

# Statement

**The Hon Jaala Pulford MP**

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Resources

Minister for Small Business



Friday, 28 October 2022

## STATEMENT FROM JAALA PULFORD

After what has been the most rewarding journey in politics, I've advised the Premier of my decision not to recontest the 2022 state election.

Around the time of the 2006 Commonwealth Games my family was driving through Melbourne. My husband Jeff pointed out a big building and said: "hey kids, Mum is going to work there."

Four-year-old Sinead exclaimed to her little brother "it's a fairy castle!"

That little brother is now 18.

We still call Parliament House 'fairy castle' and while that may never change, the time has come for me to seek new challenges.

Representing the people of Western Victoria has been an extraordinary privilege. Serving the people that rely on Labor governments has been a tremendous honour.

While it is amazing to pass a law, design a program or fund a project, the best thing about being a politician is the people we meet.

The publican fighting for his business.

The parents fearing their 18-year-old was being lost to them because a law lacked nuance.

People whose lives were forever changed by illness, injury or death and who then raise money for science, or visit schools to talk to teenagers about road safety.

The First Nations leaders delivering economic prosperity for their people.

The grandmother in the farm shed that took me aside, put her hand on my arm and said: "it's about time we had a woman in the job."

The communities of Western Victoria are proud, caring and creative.

I have loved supporting their ambitions and I've had a few favourites – the Horsham North Hub, the Rupanyup supermarket, the Warracknabeal education precinct, the Rainbow weather radar, the National Centre for Farmer Health and world-class experiences from the Grampians Peaks Trail to the Shipwreck Coast.

Nearer to home, Ballarat has enjoyed a period of revival. The city has a new gateway at the station and a GovHub built by local people with local materials.

Our governments have supported my community with many projects – the new Ballarat Hospice, a fit for purpose workplace for the people who cared for my girl, is the best of them all.

In public life any achievement is the work of many.

Thank you to my chiefs of staff Megan Berry and Jarrod Dobson for their outstanding leadership and care, and my EA Desi Iliopoulos, who came for three months and stayed eight years.

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My ministerial advisors – Rhiannon, Brian, Tim, Rachel, Leanne, Katerine and those that came before. Each day you have made a difference to the lives of others, guided by your values, and enabled by your focus and intellect.

My electorate team Tim and Romy have resolved problems and managed relationships across our vast region, often in my absence. Regularly, I've been thanked for the work actually done by you.

The ever-helpful officers and staff of the Parliament, custodians of our parliamentary democracy.

The public servants I have worked alongside in nine portfolios. It has been a joy to work with so many good, smart, hardworking people to get important things done.

Together, we modernised, reformed, saved, built and rebuilt.

There have been droughts, fires, floods, storms and economic shocks, but throughout it communities stood together, embraced change and grew stronger.

Ten million sheep were tagged, and ten million fish were stocked.

Puppies are no longer farmed but medicinal cannabis is.

Small businesses weathered the shock of a generation. They looked after their people and their communities. Their efforts saved lives.

New businesses started and others changed. Our technology and resources sectors boomed.

When the world looked to our phenomenal medical research community, we made sure they had what they needed. We championed science, celebrated discovery, and pushed hard into health tech.

We deployed data and innovation on everything from traffic management to gold discovery.

Through Jobs Victoria, over one hundred and thirty thousand people have been supported into work, many for the first time.

I have some people to thank for the extraordinary opportunities I have enjoyed:

The members of the Australian Labor Party and trade union movement.

The people of Western Victoria that put a 1 above the line – for supporting my election on four occasions.

From 1856 to 2006 only 63 women had ever been elected to the Victorian Parliament. To those who fought for gender equality in Labor's parliamentary representation, thank you.

I learnt about leadership from the best at the National Union of Workers. Greg Sword remains a generous mentor and dear friend. Charlie Donnelly who always walks the talk, not only enabled young women to have a career and a family – he encouraged it.

Two of my 'NUW boys' have been constants. Martin Pakula and I have shared union and public life with its wins, losses, laughs and tears since 1994. I met Tim Pallas in what was my first week at the union and his last. Tim has been a great ally in our shared vision for science, technology and innovation in Victoria.

I have been supported by great friends and wise counsellors – especially Rachel Dapiran, James McGarvey, Tim Holding, Sebastian Zwalf, Claudia Laidlaw, Steve Staikos, Lisa Carey, George Habib, Candy Broad and Deputy Premier Jacinta Allan.

I have had the privilege of working with, and learning from, three outstanding Labor leaders.

Steve Bracks, who taught me how to be a politician that gets things done.

John Brumby, who showed me how to pursue big reforms that endure.

Premier Daniel Andrews, who demonstrates daily what can be achieved with purpose, focus and courage. To work with him has been a master class in visionary leadership and service.

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The families of politicians put up with a great deal. Special occasions, milestones and celebrations are missed. Schoolyard injuries are recounted over the phone. Attendance doesn't always mean presence. Plans are deferred or denied.

To my parents Brenda and Kerry, siblings Melina and Jamie and father in-law Bob – thank you for the encouragement you have always given me.

To Jeff, for enabling me to give this everything I could, for understanding and accepting what it has demanded of our family without complaint, and for never letting me take myself too seriously. I'm looking forward to our next chapter.

To Hamish, I could not be more proud of you and the wonderful young man you have become. Thank you for always keeping it real. Start planning some trips, dive buddy.

I'm conscious that I'm making this decision on the eve of a state election but I'm absolutely confident that the time is right for me, and for the Government.

In Premier Daniel Andrews, our talented and energetic cabinet, and the magnificent Labor caucus, Victorians have a group of people with a vision and plan to make Victoria fairer, safer and stronger.

Their care for the lives of all Victorians is inspiring, and I wish them every success in November and beyond.

I've given my all to public life, but it's given me so much more. It's time for me to make way for the next generation, and I cannot wait to see them thrive.