirms the identity of one of the protesters as Matt Trihey and his connection to the Lads Society led by neo-Nazi Thomas Sewell, as well as his disruptive and vocal criticism at the event.
3. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/police-investigate-incident-at-kooyong-candidates-forum-20250423-p5bdafb.html> - Reporting that police were called to the Kooyong forum following the disturbance and that an investigation is underway, while no further complaints have been made, supporting the details of police involvement and the ongoing inquiry.
4. <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/man-arrested-for-intimidation-and-damage-to-election-signage-in-bennelong/news-story/fa8a0b4ff2c4a5cbd2e4631db2cc1dbc> - This article covers the arrest in Sydney of a man who damaged election signage and intimidated volunteers near a pre-polling booth in Bennelong, matching the description of the pre-polling incident and charges laid.
5. <https://www.nine.com.au/news/2025/04/23/elderly-man-assaulted-at-ashfield-prepolling-election-violence/2a5f667d-0c2b-4aa7-9a3b-b7ddf6de1a3a> - Confirms the assault on a 79-year-old man wearing a 'Make America Great Again' hat outside the Ashfield pre-polling booth and the subsequent arrest and charging of a 17-year-old boy with assault occasioning actual bodily harm.
6. <https://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/Conduct-of-elections.htm> - Offers official statements from the Australian Electoral Commission regarding incidents of violence or intimidation during elections, affirming that such matters are police responsibilities and emphasizing the AEC’s commitment to lawful and respectful campaigning.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14638741/election-violence-Kooyong-Sydney.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data