

Tuesday, 28 July 2026

THANK YOU, VICTORIA

Yesterday, mum sent me a message that just said – hang in there, Jacinta.

My whole life, mum always taught me to never give up.

Dad – he always taught me to do the right thing.

Recently I've reflected on how deeply these two lessons have shaped me.

And on the fact that they don't always point in the same direction.

I have made the difficult decision to step aside as leader of the Labor Party and Premier of Victoria.

I will shortly chair a caucus meeting to elect a new leader.

Should Ben Carroll emerge as our next Labor Leader and Labor Premier, he will have my congratulations and my unqualified support.

I am making this decision because it is the right thing by the Labor Party and by the Victorian people.

I was prepared to put my record and my plan to a ballot of members – as our rules allow.

I believe I would have won.

But doing so this close to an election takes up valuable resources – including the most precious one of all, time.

More importantly, it puts the state in a position of leadership uncertainty.

That hurts the Victorian people, and I just won't do that.

At the end of the day, I am – and always will be – a team player.

The most important thing I want to say today is thank you.

Thank you to the Victorian people.

It has been the honour of my life to serve as your Premier.

I step down after 1,036 days in the job.

Not one of them wasted.

Not one of them easy.

And let's be honest,

This gig has been tough.

But let's be clear.

The average working family has it tougher.

They're the ones managing interest rate rises.

Living in a housing crisis.

And facing economic change that no one can predict.

They're the people I've always put first.

I got into politics to fight for them.

And whatever I do next, I will still be fighting for them.

I leave immensely proud of what we have achieved in the last three years.

I inherited a rising crime rate.

My team and I toughened the bail laws, started Adult Time, established the Violence Reduction Unit.

Crime is now falling for the first time since COVID.

I inherited a budget deficit.

My team and I made savings while protecting frontline services.

The budget is now in surplus.

I came to office in a cost-of-living crisis.

Making life easier and more affordable became my mission.

We not only made public transport free during a fuel crisis.

We made public transport free for kids forever.

We cut car rego for 3.5 million people.

We doubled food relief so families could have the dignity of a meal.

And we're making work from home a right your boss can't take away.

Along the way, we delivered the biggest cost of living help there is:

Strong public schools, strong public hospitals, strong public services.

And it starts with building.

121 new schools.

12 new hospitals.

We removed 92 level crossings.

Finished the West Gate Tunnel.

We're building North East Link and the Suburban Rail Loop.

And then there's the Metro Tunnel.

Not too many people get to see a project like that through from the start to the end.

I am so goddamn proud of it.

Under my feet, 5 new underground stations, 1,200 weekly services.

Taking you to hospitals and universities.

That's why we build.

They are not just projects. They are assets that will improve our lives.

The Liberals opposed them.

Now they're trying to rewrite history again – by saying they're tainted, or somehow a waste.

Victorians won't buy that.

They just want to see a doctor sooner, enrol a child easier, and get home from work faster.

That's why we invested in schools, hospitals, roads and public transport.

Liberals talk about debt?

Well, *that's* what it paid for.

You can't have great services without great workers.

That's our nurses, midwives, teachers, police – and so many more.

We hired 17,000 more nurses.

And gave them a record payrise.

We made our police force the biggest in the country.

And gave them a record payrise.

We hired thousands more teachers.

And we've put a record payrise on the table for them, too.

Because they've all earned it.

Decent wages, decent jobs – that's what Labor Governments deliver.

An economy that works for working people.

Backed by Free TAFE.

And the new SEC Apprenticeship Academy.

Under Labor, more than half a million jobs have been created here since 2020.

Our economy has grown faster than any other state.

And there are more cranes in the sky today than at any other time during my Premiership.

These are the sort of things that business lobby groups will never tell you about our state.

Melbourne's a great city.

Best in the world.

Multicultural capital and proudly so.

Home to a Grand Prix and a Grand Slam – and an NFL regular season game.

But if you asked me sets Victoria apart, it's our regional cities.

And I'm proud to call one of them home.

Only Labor invests in the regions.

We've delivered regional rail. Hospitals and schools.

New industries. New trains.

Labor Governments have built up the regions

Today, my kids have the opportunities I didn't have when I grew up in Bendigo.

That's what I am proud of.

I'll never forget the day the Liberals assembled a protest in Brighton the day I was announcing my housing affordability plan.

That was the day the Liberals picked a side in the housing crisis – the wrong side.

Today, Victoria is approving, building and completing more homes than any other state.

As a result, it's now more affordable to buy or rent in Melbourne than any Australian capital.

That was the point.

And in 2026, that's what the people want.

I said getting millennials into homes was the fight of my life.

That fight is incomplete.

But my reforms are no longer a dream.

They are the law.

Remove those laws an *inch* and you make housing more expensive – it's that simple.

There's so much more I want to talk about.

Australia's strongest anti-hate laws.

Australia's first Treaty with its first peoples.

But I want to finish on women's health.

I'm a woman, I'm a mum.

I've lived with endometriosis.

And I almost lost my daughter after birth.

These experiences not only defined who I am.

They defined what I believe government should do for working women.

For too long, women's pain was dismissed.

I was one of those women.

I was just a girl.

If I want to be remembered for one thing, it's this:

I led a government that listened to girls about their health.

Tens of thousands of you wrote in.

We opened 15 women's health clinics across the state.

We rolled out the green whistle for pain relief free of charge.

You can get the pill at the chemist without paying to see the GP.

And if your kid's sick in the middle of the night, you can visit Australia's-first Virtual Emergency Department.

Free, with no wait, from their bed.

This is what happens when women are heard.

I'm proud to be Victoria's second female Premier.

There have absolutely been moments when it's been hard. Personal.

But the chance to make a difference was worth it.

If you're a woman making your start in politics, let me say this to you.

Please don't look at what I've experienced this week and think, *stuff that – I don't want to be involved.*

Look at the support I've experienced over my career and think, *I can make a difference here, too.*

And if you want to make a difference in politics, you've gotta get up and fight.

I'm a fighter.

I've always fought for my family's Labor values.

For my dad, the sparkie who Jeff Kennett sacked.

For my brother, who's a nurse saving lives.

And for families just like mine across Victoria who rely on work to get ahead.

I fight for working class families.

It's in my blood.

And I would have absolutely relished to lead that fight in November.

I was more than ready.

I saw off two Liberal leaders.

Now I expect my successor will see off a third.

And if they don't, One Nation certainly will.

That remains the biggest risk at this election:

A One Nation-Liberal Coalition who'll cut \$40 billion from our hospitals and schools.

And how do we know Liberals will do it?

It's what they believe.

Not because they don't understand what public services do.

But because they don't believe every Victorian is equally entitled to them.

Politics can be complex sometimes.

But that's the simple difference.

And for whoever is lucky enough to lead the Labor Party, that will always be the difference.

Let me turn to my amazing staff – led by my chief Damian Karmelich.

Most of what they do is never seen publicly.

The long nights, the hard calls.

Thank you for bringing an enormous sense of duty to your jobs.

And for making me better at mine.

Thank you, also, to my Ministers for your counsel.

To my caucus for your friendship.

And to my union colleagues for your solidarity.

And thank you to the three Labor Premiers I served under.

Steve Bracks who taught us to listen and act.

John Brumby who taught us to fight for the regions.

And Daniel Andrews who taught us to put people first.

Finally, thank you to my husband Yorick, and my two children Peggy and Cormac.

If this job was ever hard for me, it was ten times harder for them.

Kids – mum will be home more to tell you get off your computers and clean your room.

I can now be there for all your drama performances.

All our family holidays – without having to leave early.

My greatest joy is spending time with you.

I can't wait for it.

There are so many more people I want to thank, from my earliest days.

But if you'll allow me, that's a speech I want to give in my hometown of Bendigo.

I want to finish by saying once more:

Thank you to the Victorian people.

You brought me into your workplaces, your homes, your places of worship.

You spoke to me about your hopes, fears and frustrations.

And every day, I listened.

I didn't achieve all I set out to do for you in this role.

I didn't get everything right.

But I will leave knowing that I made a difference.

Fighting for working families...

Making life easier, safer and more affordable...

As one part of a proud Labor team.

Check against delivery.