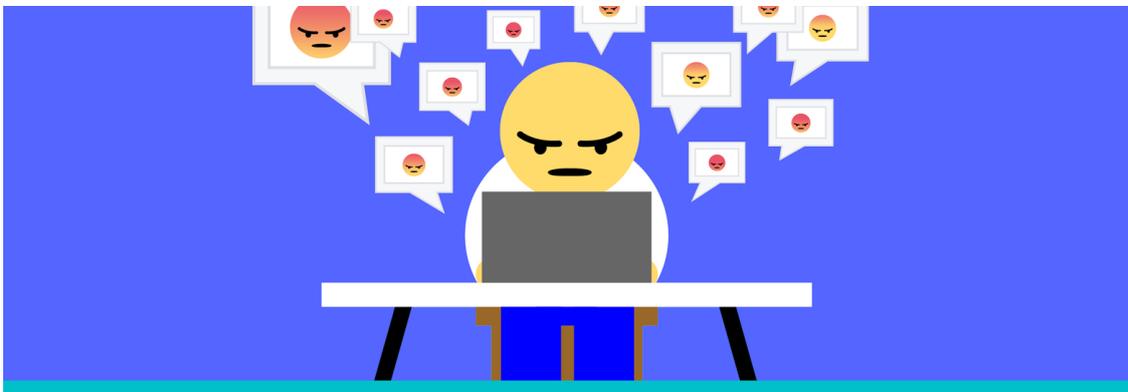




30th of August

Hi there,

Here's an update of what I've been doing during the past fortnight in Parliament and across the electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region, and how you can get involved in community activities.



My Bill tackling online hate speech

This week I presented the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Amendment Bill 2019* which will extend Victoria's anti-vilification laws and stop online trolling in its tracks.

The bill aims to expand protections under the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* to vilification based on gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

Trolls are out in force and they know they will not be held to account, but this Bill changes that. People need to take personal responsibility for their actions.

You can read or watch my speech [here](#), listen to my chat on ABC RN [here](#) or you can watch people on Sky News pull their hair out about it [here](#).



Supporting trans and gender diverse rights

Earlier this month, I stood shoulder-to-shoulder in support of transgender and gender diverse people in our community ahead of the lower house debate to allow people to change the gender on their birth certificate without having gender reassignment surgery.

I also spoke strongly in support during my speech and lamented that we had not done this sooner. The bill has now passed Parliament and will come into effect next year.

You can read or watch my speech [here](#).



Spent Convictions final report handed down

The 59th Parliament's first committee report was released this week. The Inquiry into a Legislated Spent Convictions Scheme was conducted by the Legal and Social Issues Committee and was my first report as Chair of a Committee.

The report recommended a new framework in Victoria for controlled disclosure of criminal record information - very long overdue in Victoria. The greatest protector to re-offending is employment and the greatest barrier to employment for offenders is their criminal record.

You can read or watch my speech [here](#) or watch the press conference [here](#).



Appointed to Industrial Hemp Taskforce

I was pleased to join Agriculture Minister Jaclyn Symes and Independent member for Mildura, Ali Cupper to launch an Industrial Hemp Taskforce at Parliament yesterday.

Given the versatility of this fibre, I'm extremely excited to investigate what opportunities there are to grow the industry, particularly from an advanced manufacturing and agricultural point of view.

You can watch the announcement [here](#) or find more information on the Taskforce [here](#).



Hosted a pill testing demonstration at Parliament

It was a pleasure to host [Harm Reduction Australia](#) and [Pill Testing Australia](#), for a demonstration of Pill Testing in the Victorian Parliament.

Dr David Caldicott, Stephanie Tzanetis and Gino Vumbaca presented the evidence for pill testing, while busting some of the myths and common misconceptions to a range of MP's, parliamentary staff and special guests.

They also brought along a Compact FTIR Spectrometer, the main tech behind pill testing to demonstrate how it works.



(L-R) Dr David Caldicott, Gulliver Mclean, myself and Gino Vumbaca.

I also pressed the Minister for Health during question time this week on how many people need to die at music festivals before we will see action. You can read or watch my question [here](#).



Questioned the Government on access to medicinal cannabis

I weighed in on the Victorian Government's refusal to reveal how much cannabis has been grown as part of their \$28 million medicinal cannabis program earlier this month.

After almost three years of growing, we are still yet to see a product come out the other end. We have thousands of children and adults suffering and people having to break the law to ease their loved one's pain. This is a mess and we need the Government to fix this now.

You can read or watch my question [here](#), or watch the Current Affair story [here](#).



Condolences to family and friends of Allison Milner

In the last sitting week, I rose in Parliament to extend my sympathies to the family and friends of Allison Milner. She was a respected academic and much-loved wife and mother of two. Such a tragic loss and I can't imagine what her family are going through right now.

I paid tribute to her in my members statement which you can read [here](#).



Condemning the Catholic Church's appalling stance on protecting paedophiles

It will come as no surprise that I welcomed the Government's plan to force religious ministers to report suspicions of child abuse, bringing their profession in line with police, teachers, medical practitioners and early childhood workers.

I was appalled at Archbishop Peter Comensoli's resistance to the proposed laws, re-affirming his commitment to the seal of confession - above the safety of children.

Both in comments to [AAP](#) and in a [Facebook live](#) I condemned his arrogance and posed a question I don't find myself asking very often: *"What would Jesus do?"*.

I'm no expert here, but from what I've heard, I think Jesus would choose to protect children.



Improving access to HIV testing

I voted in favor of the Public Health and Well-Being Amendment Bill 2019, which seeks to address structural stigma associated with HIV and normalise regular screening. The changes will allow the expansion of cost-effective peer-led testing models, particularly in rural and regional Victoria.

Victoria was previously the only jurisdiction in Australia to impose requirements on who may conduct HIV testing, which will now not be the case as a result of this Bill.

Read or watch my speech [here](#).



Addressing stigma of chronic pain

Despite its prevalence, sufferers of chronic pain continue to feel stigmatised in the healthcare system for simply having a condition they didn't choose to have.

One in five Victorians are affected by chronic pain and it's wrong for them to feel like they have to constantly explain the legitimacy and severity of their pain to anyone, let alone a healthcare professional.

I asked what the Minister for Health was doing to address this issue. Read or watch my constituency question [here](#).



Improving access to IVF

Earlier this month, I supported the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment (Consent) Bill 2019, a Bill designed to ensure women, regardless of marital status, are treated equally when accessing IVF services.

An independent [review of assisted reproductive treatment](#) recognised that married women were treated differently to single women and women in de facto relationships or women leaving de facto relationships.

You can read or watch my speech [here](#).



Hydromorphone trial

I was recently contacted by a father of a long-term addict who thanked me for my efforts in getting support for a Medically Supervised Injecting Room. Sadly, his son had passed away and while going through his things, had come across a poem written about the injecting room.

I was deeply touched by this and with his permission, I read the poem in Parliament and outlined ways a hydromorphone trial could help people like his son who are battling addiction.

You can read or watch my adjournment matter [here](#).



First Nations Assembly election

Elections are coming up for the First Nations Assembly, the voice to Parliament which

will negotiate a treaty.

People can vote if they are:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander;
- are **aged 16 or above**, and;
- either:

Are a traditional owner of country in Victoria (even if you live outside of Victoria) or live in Victoria (and have done so for at least three of the past five years).

People can enrol [online](#), via post or in person. All that is needed is one proof of your name, date of birth and address, and a signature on the form.

The details of people who enrol and vote will be held securely by the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission, and then transferred to the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria.

You can call the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission on 1800 TREATY (1800 87 32 89) if you want more information.



Congratulations to all students who participated in the Parliament Prize 2019

This year's Parliament Prize asked students to make a video of a 90-second statement they would make to Parliament if they were an MP. The competition received a record number of entries from 589 primary and secondary school students from 113 schools

across Victoria.

Taking out first place in the three categories were Isabella Schwarze from Genazzano FCJ College in the years 5-6 category, Mungo Sweeney from Fitzroy High School in the years 7-9 category and Isabelle Langley from Billanook College in the years 11-12 category.

Well done to everyone who entered and I look forward to the awards being presented at Parliament House in September.

Watch the videos of the finalists [here](#).

I hope you have a terrific weekend,

Fiona Patten MP