

Statement

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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NEW SOLUTIONS TO MAKE LIFE EASIER, SAFER, MORE AFFORDABLE

I welcome my united Labor team back to Parliament for the start of a big year.

This year, Victorians have a choice.

Between new solutions – or no solutions.

Between real action – or real risks.

Between the change people want – or the cuts they can't afford.

The choice matters, and it matters most to ordinary working families.

They are the families you and I know, who rely on good local schools to give their kids the best start.

Families who take comfort from knowing there's a great public hospital nearby.

Families who count what's left over after mortgage, rent, groceries and bills, and who have to say goodbye to their kids a lot earlier than they'd like, just to get to work.

I've spoken with thousands of these families as Premier at events, in communities, and in everyday life.

Some are my family, my girlfriends, my neighbours, or parents on the sidelines at cricket and basketball.

They love where they live.

They love their community, especially their school, and the support it gives their kids.

They believe in this state and the opportunities it offers.

They have plans for their lives, and they know they have somewhere to turn if something goes wrong.

But none of that means life is easy.

In today's world – even if you're working hard and doing the right thing – life is difficult for busy families.

Why?

Because the cost of living doesn't just take money.

It robs time.

And it means families rely more than ever on the systems around them just to keep up.

It's difficult for a mum with sick kids who has to juggle work, school, GP and specialist appointments.

It's difficult for young families who had to move away from their parents and support networks to get into a home of their own.

And it's difficult, when the gains we've made as a society to make life a little bit easier – like working from home – are constantly under attack.

These are some of the new challenges that families are facing.

Our purpose, as a Labor Government, is delivering new solutions to these challenges.

To make systems catch up to the complex reality of modern family life, where hopes are big, responsibilities are many, and time and money are tight.

That's why our Labor Government doesn't just make public health and education bigger and better.

We also make it easier to access and easier to afford.

Even if that means breaking old conventions.

That's why our Labor Government doesn't just build the big projects that change a state...

...we also build the local ones that change daily life.

And from the biggest tunnel to the smallest roundabout, we do it to save people time.

That's why we shape an economy that works for working people...

...one that never succumbs to frontline cuts that push costs back onto families.

That's why we're taking on the status quo of housing and planning...

...putting homes that young people can afford in the places they want to live.

Near their job. Near their family. Next to a train station.

And that's why we're not just creating jobs, but making work secure...

...with more pay and more flexibility, the chance to study for free, and the right to work from home.

And in Labor, we know that violent youth crime hurts families and kids.

They deserve safety. We're changing the justice system to deliver it...

...with serious consequences for violent crime, and early interventions to prevent it.

Above all, we are a Labor Government with new solutions to make life easier, safer and more affordable.

This year, our job as a united Labor team isn't just to talk about what we've already delivered.

It's to drive the next wave of change that we have made possible.

Our priorities are clear.

Better access to health and education.

A safer community.

And real help with the cost-of-living to save families time and money.

We will present new solutions. This week. This Budget. This year.

And they will build on the real, tangible change we have already delivered.

We have a bigger public transport system, more services – and we made them free for every child, every day, everywhere.

We're fighting the cost of housing with more homes young people can afford – and rental bonds they can transfer.

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We're delivering energy bill relief and capping fuel increases.

And to save workers time and money, we're making work from home a right their boss can't take away.

But if there's one thing Labor knows, it's this:

The number one cost-of-living help for families is public health and education they can rely on.

We added 40,000 health workers and we're opening nine hospitals, because Labor always invests in a strong health system.

Now we're making health care work better for busy families by making it easier and cheaper to access.

Labor's Urgent Care Clinics.

ChemistCare Now – so you don't need to go to the GP to get a script.

A free Virtual Emergency Department.

And opening Women's Health Clinics – because we listen to women about their pain.

It's all about making health care easier and cheaper for people to access.

And redesigning the system so it understands them.

This is personal to me.

I was a mum with a profoundly sick child.

And I am a woman who suffered endometriosis.

I've lived the referrals, the specialists, the waiting.

The care we got in hospital for our baby was unforgettable.

But back home, we felt like we were navigating a maze.

And then, with my condition, all I wanted was someone to take it seriously.

I was confused that my pain was being dismissed.

It taught me to dismiss it myself.

That's why I want health care that helps families, because I needed that help.

We also help families at home, by helping them at school.

We made Victoria the Education State.

We deliver Free TAFE, Free Kinder.

Last week, we marked the opening of 100 new schools since 2019 – as promised.

And as families deal with the cost of living, we're helping them keep up with the costs of school.

Logo pants are out.

Free dental checkups, glasses and breakfasts are in.

We'll pay for your camps and excursions if you need it.

And if your child catches a bus, train or tram to get to school, we're paying for that, too.

Labor invests in public services – and let's be clear, there's no public service more important than public safety.

Victoria now has the largest police force of any state in Australia, because we back the frontline.

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Today, violent youth crime is hurting families and kids.

And the families it hurts the most are working families: the people who don't get to live on a street full of tall fences and security.

We made a massive decision to change the way youth sentencing works in Victoria, so there are serious consequences for serious crimes.

It was the right decision.

Adult Time for Violent Crime comes in this month.

And our Violence Reduction Unit is up and running, intervening early, tackling the root causes.

Families are facing new challenges.

They want new solutions to make their life easier, safer and more affordable.

Only Labor will deliver them.

Because only Labor invests in public services, and only Labor fights for working people.

Labor will never cut a billion dollars from health.

Labor will never cut a billion dollars from schools.

The Liberals did, and families paid the price.

Labor has solutions that make life easier.

Liberals have cuts that make life harder.

They have an 11.1 billion dollar black hole in their budget right now, and that means only one thing: cuts.

Because they only have one setting: cut.

It's in their bones.

They even cut their leaders: six in seven years.

And to avoid the next cut, their current leader is spending this weekend cosying up with One Nation.

She's appearing at the misinformation convention right alongside Barnaby Joyce, to oppose cheaper renewable energy that keeps power bills down.

Mark my words:

The Liberal National One Nation circus will push her further away from families...and further towards the extremes.

Liberals are too busy fighting each other to fight for Victorians.

They have no solutions – just cuts.

That's their risk.

And this is my question:

Who do you trust to invest in the things that really matter to your family:

A Labor Government, with a record of investment, that fights for change?

Or a Liberal Government, with a record of cuts, that fights itself?

New solutions – or no solutions.

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Change – or cuts.

Victorians will make that choice later this year.

Until then, I'll be out every day talking to them.

And every day, our focus as a united Labor team is this:

Keeping costs down for families with public services they can rely on.

And delivering new solutions to make life easier, safer and more affordable.

That's what a Labor Government does.