



18th of March, 2022

Hi there,

As you might be aware, I have been fighting for an endometriosis and pelvic pain centre for Victoria.

March is endometriosis month – so this is a great time to amplify the push to provide adequate care for women suffering this insidious, under-recognised scourge undermining the wellbeing of so many.

By the age of 44, one in nine Australian women and those assigned female at birth have been diagnosed with this condition caused by tissue similar to the lining of the uterus growing outside it in other parts of the body. It can impact fertility.



Cruel delay

Many cases start in teenagers. It can be debilitating, putting life on hold around or during a woman's period.

There's a range of painful pelvic symptoms – which partly explains why there's a 6.5-year delay in diagnosis. Nobody should have to endure being in pain for so

ridiculously long.

Endo most commonly strikes the reproductive organs. It is frequently found in the bowel and bladder and can happen in muscles, joints, the lungs, and the brain.

There are 35,000 endometriosis-related hospitalisations each year in Australia.



It hurts us all

It's not just hurting women. It's a huge economic burden on the entire community. The Australian Government estimates the disease costs close to \$10 billion each year. Two-thirds is lost productivity, the rest healthcare.

Endo is as common as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis. It is more common than breast and prostate cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined.

Yet it has been ridiculed, ignored, stigmatised and drastically underfunded. That is obviously not OK.



Need help?

The [Endo Help Foundation](#) is running a lunch on Sunday in Geelong with Endo warriors and experts, and an info webinar on the same day from 3-5pm, to present practical tips and advice and to answer your questions.

You can also sign [my petition](#) to urge the Federal Government to set up a

specialised centre to treat the symptoms, which include irritable bowel syndrome, bladder pain, urinary tract infections (UTIs), painful sex, and mental wellbeing.

The Victorian Government is committed to changing the lives of pelvic pain casualties. We just need the Federal government to do the right, rational, and reasonable thing.

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 partner with research organisations to evaluate the best treatments and training. It will also help those with any kind of persistent pelvic pain and disease.

In the meantime, if you have symptoms or a diagnosis of endometriosis, new Australian research is being undertaken to improve diagnosis and treatment options. Find out more [here](#).



Our system, our failure

The lack of proper focus on Endo is because of the variability of symptoms, the need for surgery for diagnosis, and stigma that puts up barriers to discussing menstruation.

Our current health system lacks proper care pathways and evidence-based approaches to the delivery of care. There are so many stories of patients being poorly managed and the severity of their disease not being understood.

I recently discussed this in Parliament, as part of the push for an endometriosis and pelvic pain centre. Watch the [video](#).



Meet Reason's Victorian Senate candidate: Yolanda Vega

On a far more joyous note, I am proud and delighted to present Yolanda Vega, who will lead Reason Party's Victorian Senate Ticket in the federal election.

She is motivated by human rights, protecting children from abuse, and removing political, professional, and cultural barriers for women. Yolanda is also determined to fight corruption. She says: "Human rights decrease when corruption increases."

She wants to enter the Federal Parliament to champion equality of opportunity and access to education. She understands and cares about how government decisions affect individuals and communities.

She fits with the Reason Party's drive to make the place better and fairer for everyone.

She's walked the walk

Yolanda arrived in Australia in the early 1970s as one of three daughters of Spanish political refugees. She offers voters a breadth of professional and personal experience in business and academia.

She has just submitted her PhD thesis on how past successful policies can be replicated to deliver positive outcomes in Australia.

She says: "I am grateful for the education I have obtained, and for the opportunities to research, teach and advocate for abused children, women, and small businesses. Now, the Senate is where I can best bring my lived and work experiences together in the public interest." Find out more about Yolanda [here](#).



On drugs

My legislation to compulsorily extend existing diversion options to all people apprehended for use and/or possession of small quantities of drugs was debated in the Victorian Parliament in recent days.

It did not go to a vote, as the Government and the Opposition had refused to countenance this evidence-based policy adjustment, so it stood no chance of passing.

That is disappointing and sad. Almost without exception, every lawmaker in that place and in every Australian Parliament is aware of the abundant and irrefutable evidence that the half-century prohibition-based 'war on drugs' is one of the most catastrophic policy failures in modern political history.

There's progress

While there was no vote, the Government has committed to establishing an independent expert panel to advise on options to trial the change. That is in line with the Victoria Police's 2020-2025 drug strategy, entitled 'Prevent, Disrupt, Connect, Care.'

Victoria Police supports treatment-based responses, rightly describing drug problems as 'first and foremost health issues'. More people die of needless overdoses – a result of the unintended consequences of prohibition – than through road trauma.

The Bill was also backed by medical experts, the alcohol and other drugs sector that delivers front-line treatment and support, doctors, nurses, lawyers, public

policy analysts and more. Independent costings by the Parliamentary Budget Office showed tens of millions of savings in court and prison costs, money that can be spent on saving lives through treatment.

The truth

The truth is that most people who take substances - licit and illicit – do so safely in the privacy of their own homes. But drugs are dangerous, and those with problematic use – usually associated with self-medicating traumas including childhood sexual, emotional, and other physical abuse – need help, not more harm through criminalisation.

International evidence (just have a quick look online) proves decriminalisation saves lives and public funds by diverting problematic drug users into the health system, not the criminal justice system. It reduces crime, frees up police to pursue the organised criminals, and improves the lives of those affected by a loved one's addiction.

What's not to like?

It should appeal to fiscal conservatives and social progressives alike. Tony Abbott's said in 2014: *``It's not a war we will ever finally win.'`*

When overwhelming evidence is that a policy has failed, you've got to change policy.

This is not party-political. It is about evidence and facts, not ideology.

This change will happen throughout Australia, as it has in an increasing number of jurisdictions. The leadership, in so many cases, will come from the ground up. It will come because it meets the tenets of public policy: truth, fairness, accuracy, evidence, and decency.

Until next time,

Go well,

Fiona
