



*15<sup>th</sup> of October, 2021*

Hi there,

Times are still tough. Terribly tough. So, I want to start by acknowledging just how much frustration, isolation and suffering our community is still experiencing.

But I also want to tell you of my optimism for our community and for our world, this tiny pale blue dot. 🌐 (Watch [this video](#) if you don't know what I'm talking about).

Progress continues to occur, despite the absolute need, which I have supported, for the Government to focus on minimising the physical, mental and economic health consequences of the pandemic. It, of course, is rightly the priority.

We are close, oh we are close, to being able to be free and social creatures again. Please help accelerate our path by getting vaccinated.

---



## This week in Parliament, I ...

- Was elated to see the introduction of a Bill to [Decriminalise Sex Work](#) in Victoria, in response to my recommendations
- Introduced a motion into Parliament for a Loneliness Minister
- Saw our hard work to increase the care leaving age for foster kids reach Parliament
- Argued to transition our [native timber industry to hemp](#)
- Argued against [expanded police powers](#) that further delegate which police can issue orders capable of side-stepping search warrants and court oversight
- Supported a motion to [block new gas drilling](#) near the 12 apostles
- Asked the government to support [research of psychedelics](#) in treating PTSD
- Asked to see evidence of any car crash where the driver at fault was [prescribed medicinal cannabis](#) within the last 5 years
- Again called for [pandemic stress leave](#) for our frontline health workers
- Asked for funding commitments for [John Fawkner College](#) to undertake much needed redevelopment

- Supported measures to ensure [MPs are required to be vaccinated](#)
- Delivered the second report of the [Inquiry into the Closure of I Cook Foods](#)



## **State of Emergency to expire, Reason will fight for transparency from the Andrews Government**

Our view is clear and consistent: The state of emergency extension is poised to expire. I will not support a further extension. Instead, I am fighting for pandemic-specific legislation that is fair and transparent to help us restore cherished liberties. Stay tuned.

I have received much abuse from people who have been given the disingenuous and, frankly, pathetic misrepresentation that I am personally responsible for pandemic lockdowns. That is spin. That is rubbish.

*The truth is* that this extension was for a strictly legislated, limited time and at a

time of profound community need for our governments to lead a Covid response.

*The truth is* Victoria has had the certain end-date, while other Australian jurisdictions have simply rolled over a monthly extension.

*The truth is* that Reason is civil liberties focused, we always seek a proper balance between personal freedom and community responsibility. The truth is that vaccination is our only path, and I have been advocating for that throughout. I do not think mandatory vaccination is appalling. I think vaccination, in these conditions, is a [social responsibility](#).

We will always seek to negotiate and/or champion evidence-based policy aimed at benefitting the many, not the few.

## **There's good news too**

But, getting back to the optimism, dealing with the pandemic does not mean nothing else of importance and reform is happening.

And I want to share with you some stuff from this week and give you an insider peak of what's coming up from us.



## Sex work *is* work

Having spent so many years fighting, for fairness for sex workers, I was so happy this week to see a bill introduced to de-stigmatise, legitimised and respect sex workers.

I am working with communities to see how that can best be implemented in a way that respects the rights of all.

Make no mistake, this was a piece of historically significant reform, long overdue, for which I have advocated for decades, standing on the shoulders of giants of fairness and humanity. Tens of thousands of workers will now be able to receive equal workplace rights and protections.

I applaud the government for adopting this change in response to my recommendations. And I am pleased to have been able to drive it. We are pleased to have been able to move Victoria in this direction, to the pride of Reason Party. And we won't stop here, we'll keep rolling out to you elements of [our agenda](#).

Make no mistake, this was a piece of historically significant reform, long overdue, for which I have long advocated, standing on the shoulders of giants of fairness and humanity. I said exactly this when giving comments to the media, which you can watch [here](#).

Tens of thousands of workers are now able to receive the workplace rights and protections of us all. And the undue stigma around this work should decrease.

And the respect for our extraordinary front-line workers should increase.



## Caring for the carers

Frontline health workers are frazzled. They are in need of our support.

We've pushed successfully for an increased payment per shift of up to \$60 for nurses, one of the most valuable yet undervalued professions. Meanwhile coupon-clippers make a parasitic fortune churning stocks and bonds and deviant derivative traps.

We are now striving to get the Parliament to allocate nurses and allied-health workers pandemic stress leave, just to give them a break as soon as possible. How soon that is depends on all of us – just get the job, please.



## Heroic hemp

Victoria's old-growth forestry industry is transitioning and I want to recognise and respect the unease of those families and communities faced with this.

Which is a key reason why Reason Party will be championing hemp. I want to offer some vision, some clarity, some optimism about the future of the communities that have long relied on forestry.



We know it is necessary to wind down the old-growth timber industry – for a well-rehearsed panoply of environmental and economic reasons. They are the lungs of this land.

So, what is the big picture? Why does hemp have such great potential?

Here are some of the reasons:

- It can replace the bulk of building and timber products currently needlessly sourced from magnificent old-growth forests. It is ridiculous, for example, just how much wood is used to make warehouse pallets
- plantation hardwood takes 30 to deliver a yield. One can grow three hemp crops a year
- It uses little water, and so is a clear replacement, too, for cotton, which requires massive amounts of water, and we all know how important that has become
- It can replace concrete
- No part of this superfast-growing weed is wasted
- There are also profitable opportunities for hemp use in food, beverage, cosmetic and the pet food industries. There is no doubt that these communities facing fundamental reorientation deserve support in the transition.
- It is an amazing carbon sink – much more so than plantation timber.

Hemp can help make it a beneficial transition not only for those communities, but for the entire nation. And that pale blue dot.

## Loneliness

We're going to go hard on this one. Loneliness is a sad killer. We need to act.

The motion I introduced can be found [here](#). Stay tuned.



## The Devil's in the comments section

As you might be aware, I and my office are taking a break from social media. We will be back there, in some form, after we use this time to seek to assess how we can communicate our ideas.

I did this because of the appalling abuse, most of it from anonymous cowards.

The term `social media' is misleading. Perhaps a better description is 'open media'.

All who post – and those who incite and host them - are subject to defamation and other laws against malice and harm. With the right to freedom of expression come legal and moral responsibilities.

Open Media can be a wonderful source creativity, but it can also be a cesspit of bastardry, where people for some reason write things they would never say to someone's face.



There was in recent days a conviction and suspended jail term in Queensland man who threatened on Facebook to shave my head and 'drag me up the street naked' if I supported proposed COVID-19 laws. The charge was using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence.

## **Local music showcase!**

The pandemic has devastated the live music industry. I have been calling for more support for venues, but our musicians need help too.

In support of Alex Lahey's open letter to the federal government asking for a wage subsidy for the industry, every week I will buy a record or shirt from a local musician.

Check out the tee-shirt I purchased, resplendent with the Leathers!



Imperial Leather is the Melbourne-based supergroup consisting of some of the city's best DJs and all-round legends Annaliese Redlich, Emma Peel, Ginger Light and Alice Edgeley.

They have been described as hedonists in all things fashion, hair and style and lovers of all things real, glamorous and badass.

Last year they released their first track, which was a cover of “8 a m” originally by 80s post-punk group Bona Dish and in December, their first single “Leatherman” came out on a self-released 45, with the wonderfully moody “Spa Country” on the flipside.

This year due to COVID-19 they have had to cancel shows at the Westwood Hotel and Lulie Tavern.

Musicians make a pittance from Spotify – so we say spend the money you usually would on a gig, by [buying a record or some merch](#).

---

## **Parliament prize winners**

The Parliament Prize is an annual competition delivered by the Parliament’s Community Engagement Unit. Students are invited to consider what they would say in Parliament if they were an MP and submit a 90-second video of their own Member Statement.

You can check out the winners on [Parliament’s Facebook](#) page or the [Parliament Education](#) website, and first-place winners will have their video posted to the Parliament Facebook page over the coming weeks.

633 students took part this year, from across Victoria, and they spoke about a huge range of issues that are important to them and to their community.

Across the Northern Metropolitan electorate there were 39 entries from 12 schools, covering a range of topics including:

- Environment
- Sexism
- Homelessness
- Covid
- Human rights
- Animal rights
- Health
- Racism

So, the kids are alright.

That's it for another week, thanks for reading.

Next week I'll be chairing public hearings for the parliamentary inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system from 9:15 am on Tuesday 19 October and 10:30 am on Thursday 21 October. Find out more [here](#).

Have a lovely weekend!

**Fiona Patten MP**