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Invercargill Mayor Nobby Clark throws weight behind Stop Co-Governance Tour, police say claims people arming themselves untrue



By [Lincoln Tan](#)

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Stop Co-Governance Tour leader Julian Batchelor. Photo / Peter de Graaf

Invercargill's mayor has thrown his weight behind a controversial anti-co-governance speaker touring the country, while those at a meeting in the Southland city were last night told people are buying guns - but police say the claim is hogwash.

When asked by a member of the audience if he thought there was any real threat of civil war, speaker Julian Batchelor urged people to oppose co-governance with dialogue and not the sword - but claimed he's receiving calls from people wanting to arm themselves.

“I’m getting phoned by people once a week saying they’ve gone out and bought guns,” Batchelor said, according to a video from the event last night.

“And I say ‘don’t use those mate’, let’s try to fight this peacefully and try to stop it, peacefully.”

A police spokeswoman said police did not attend the event but were aware of the meeting and were ready to respond had any issues arisen.

“There is absolutely nothing to substantiate the claims made at the meeting in relation to New Zealanders arming themselves,” she said.

Batchelor has been touring the country as part of his Stop Co-Governance Tour, which has attracted protests, and several venues have cancelled his bookings for meetings.

The meeting at Ascot Park Raceway, where about 80 people attended, also had the support of Invercargill’s mayor.

Mayor Nobby Clark not only attended but spoke at the meeting.

Clark said taking up arms was definitely not the message that was shared at the meeting, and reaffirmed Batchelor’s message about “using the mind, using the ability to vote and stuff like that to remove co-governance”.

Last Wednesday, Batchelor and his group were told by Clutha District Mayor Bryan Cadogan to “get out of town, you are not welcome here”.

Clark said the group getting closed down at venues across the country was “a sad indictment of democracy in this country”.

“I don’t agree with everything that’s said at the meeting, but I probably agree with a majority of what he says,” Clark said.

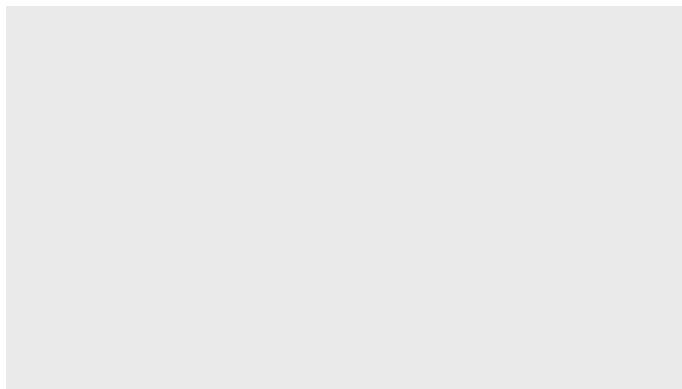
“Why I attend is because I like to engage with what the community’s saying or what they’re listening to. And if you’re asking if I support the idea of co-governance, the answer is no, I don’t.”

Clark said the meeting was generally peaceful, although at one stage people were asked to be more respectful while others were talking.

Clark made headlines in March when he was called out for [using the “n-word” at a public event](#). He used the word when speaking at an Art Foundation event where he touched on the issue of freedom of expression in art.

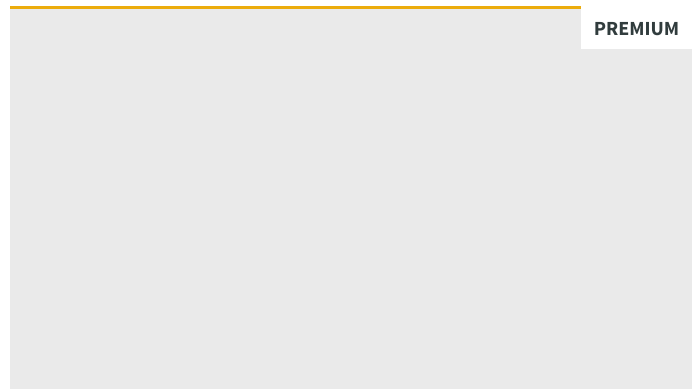
Lincoln Tan specialises in covering stories around diversity and immigration. He’s been a journalist at the Herald since 2006.

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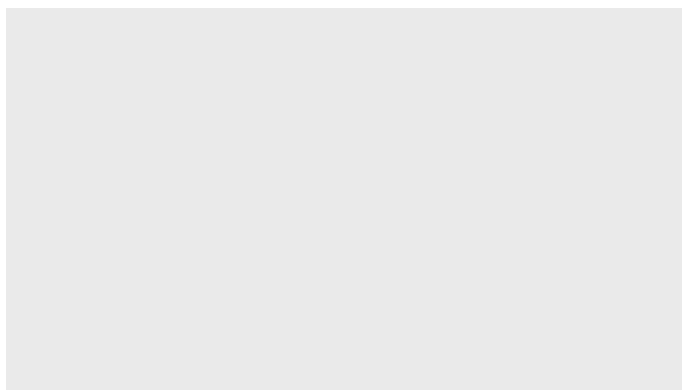
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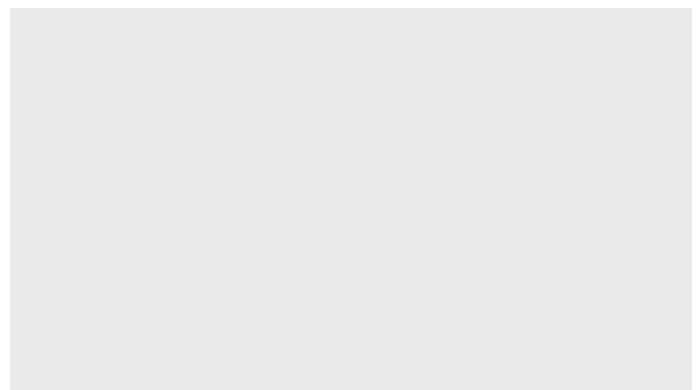
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