



CHEERS VICTORIA!

Hi. It has been a grindingly long time between drinks. (Well, experience and the stats show many of us might have sought a bit of solace from fermented, brewed and distilled therapeutic beverages during this challenging lockdown!)

DEHYDRATED AND DOWN – BUT NOW GOING OUT

What I mean is it's been a terribly long times between drinks with friends and loved ones and random others in our bars, cafes, restaurants, speakeasies, popups and all those venues that make Melbourne one of the most engaging and celebrated metropolises on the pale blue dot. Many of them are in my electorate, and I am so relieved for them and their patrons (my staff unambiguously and spiritedly included).

Bravo Victorians, indeed all Australians, for rolling up your sleeves. What you have done is huge. **We are a competitive bunch and we are about to lead the world in vaccination rates.**



HEROES – JUST FOR HUNDREDS OF DAYS

So, I want to give a massive shoutout to all the staff who are about to greet a relieved mass with a thirst and a desire to celebrate this milestone on our route to economic, social, and cultural recovery. I want to give a massive shoutout to the arts community – which has suffered extraordinarily and needs support. I've been on about that for a while and will continue to fight for them.

I want to give a massive shoutout to the allied-health workers, the nurses, the doctors, the ambos, the doctors, the ICU warriors, and all those frontline workers who have protected us with professionalism and selflessness.

I am pleased to have been able to get them up to an extra \$60 per shift. We're now fighting for stress leave of two weeks for all these decent, dedicated people. They've earned it, and it's our turn soon, I hope, to be able to protect them.

BE NICE, PLEASE, IN THE SANDPIT

With conviviality set to return to its rightful prominence, I just would also like to urge everyone to be kind and respectful to the people who're going to be serving you. They are going to be the frontline of the proof-of-vax effort. Many are just kids. All have the same right to respect and fairness as you and me. Give 'em a (Covid-safe) hug and maybe buy them a beer.

WHICH BRINGS ME TO BARSTARDRY

As you might be aware, I and my staff called a pause on social media a few weeks ago. I said:

“I am calling this pause because of the appalling abuse, most of it from anonymous cowards, polluting what could and should be one of humanity's triumphs, the ability for the majority of people to follow and participate in the most important market there is – the free market for ideas.

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.”



A WINDOW ON SILLINESS

On Wednesday evening, my office was vandalized. This time the message was I had caused child abuse. Really?

We were first told the glass to be replaced at significant cost to the taxpayer. But luckily, a couple of good Samaritans came last night and managed to get the glue off! I am grateful for the kindness in our community.

I have compassion for the perpetrators. Police are investigating that and further menacing behaviour on Thursday.

SERVING JUSTICE

I am currently Chairing a broad-ranging inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system, one of the most comprehensive examinations of Victoria's criminal justice system ever undertaken in this state. While there is still some more evidence to review, there are some clear themes emerging: early intervention, early intervention, early intervention.

Not only do early intervention programs get better outcomes, they are far less costly to the community. That means getting to young people as soon as possible.

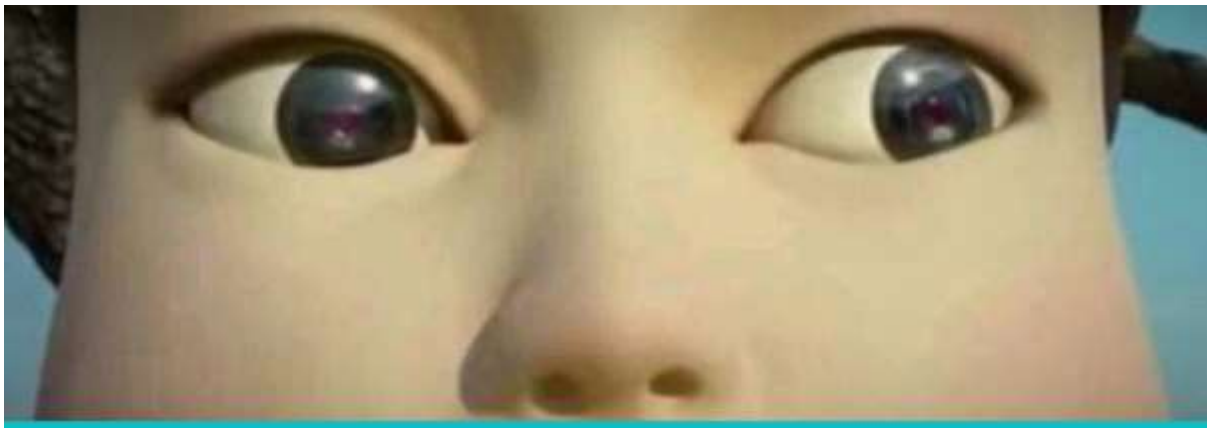
Victoria's youth remand population more than doubled over the eight-year period to 2019. Indeed, remanded children made up nearly half of all children in detention Victoria, compared to 22 percent in 2012. In 2019/20, 57% of the youth in detention were unsentenced.

The 2019-20 Youth Parole Board Survey, conducted annually, coupled with the socio-economic disadvantage data for the west, gives us valuable insight as to why this may be the case:

- *71% of children in custody have history of trauma, abuse or neglect and*
- *68% were suspended or expelled from school.*
- *55% have a history of drug or alcohol abuse,*
- *68% have mental health issues and*
- *28% had history of self-harm or suicidal ideation and*
- *38% had cognitive difficulties which affect their daily functioning*
- *25% spoke English as a second language.*

Source: West Justice

You can watch [video snapshots](#) of earlier sessions on the Parliament's [Youtube channel](#).



WATCH THIS SPACE, PLEASE

We'll be back on open media very soon. We are repackaging and expanding the presentation of my work, that of my formidable team and of Reason Party.

It is so sad people feel they can behave abusively yet wish to be treated with decency. We will always show people the decency and respect they deserve.

SHOCK! HORROR! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

So, we are putting together something I hope will become a must-read. It should be like opening a present; our audience will know that there will be at least one item in there of value to them, plus a lot of other stuff.

Abuse – verbal, written, vandalism – is not acceptable. Vigorous public discussion about ideas and policies is magnificent.

Mindless extremism will never stop my efforts to make life better and fairer for all Victorians. Any yes, even trolls.

Truly, cheers! And let's raise a glass for the heroes.

Fiona.