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Media Release

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Sheed airs concerns about female job security

In parliament today, Independent Member for Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed aired concerns that the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the job security of women in the district.

Ms Sheed highlighted that the number of people employed in Greater Shepparton fell 18 per cent from February last year to September this year.

“The pandemic has shone the spotlight on the unstable nature of employment in our region, and the most affected have been women,” she said.

“It has unveiled the entrenched gender inequalities that were hidden below the surface.”

Ms Sheed told the parliament that more than 10,000 local women were out of work in this period, compared to only 2,282 men – a ratio mirrored across Victoria with female job losses being five times more than men. Monthly labour force data shows that this is the highest ever rate of female unemployment.

“I am especially concerned about our Shepparton girls and women in the 15 to 24 age bracket, where a loss of 5,329 jobs occurred,” Ms Sheed said.

“We know that women are often in more casualised labour environments such as the care industry and retail, which has been impacted greatly by COVID-19 restrictions. Recent labour force statistics showed retail had 3,800 job losses and health care dropped 2,000 of its workforce in Shepparton, between February 2020 and August 2021.”

Ms Sheed said she was concerned that some of these female job losses could continue for months or years and result in long-term disadvantage and economic insecurity.

“Women are already on the back foot when it comes to the 14.2 per cent gender pay gap and lower superannuation balances due to taking time off for child rearing, we do not need to see the gap widened by a disproportionate number of women in unstable work,” Ms Sheed said.

“As a community, employers need to look at the type of work contracts they offer women and make them full-time and permanent if that’s the type of work the employee is seeking.

“I will be looking into these figures and speaking with women who have been affected by unemployment in the past 18 months to see how they can be better supported.”

ENDS

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