



*18<sup>th</sup> of February, 2022*

Hi there,

Hello again. Sometimes there is reason to be cheerful, even amid a pandemic. Sometimes there are multiple reasons. This is one of those times.

Important reforms, which I'll touch on below, have been passed into law by our Parliament in recent days. In a few days another crucial reform bill will be introduced.

I am mightily pleased to have been able to be fundamentally involved with these; I and many others in the community have long fought for them and they are all based on evidence and first principles.



## **How to save and improve lives**

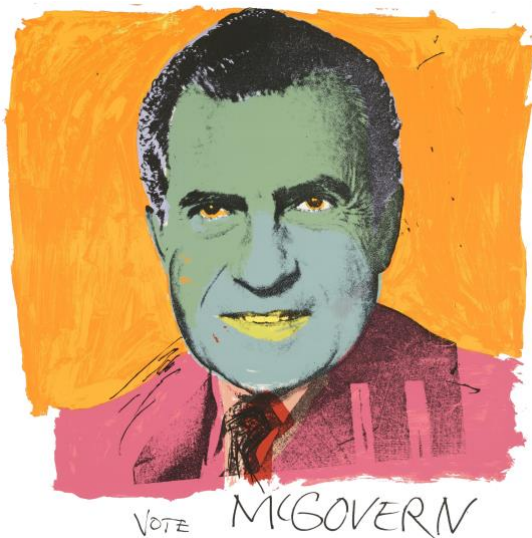
Next Wednesday, I am bringing into the Victorian Parliament legislation to decriminalise all drugs.

It is about saving lives and reducing harm caused by drugs.

It is about treating drug use as a health issue with a health solution, not a criminal one.

Almost 95% of drug arrests in Victoria are of private consumers, not providers. Victoria Police support a change; after all, they and we all know they have far more important things to do.

International evidence proves replacing criminal penalties with health and recovery treatment is the most effective and efficient way.



The 50-year-old 'War on Drugs', based on prohibition, has been one of the most disastrous public policy failures in modern history.

It has destroyed countless lives, wasted an obscene amount of public funds, and generated a massive black market.

Under my proposed law, instead of a charge, Victoria Police would issue a notice referring someone to drug education or treatment where they have used a drug of dependence, or possessed a drug of dependence (in a small quantity).

Prohibition is being replaced with successful harm-reduction across the world. Change here in Victoria and throughout Australia is inevitable.

Please help make that happen sooner rather than later by joining the campaign and urging your elected representative to honour their responsibility to protect and promote the public interest at [decrim.com.au](http://decrim.com.au)

Who knows what progress and reform might be achieved?



## Now for the SEX

As I previewed in my letter to you two weeks ago, Parliament has now passed changes to the law flowing from my legislative review to extend to all sex workers the occupational health and safety, welfare and taxation coverage of any other employee.

The Government implemented my recommendation to decriminalise sex work as legitimate employment, protecting these workers and reducing the stigma and discrimination they have suffered for so long.

Many of us fought for this for many years. Here is a little video which explains the journey of the bill over the last couple of years. [!\[\]\(cbe80b694ebd74fcfe136a095b608235\_img.jpg\)](#)





## And the other better times

Also as previewed in my last newsletter, Parliament commenced debate on an issue I introduced two years ago to protect young people in out-of-home care by increasing to 21 from 18, the age at which they have to leave care and fend for themselves.

You may not realise, but around 11,000 young Victorians are unable to live with their parents and so are in statutory care.

Under the previous situation, within six months of turning 18, half of these young people could end up homeless, in jail, or unemployed.

Deloitte Access Economics estimates that continuing care in Australia to 18, 19 and 20-year-olds would halve homelessness, reduce hospitalisation by one third, reduce mental illness by almost half, increase engagement in education, significantly decrease arrests and slash alcohol and drug dependence for these vulnerable young people.

You can read or watch my contribution in Parliament [here](#) and I look forward to seeing the laws pass soon.



It's almost enough to revive some faith and hope in politics.

**BUT THERE'S ALWAYS A BUT**



It's uplifting to see Melbourne reviving. The Omicron peak seems to have passed and restrictions are easing.

Our frontline healthcare workers continue to be heroic. I will continue fighting to permanently improve their pay and conditions.

We've managed to increase shift-payments for nurses and I want that for other healthcare workers.

I'll update you regularly on this, and on my list of things I want to get done this year to give a few more reasons for some positivity and optimism.

Cheers,

**Fiona**