

Statement

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Friday, 28 October 2022

STATEMENT FROM THE PREMIER

Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business and Minister for Resources Jaala Pulford has advised me she will not seek re-election next month.

She will remain in her Cabinet portfolios until the end of this term, continuing to support flood recovery efforts until such time as a new government is formed.

For as long as I've known her, Jaala has been a devoted advocate for working people.

Making their conditions better and fairer. Speaking up for them in the face of gross injustices. Protecting them from some truly shameful conditions affecting their health and wellbeing.

Sixteen years ago, Jaala rose to her feet to make her inaugural speech in the newly constituted Legislative Council of Victoria.

She spoke of the profound role decent work can play in giving people the dignity they deserve, the profound harm a workplace injury can cause – and the profound duty governments have to protect workers who, for whatever reason, cannot negotiate a better deal themselves.

She carried that compassion with her into Parliament, and I have no doubt it's what has driven her every day.

Her achievements in government have been outstanding.

Jaala was Victoria's first female Agriculture Minister, and she played a crucial role in our ground-breaking efforts to legalise locally manufactured medicinal cannabis for use in exceptional circumstances.

It's a reform that has changed lives, and saved lives. Now, parents no longer have to choose between breaking the law or watching their children suffer.

As Minister for Employment, Jaala steered Jobs Victoria through a critical period as the pandemic hit hard for both workers and employers alike.

Her task was enormous: to not only find decent, secure work for Victorians, but also, to find workers for jobs while businesses struggled to fill vacancies.

And her efforts are part of the reason thousands of Victorians now have jobs across sectors like healthcare, construction, hospitality, retail, transport and logistics, horticulture, information and communications technology and trade.

Jaala has always done her best to make sure regional Victorians enjoyed the same quality of life as those in the city. In particular, fast tracking better internet speeds and mobile services through our half-a-billion dollar Connecting Victoria program to change the way we live and work right across the state.

As Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Jaala has presided over a massive boost to funding in all of our medical research precincts.

That means more devices, more implantables, more therapeutics. It means better care, bigger advancements and a pipeline of work to deliver massive benefits for kids and families right here in Victoria – and well and truly beyond.

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Jaala can be rightly proud of her role in making Victoria the first place in the Southern Hemisphere to manufacture mRNA vaccines through our deal with Moderna - the possibilities of which are almost endless.

I was so proud to stand with Jaala last Sunday as we pledged a new, \$35 million package to fight cancer in kids.

When we came to government in 2014, Jaala suffered the most personal of losses, and the most unimaginable grief, as her daughter Sinead lost her own battle with cancer.

We all were, and still are, in awe of Jaala's strength. To see her continue to manage her ministerial responsibilities with such heart, while holding onto that pain, was nothing short of remarkable.

She made the Victorian Parliament a kinder, more thoughtful place. She gave us all cause to reflect, and to garner a little perspective. She will be sorely missed by many on both sides of the aisle.

On behalf of our Party and our Parliament, I'd like to thank Jaala for her many years of dedication to the people of Victoria. I wish her, Jeff and Hamish all the very best for the future.