



*21<sup>st</sup> of January, 2022*

Hi there,

Welcome to my first newsletter of 2022.

I hope that many of you have been able to enjoy a break and spend some time with friends and family, despite the pandemic throwing up new problems.

Many of us ended 2021 with not only relief, but a bit of optimism. But only days into 2022, it became obvious the Omicron strain, whilst causing fewer severe cases, is so much more infectious than Delta.

The good news is that we are closing in on the projected peak. The pressure on the health system right now is significant, but should be reducing soon.

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## Aw RATs!

It is difficult that people are being asked to self-test with kits that are unavailable and/or unaffordable. It's a reasonable measure being unreasonably mishandled because of supply issues.

I urge governments, state and federal, to get these rapid antigen tests into the country, and out to the community.

Likewise, N95 and other high-grade masks must be available widely and freely so people are to be able to protect each other and keep working.



**Fiona Patten MP**   
@FionaPattenMLC

Whether it's a finding a 🐭 or a N95 mask, the pandemic is creating new problems everyday.

My position has always been listen to the experts, if they say we need N95 masks then we need them - but there's no point saying that if we don't have the supply. [#springst](#) (1/2)

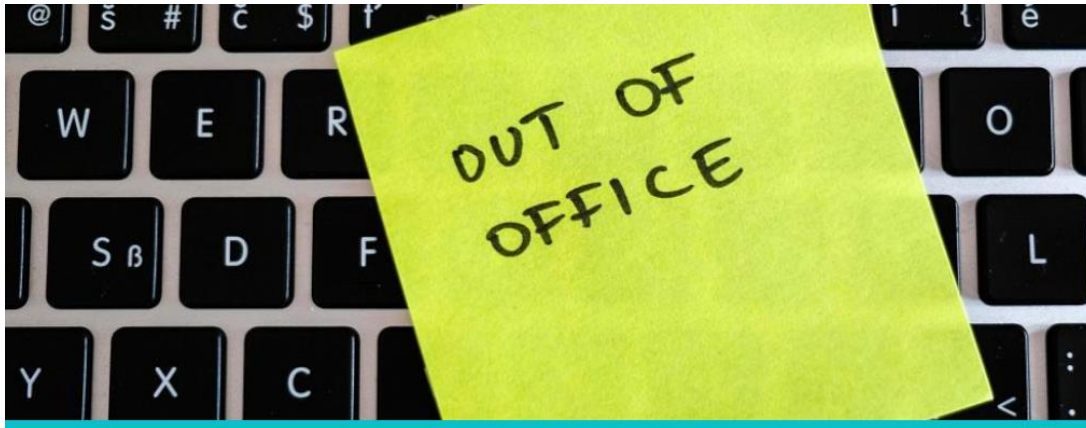
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**Fiona Patten MP**   
@FionaPattenMLC · 27s  
Replying to @FionaPattenMLC

Logistical problems that are causing mass anxiety should be being considered by the Independent Pandemic Advisory Committee, but we are still waiting for members to be appointed.

This should be a matter of urgency. We deserve clear, independent advice as we navigate 2022. (2/2)



## SILVER LININGS WORKBOOK

I am calling for a four-day working week trial within the Victorian public service, with a view to rolling out this common-sense option across the economy as we recover from covid and capitalise on the widespread benefits of greater workplace flexibility.

The Reason Party took this policy to the last election. It is an idea whose time has come, after we have proven as a society that we can work more flexibly.

Governments and businesses the world over have been trialling a 4DWW and finding it boosts productivity and profits, saves non-wage costs and reduces absenteeism caused by physical and mental ill-health.

The pandemic has not only triggered agility, but caused many to reassess priorities. A 4DWW is one light in the Covid gloom. There is clearly need and scope for getting the work/life trade-off in better shape.



## **WORK TO LIVE, NOT LIVE TO WORK**

It is the logical, rational next step in the reduction in working hours and improvements in conditions that have been happening since the industrial revolution began more than 250 years ago.

The successful adoption during the pandemic of flexible working arrangements has paved the way for a 4DWW.

We should start by trialling the policy in a section of the public service. We risk little by conducting a limited trial, but plenty should we ignore the opportunity.

In 2018 the Parliamentary Budget Office estimated at our request a four-day week trial within the Department of Treasury and Finance for 12 months (as an example) would save the government close to \$4 million in non-wage expenses.

## **BETTER WAYS TO SPEND TAXPAYERS' MONEY**

Imagine that across the entire bureaucracy. Those savings could go to alleviating homelessness, mental health, front-line health workers, and so much more.

The potential to simultaneously improve working conditions, work/life balance and productivity is huge; the Victorian public service accounts for about one in 10 of the state's jobs.

Covid has shown how adaptable we are individually and at every level. Working from home has shown the value of technology-enhanced flexibility.

We have learned to do things differently. We have been reminded there are other things in life than just work. That we truly should work to live, not live to work.



## INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE ABOUNDS

For the five years to 2019, Iceland's government and the Reykjavik City Council reduced almost 3,000 workers' hours without cutting their pay. Men started doing a bit more of their fair share of domestic work. Baby steps.

Productivity was steady in most workplaces and rose in some. Today, almost nine in 10 of Iceland's workers have either moved to shorter hours or been given the right to.

In August 2019, Microsoft Japan gave 2,300 employees a paid Friday off each week. Productivity leapt 40%. But it was not just the reduced hours. Productivity increased through fewer and shorter meetings and by using online platforms for teamwork.

The previous year, New Zealand financial company Perpetual Guardian held a similar trial. Staff continued to receive their full pay. The financial company permanently adopted the policy and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern suggests taking the option national.

This week, some 30 companies in the United Kingdom began a six-month trial during which they will institute a four-day work week beginning in June and the Spanish government is underwriting a trial three-year transition to a 4DWW.

A 4DWW increases productivity, profits, well-being and creativity. It reduces physical and mental illness. It makes savings in the cost of the public service, without reducing wages. It attracts and helps retain top staff in the private sector. It is time.



## ENDING ENDO NEGLECT

I am fighting for an endometriosis and pelvic pain centre for Victoria. Endo is as common as asthma or diabetes – affecting one in 9 people born with a uterus. Despite this it has been ridiculed, ignored, stigmatised and drastically underfunded.

We urgently need better treatment services so people with Endo are no longer suffering in silence. We need to stop the horror of people receiving inadequate care and Endo derailing their lives.

The centre will train up world class surgeons & nurses so patients can access the best care. It will provide interdisciplinary and holistic care. It will also partner with research organisations to evaluate the best treatments and training.

No-one with pelvic pain will be left behind. The centre will cater for all those born with a uterus with any kind of pelvic pain and disease, including, PCOS, adenomyosis and persistent pelvic pain.

Symptoms such as Irritable bowel syndrome, bladder pain & urinary tract infections (UTIs), painful sex and mental wellbeing will also be addressed with a dedicated centre.

The Victorian government is committed to changing the lives of pelvic pain warriors – we just need the Federal government to jump on too. You can help by signing my petition below.

 **SIGN THE PETITION**



## **COP A LOOK AT THAT!**

In the final days of 2021, we had a community win of which I am proud. After we raised this issue publicly, and commissioned a Parliamentary Intern Report on the topic, Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes has changed the law to allow footage from body-worn cameras to be used as evidence in lawsuits against police and prison guards.

Before the change, not even judges in civil cases were allowed to see body-cam recordings. These could only be used in criminal cases.

Body-cam footage can now be used in civil proceedings in which officers are called as witnesses, and before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal. It's also available in child protection and personal safety intervention order cases.

Accountability and transparency are public-interest principles I apply to every reform and policy debate in which I have been involved. That will not change.

Viruses mutate. Principles are immutable.

Until next time, take care, go well and get vaccinated.

**Fiona Patten MP**

*P.S. The Reason Party will have a stall this Sunday at Midsumma Carnival, so please come and say hi!*