

Australian Minister Defends Comments Telling Christians to 'Suck It Up' Regarding Persecution

Tim Costello, an Australian Baptist minister and senior fellow at the Center for Public Christianity, recently told his fellow believers to “calm down” and “suck it up” when it comes to persecution. Recently, Australian believers have been concerned about growing religious persecution, and what role the government has in protecting religious liberty.

According to the Guardian, Costello—who previously served as CEO of World Vision Australia—said earlier this month, “I don’t think there is a risk of persecution—Christians need to calm down. I would say to Christians if you want to see persecution, let me take you to places where there is persecution of Christians and other religious groups. Let me take you to Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, and I will show you persecution. And if they read their Bibles, Jesus said ‘The world will hate you and misunderstand you for following me,’ but to go on following, loving, serving. So I would say, just suck it up. Jesus didn’t go around demanding legislation to protect his rights. Jesus didn’t advocate for freedom of religion legislation.”

On Monday, during an appearance on *Q&A*—a public broadcast show in Australia—Costello was questioned by an audience member named Rob Ward about his earlier comments.

“Tim, you’ve recently been reported as saying that Christians should calm down in the face of what would seem to be an increasing intolerance of the Christian faith,” Ward asked. “So my question is should Luke and Carla Burrell, publishers

of *White* wedding magazine, forced out of business for failing to promote same-sex marriage, should they calm down? Should Joshua, the uni student suspended for daring to pray, should he calm down? And what about the Melbourne IT specialist, fired for privately expressing concerns about the safe schools program—should he calm down? What do we do?”

Costello then clarified that his points were intended for a Christian audience—although “calm down” would also be applicable to liberal opponents—and said he was trying to paraphrase Jesus.

“I was speaking to my mob, the Christian mob,” Costello says. “I would also say to some on the hard secular left that they should calm down. I think I’d paraphrase Jesus, who said, ‘Turn the other cheek.’ My paraphrase was ‘Calm down and suck it up.’ By that I’m saying that we’ve just elected our first Pentecostal prime minister who could pray openly for six minutes at Hillsong and talk openly about his faith. So this notion that we’re victimized, we’re persecuted? I’ll show you real persecution in my World Vision work. Where Christians really are suffering.

“To your question, I do think there are real issues around freedom of religion. I think freedom of religion is actually good for society. Freedom of Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Christians—who actually ran institutions, have schools, charities that express their vision of flourishing is good in a democratic society. I do think there are loopholes. I know in New South Wales that you can be sacked because of your religion. An employer can say to a woman wearing a hijab, ‘You’re scaring the customers. You’re fired.’ I think that’s not on. I think that to go to what’s behind your question, that Christians should be working this out sensibly, because I think there’s a lot of victim-claiming of ‘We’re persecuted,’ which is overreach.”

Costello also speculated that Christians were being exploited

by political parties, who were intentionally stoking outrage rather than seeking genuine solutions to the cultural divide.

“I think left and right want to keep the war going often, and overreaching hysteria keeps the war going,” Costello says. “In the middle is us, the exhausted middle, who want to compromise and live together. And I think we can find solutions to this.”

Watch the full video of Costello’s Q&A reply [here](#). The question and Costello’s response begins at 21:20.