



Attorney-General Sonya Kilkeny and Premier Ben Carroll yesterday. Photo: AAP

## Carroll on WFH

home rights, the business lobby is still pushing Labor to ditch the policy altogether, believing a face-to-face meeting with Carroll will encourage him to scrap the policy.

“When we give him the reasons, the rationale, the economic benefits of not doing it, we hope that he will change his mind,” Piper said.

Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive Sally Curtain said the decision to pause the debate over the “divisive legislation” and listen to industry was a good start, but maintained the bill should be scrapped.

Bran Black, chief executive of the Business Council of Australia, said while Carroll was taking the first steps towards listening to industry, the bill in any form would “compound Victoria’s economic decline”.

“Already, Victoria has the highest unemployment rate in the country and the Victorian economy cannot afford another policy that drives investment and jobs away,” Black said.

Cath Evans, Victorian executive director of the Property Council, said the government should use the

delay to consult deeply on the legislation and examine its potentially dire economic consequences.

The Coalition under Opposition Leader Jess Wilson decided not to oppose Labor’s bill and was seeking to introduce amendments to protect businesses.

The proposed amendments include capping “reasonable costs” an employer must pay at \$1000, limiting the right to employees who primarily work in Victoria and will continue to do so (unless mutually agreed to) and delaying an employee’s right to appeal a company’s decision until next year.

Shadow attorney-general James Newbury said by pushing the promised start of the legislation back 10 months Carroll was creating instability for businesses and workers.

“His government committed to a guarantee of working from home on the first of September – he’s broken that guarantee,” Newbury said.

“Victorians should know they cannot trust this man, and they cannot trust this government, despite what he guarantees, despite what this government has promised.”

## of course, you’re rich

dollar deals while waiting for his trial.

The reality is police say everyone charged with sex offences is at risk of self harm, but it is not your mental balance but your bank balance that matters when it comes to naming names.

Then there is Mr George Weaver.

Weaver is a member of a powerful Melbourne family, but don’t go online trying to find him as that is not his real name.

He is a convicted child sex offender, but his identity has been protected because his lawyers said he was a suicide risk.

The suppression order is so tight he doesn’t exist. We are banned from reporting the suburb where he was raised, his number of siblings and the suburb of the community corrections centre he had to attend.

Despite the judge describing his offending as “disgusting, reprehensible, and frankly, deeply disturbing”, he can live in denial.

The law is supposed to be equal, but being able to afford the best lawyers always gives you the inside running.

Then you may be named in Who’s Who, but not on the court list.

# The premier has retreated from a fight about nothing

## OPINION

CHIP  
LE GRAND

STATE POLITICAL EDITOR



For the first time in a long time, it feels like grown-ups are back in charge of the Victorian government.

Premier Ben Carroll’s decision to delay his government’s working from home legislation sends two clear messages.

The first is he would rather be a Labor leader who listens to business owners than one who goes out of his way to pick a fight with them.

The second is that, in the potentially short time he has in the job, he wants to focus on genuine problems – and there are plenty of them in Victoria – rather than confected ones.

The decision also reflects how dramatically the political landscape has changed in the 12 months since Jacinta Allan announced her work-from-home policy, to rapturous applause, on the floor of the state Labor conference.

Back then, Labor was a government searching for a viable opposition to define the coming political contest. The entire point of legislating a right to work from home was to draw a feckless Liberal

Party and the business lobby into a Duttonesque stoush.

This is why Allan promised not only to legislate working-from-home rights this parliamentary term, but to bring the laws into effect in plenty of time for someone to mount a High Court challenge before the November election. The louder the fight, the better for Labor.

*[Carroll] wants to focus on genuine problems ... rather than confected ones.*

It was political opportunism, laced with a socialist left caricature of industrial relations, in which every boss is an exploitative bastard intent on screwing over workers, and every worker is powerless to negotiate reasonable terms of employment for themselves.

The proposed construction – changing anti-discrimination law to make working from home a protected attribute alongside race, sexuality and gender – always seemed faintly absurd, and indeed insulting, to people who face genuine discrimination.

Labor has no lack of opposition now – not from a Coalition better organised under the leadership of Jess Wilson and not from a One Nation party that wasn’t even a blip on the Victorian political radar a year ago.

In many households in Greenvale and Thomastown and Mill Park and Kororoit – state seats that Labor is at risk of losing to One Nation – working from home is something other people do in more affluent suburbs.

As a political concern, it is of lower order importance to the state of the roads, the cost of food and the state of your local high school.

In Victoria, where anyone who could work from home spent nearly two years doing so during COVID, the practice is a well-established and widely accepted feature of post-pandemic life. As Allan and Carroll have both argued, the benefits to both employees and employers are clear.

This is why, according to a survey conducted by the e61 Institute last month, Victoria has the most work-from-home-friendly employers in Australia, and why 68 per cent of all full-time office workers can already work at least two days a week from home.

Faced with this glaring non-problem, Carroll has retreated from a stoush that never was.

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## A message to the Premier



Dear Premier Carroll,

When the State Government stopped maintaining the historic Flinders Pier a decade ago, it fell into such disrepair that **45,000 Victorians** demanded action.

Heritage Victoria intervened and listed the Flinders Pier for its **historical significance**, ruling that the pier must either be properly maintained or rebuilt the same.

Instead, the current Government demolished the Heritage listed structure, left 12 new piles sitting abandoned in the water, and refused to rebuild the historic inner pier. This was a **betrayal** of community trust, undermined faith in the Heritage Act and eroded our confidence in the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

**Premier, we expect better.** It is now time to restore and rebuild the Flinders Pier for all Victorians, just as your Government **publicly promised** only 8½ months ago.



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