



8th of April, 2021.

Hi there,

Welcome to the new 'Covid Normal'.

We have all seen it with our own eyes – Melbourne is swinging again – sometimes in a social distanced way - but it is swinging nonetheless.

You can grab a drink at your local and even have a party at your house. You can go on a road trip interstate, get on a plane and Tinder dates are totally allowed! Businesses are open and many of us have gone back to the office almost full time. It's certainly been a busy time in my office.

I am sure we are all pretty happy with how things are looking now that's for sure, so it's just a matter of keeping vigilant until we all have a shot in our arm. You know – one of those vaccines that DOES NOT contain microchips! 🙄

41 🍌 days in a row today! Check [here](#) for the most up-to-date information and advice from Victoria's Chief Health Officer.

To give you a quick update, in the last couple of sitting weeks of Parliament, we:

- Passed the [Spent Convictions Bill](#)
- Released the Legal and Social Issues [Inquiry into Homelessness](#) which I Chaired and put forward 51 amazing recommendations. Read more about it [here](#)
- Spoke to the report on the Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections
- Supported a push to lift the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14
- Roared loudly with other women at the #March4Justice
- Pushed the Attorney General to fix holes in our [Voluntary Assisted Dying laws](#) that put barriers up for New Zealand long term residents.
- Met with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to discuss ways we can tackle the high rates of smoking in Indigenous communities

- Chaired the first public hearing for the [Inquiry into Cannabis use in Victoria](#)
- Questioned the Minister for the Digital Economy about the government's approach to [digital currencies](#)
- Celebrated International Women's Day
- Lobbied the Health Minister and Treasurer for funding for AOD services in Mildura
- Delivered a speech to parliament on [family violence and animal welfare](#)
- Called for an MP's [code of conduct](#)
- Spoke in parliament about the struggle of [refugees](#) in our community
- Lobbied the Health Minister for a [Centre of Excellence for Endometriosis](#)
- Delivered an adjournment on the need to support the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's employment recovery plan
- Spoke to the [constitutional amendment to ban fracking](#)
- Pushed for greater government investment following the Royal Commission into Mental Health, specifically early interventions in psychosocial support.
- Questioned the Planning Minister about the [The Craigieburn West precinct structure plan](#)

Fiona



Hemp is Victoria's Farming Future

On Easter Monday I travelled to Bunjil Farm in beautiful Lauriston for a Farm Open Day featuring a wide variety of hemp products. There was hemp beer, hemp building materials, hemp muesli, and, of course, hemp chocolate easter eggs!

Those visiting got to see Bunjil's Hemp Cottage fully decorated with luxurious hemp bed linen, some glorious smelling hemp body care products and a hemp-covered couch. Even the light fittings were made from hemp.

All are all examples of the many and varied uses of hemp which I advocate for sitting on the Victorian Hemp Taskforce with Reason Coalition partner Ali Cupper MP and the Agriculture Minister Mary-Anne Thomas. I would also advocate for everyone to visit this gorgeous part of the Macedon Ranges.

You can find out more about Bunjil Farm by visiting www.bunjilfarm.com.au.



Female facilities for Thornbury

It was wonderful to be in Thornbury for the turning of the sod of the new female facilities at the [Fitzroy Stars Football & Netball Club](#).

Since the 1970s the Fitzroy Stars have been at the heart of the Aboriginal community in Melbourne's North, now fielding men's and women's senior and junior teams in the Northern Football League and Northern Netball League.

President Esme Bamblett and CEO Simon Minton-Connell spoke with such pride about their women's teams, who will soon have professional grade facilities of their own, no longer having to get changed in the car.

It's so important that women and girls in sport are supported in exactly the same way that the boys and men are. It shows them that they belong and that they are valued.

Good on the Minister for Women, Gabrielle Williams MP for throwing her support behind the project.



Michael Gudinski Memorial

I was proud to be part of the official delegation that attended the Michael Gudinski Memorial at the Rod Laver Arena the other week.

My electorate of Northern Metro has a high concentration and long tradition of live inner-city music venues - think Collingwood, Melbourne, North Melbourne, Brunswick, Fitzroy, Richmond and so on.

Many of the artists who have plied their trade at our inner North venues went on to work with Michael Gudinski and Mushroom Records.

It was a great send off for a Victorian who walked his own path and changed the face of Australian music.



New Doco Spotlighting Plight of Homeless Women 50+

Women over fifty are the fastest growing demographic of people experiencing homelessness in Australia, and a documentary is in the works to shine a light on those stories.

I spoke to Director Sue Thomson about the solutions offered by the recent homelessness inquiry and what can be done, if we have the political will to do so.

Please follow www.facebook.com/undercoverdocumentary to keep up to date with the film's release.



Push for Richmond Tigers to Play in Mildura

Recently Reason Coalition partner Member for Mildura Ali Cupper and I met with representatives of the Richmond Football Club to talk about the possibility of the Tigers taking a pre-season game of the AFL to Mildura in 2022.

Mildura is in the throes of completing a brand spanking new Community Sports Centre which will have the capacity to host a game. Did you know that many people are Tiger-Mad in Mildura? Playing a game, more than likely at night, early next year would be an economic boon for the city and provide inspiration to the many kids in the area who wanna be just like Dusty.

We've met with the AFL now and will continue to make our case for big time AFL footy to kick off in Mildura. We'll keep you updated on our progress.



Legalise Cannabis Party Wins in WA

Congratulations to Sophia Moermond and Dr Brian Walker, who have been elected to the West Australian Parliament Upper House.

Sophia and Brian are the first ever Legalise Cannabis Party Members of Parliament and I can't wait to see the amazing work they're is going to do. They are sure to make a splash at next year's Victorian State election too.

The mood for change in society when it comes to relaxing our cannabis laws is growing. With personal use of up to 50 grams and two plants per person now legal in the ACT and with this WA election result, the major parties better wake and smell the ... well, buds.



Reason Party Gets New Digs

It's official - Reason has a new home!

2021 Victorian of the Year and the founder of the National Homeless Collective Donna Stolzenberg, joined me to cut the ribbon on our new Reason HQ office at 91 Johnston Street in Collingwood.

A huge thank-you to everyone who volunteered on the night and to all of those who have rolled up their sleeves over the last few weeks to help get our office looking great. We're delighted with our new digs. If you would like to get involved, drop us a line!



Parliament comes to Bright

I am looking forward to the Legislative Council holding a regional sitting in the town of Bright on Thursday April 29. It will be a great opportunity for the communities of North East Victoria to experience how Parliament operates and for Members of the Council to engage with the people in the area. Bright was an important hub for responding to last summer's bushfires and continues to play a pivotal part in the region's recovery.

It's been a while but the Legislative Council has previously held regional sittings in various parts of Victoria and this one will be open to the public.



Community Skills for Climate Action

Keen to work with others to take action on climate change? Whether you're new to climate action or are already involved, Darebin, Moreland and Yarra councils have combined forces to run a new Community Skills for Climate Action program.

This program is for you if you're wanting to:

- Deepen your level of climate action, wherever you are at
- Consider, or reconnect with, how you can take climate action in ways that suit your unique skills, experience, networks and interests
- Develop new skills to help your work have the most impact
- Use your existing networks, and/or develop new ones, to extend your reach and impact
- Meet and work with others in your community who are passionate about climate action

Apply for the program [here](#).



Grants! Grants! Grants!

There's a plethora of pathways to funding for community groups and businesses through local grants and sponsorship programs run by Councils in the Northern Metropolitan Region.

[Economic Development Grants](#), [Female Inclusion in Sport Grants](#), Covid19 Business Support, Council Sponsorships, [Sustainable Land Management Grants](#) and much, much more.

Check out what your local council has to offer [here](#).



Hume Town Planning Community Input

Hume Council will be running a series of community workshops in April to hear your ideas and priorities to make Hume a great place to live, learn, work and play in the future. Anyone who has a connection with Hume City is invited to attend.

All workshops will be run in accordance with current COVID-safe requirements. Registered participants will be updated of any changes via email.

Workshops will be run on the following dates:

Wednesday 14 April: Hume Global Learning Centre Sunbury (6pm to 8pm)

Wednesday 21 April: Town Hall Broadmeadows (6pm to 8pm)

Thursday 22 April: Hume Global Learning Centre Craigieburn (6pm to 8pm)

[Register now](#) to get involved.



Farmers' Market meet and greets

Over the coming weeks, you can come and have a chat with me at one of several Farmers' Markets in the area. Whether you have an issue you'd like to address, a suggestion to offer or perhaps you just want to introduce me to your dog, I'll be there and looking forward to meeting as many locals as I can.

Coburg Farmers' Market

Saturday April 17, 8am-1pm.

Coburg Primary School

92 Bell Street Coburg

Carlton Farmers' Market

Saturday May 1, 8am-1pm.

Carlton North Primary School

Cnr Canning & Lee Streets, Carlton North

(Enter via O'Grady Street)

Alphington Farmers' Markets

Sunday May 25, 9am-1pm

Melbourne Innovation Centre

2 Wingrove St Alphington

You can find out about these, and other Farmers' Markets, in your area, by visiting the Melbourne Farmers' Markets website on www.mfm.com.au

Get in Touch! I am always keen to hear from you on any matter. You can make an appointment to see me or speak to one of my team by calling 03 9386 4400, by emailing fiona.patten@parliament.vic.gov.au or drop into our office at 747 Sydney Road Brunswick.

Fiona Patten MP