

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

The **SPEAKER**—I have the honour to report that the House this day attended His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber when His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of Parliament of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy. As the Speech is printed, and copies will be in the hands of honourable members, it will not be necessary for me to read it.

Mrs HIRSH (Wantirna)—I move:

That the following Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor to both Houses of Parliament be agreed to by this House—

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, assembled in Parliament, wish to express our loyalty to our Sovereign, and to thank your Excellency for the Speech which you have made to the Parliament.

I am honoured to move the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply. This task is of great significance because of the special circumstances surrounding today's opening of Parliament. This is the fiftieth Parliament in this State and it is meeting in the year of Victoria's 150th anniversary. It is an historic occasion, in that a Labor Government has been re-elected for a second term by the people of Victoria. That has never happened in this State before. Also, it is exactly three years today since the election of the first Cain Labor Government of this generation.

As one of the eight women on the Government side of the House, I direct attention to the fact that it is 61 years since women became eligible to stand as candidates at Parliamentary elections in this State. The electorate of Wantirna is unique in Victoria, in that it is now wholly represented by women. When I look around the Chamber, it is obvious to me that the Labor Party is the only party that has taken steps to ensure that women are being represented in Parliament.

I acknowledge the Speech made by His Excellency the Governor, which outlined the Government's program for the next four years. I wish Sir Brian and Lady Murray well in their continuing service to the people of Victoria. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election for a second term to the important and difficult role of Speaker of this House. I have heard that you have already served one term with impartiality and distinction and, I believe, some humour, which I imagine must be an important component of the functioning of this place.

With the historic election of this Government, history has also been made in the electorate of Wantirna. For the first time, a member of the Labor Party has been elected to represent the people of Wantirna. I am honoured to represent the electorate in this Parliament and I thank the people of Wantirna for so clearly placing their confidence in me at the recent poll.

I should explain how I came to be in this place. I have chosen to pursue a political career because I believe Government intervention in the affairs of society is essential for the purposes of alleviating poverty and ensuring that there is an equitable distribution of available resources to all people. I worked for many years as a teacher and as a psychologist with individuals and families who are considered to be disadvantaged. I have reached the conclusion that, for a majority of disadvantaged people, the main difficulties they face are a lack of availability of resources or a lack of accessibility to the resources that exist. I refer to such matters as economic resources, through jobs and income support, housing, transport, education, child care and health care. People have a right to these resources and Governments have a responsibility to provide them.

In the early 1980s, Victoria was suffering the debilitating effects of 27 years of mismanagement by a Liberal Government that took little action on behalf of a significant proportion of the people of Victoria and had no vision for the future of this State. Victoria

was going downhill fast. The election of the Cain Labor Government exactly three years ago today changed the direction of Victoria. The Cain Government has brought compassionate policies and careful planning to this State—including a ten-year over-all strategy plan, detailed strategies for social justice and a new urban strategy. The impact is already evident.

The people of Wantirna experienced the effects of the neglect of the Liberal Government and are now experiencing the positive effects of the Cain Government's policies. I shall outline the impact of these policies and planning strategies on an outer-suburban area such as Wantirna, as well as explain how this Government's policies have made Victoria the leading State in Australia, with the nation's strongest State economy.

The electorate of Wantirna is situated in the western half of the City of Knox, at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges. The area was first settled in the 1870s and comprised mainly orchards and market gardens. The rural townships of Bayswater, Wantirna and Scoresby, served a small population who lived and worked in the countryside. However, approximately twenty years ago, a second wave of settlement commenced, which is still continuing. This settlement is bringing about the urbanization of the Wantirna area. As local orchardists and market gardeners have sold up to land developers, young families have been attracted to the district by the great Australian dream of home ownership.

From the time of the commencement of urban development until the early 1980s, houses were built for sale in the private sector and people took out loans from various sources to enable them to move into these houses. Local government was aware, through these years, of the need for services to go with the houses and it did attempt to provide them, but there was no commitment from the State Government of the time and social dislocation occurred. Services did not keep pace with population growth and the economic decline of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which occurred over the whole State, had an effect on the Wantirna area.

There was a combination of high unemployment—among both adults and young people—high housing loan interest rates and a desperate shortage of rental housing in both the private and public sectors. A poor transport network, a shortage of affordable child care, inadequate health services and a lack of youth services added to the problems. Early in 1982, the Cain Government halted this downhill slide. A carefully formulated economic policy was implemented, with the fundamental aim of providing as many jobs as possible. That policy has been successful.

Over the past three years, Victoria's economy has out-performed Australia's. Victoria now has the nation's strongest economy and its best employment growth. Victoria has accounted for more than 40 per cent of Australian employment growth since John Cain won office. In the last term of the Liberal Government, Victoria accounted for only 16 per cent of that growth.

Since the bottom of the recession, employment has increased by 6.2 per cent in Victoria compared with 4.8 per cent across Australia.

A cornerstone of the Cain Government's strategy for economic recovery was the revival of the building industry, especially the housing sector, both public and private. The use of the building industry to lead the economic recovery served the dual purposes of creating more jobs and more houses—both critically important areas. The past three years have seen a resurgence in the building industry and new building approvals in the private sector are up by 50 per cent in the current year.

A revitalization of public housing is occurring under the Cain Government with the addition of over 3000 dwellings to the State's public housing stock in 1983–84 with another 3000 planned for 1984–85. New public housing, comprising good quality dwellings, is spread throughout the community.

Maintenance of public housing is important and estate improvement funds have increased from \$2 million, as they were under the Liberal Government, to \$22 million under the Cain Government.

The provision of private housing has flourished in the past three years and will continue to do so under the Cain Government. Interest rates are much lower now than they were in 1982. This has been of great assistance to people living in the outer suburbs. Creative loan schemes have been introduced to provide access to home ownership for over 2000 low income families and intervention by the Urban Land Authority will help to control land prices.

Local building figures reflect the housing recovery. In the past year, the number of houses built in the City of Knox increased by 26.7 per cent. There was also an increase of 109 per cent in flat building and an increase of 41 per cent in the construction of new factories. Two new primary schools are being built and the progress of work on a new TAFE college, due to commence operation next year, is on schedule.

A deficit in transport services in the electorate of Wantirna was addressed by the Cain Government. The reorganization and co-ordination of bus services in the new Ringwood neighbourhood commenced in October 1984 and led to increased mobility for those sections of the community that could not readily move outside their homes, for instance, non-car drivers, young people and the elderly.

Train travellers, who had been disadvantaged in previous years, are better off under the Cain Government. The Government has completed the duplication of the railway line between Ringwood and Bayswater and got rid of the large hole in the ground that had inconvenienced Bayswater train travellers for years. The station car park has also been upgraded.

An important issue to be addressed during the next term of the Cain Government will be the combined effects of such organizations and materials as the group apprenticeship scheme, the new TAFE college in the outer-eastern suburbs, the participation and equity programs in schools, the recommendations of the Blackburn report on post-compulsory schooling and the co-operation with private industry. These key components of the Government's youth guarantee scheme will help deal with the serious disadvantage suffered by a high proportion of young people in the Wantirna electorate, and in Victoria generally.

Finally, I wish to mention the right of people to live their lives in safety. The Victorian Labor Government's policy of a nuclear-free State provides a model for Australia and for the rest of the world in bringing about disarmament and bans on all nuclear weapons

I shall encourage the declaration of the City of Knox as a nuclear-free zone as part of this program.

I look forward to energetically and effectively representing in Parliament the electorate of Wantirna during the second Cain Labor Government of the 1980s.

The sitting was suspended at 6.25 p.m. until 8.4 p.m.

Mrs WILSON (Dandenong North)—I am pleased to second the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the speech of His Excellency the Governor. In doing so, Mr Speaker, I offer you my sincere congratulations on being elected to the highest office in this House. I also take this opportunity of thanking the Parliamentary staff for the help and consideration they have given to new members such as me during our first few weeks in office.

I have the honour to represent the new electorate of Dandenong North in this Parliament and I am proud to be its first member. I thank the voters of the electorate I represent for the confidence they have shown in me and in the Cain Labor Government.

The people of the Dandenong North electorate have my firm commitment that I will be an accessible local member, available to share their problems and anxieties and, where possible, assist with a solution. I am fortunate to follow a wonderful tradition of good solid local representation in the Dandenong North area, commenced in the 1960s by the previous member for Dandenong, my good friend, Alan Lind, and carried on by his successor, the current Victorian Treasurer, Rob Jolly.