

Mr CUNNINGHAM (Derrimut) - Firstly, I take this opportunity of congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your re-election to the esteemed role of Speaker of the House. Secondly, I should like to say that I am honoured by the privilege of representing the people of Derrimut in this new seat in this 50th Parliament of Victoria, and I thank all the supporters and voters who made it possible. I also pay tribute to the honourable member for Werribee, Dr Ken Coghill, for the solid foundations he has laid in this new Derrimut electorate which was once part of the Werribee electorate.

In his opening address to this 50th and historic Parliament of Victoria, His Excellency the Governor touched upon a number of programs that will be implemented during the life of this Parliament. One of the programs that has special significance to Derrimut electorate is the youth guarantee program. That program is composed of full-time work, full-time education, full-time training or an acceptable and structured arrangement for education, training and work for all those Victorians aged between fifteen and nineteen years. Its significance for Derrimut is that the eastern end of the electorate takes in Albanvale, Deer Park and Ardeer, with parts of those suburbs coming under the municipality of Sunshine, which is one of a number of municipalities that has been selected as a pilot program area.

The 1981 census figures show that 19.9 per cent of the population of Sunshine is represented by persons aged between ten and nineteen years. Therefore, it can be seen that the youth guarantee program will have great significance in that area over the next four years.

The western end of the electorate takes in the Shire of Melton which consists of an extremely young population. The 1981 census figures show that 43.5 per cent of the population of the Melton Shire is represented by persons under the age of nineteen years. Here again, the youth guarantee program will have a vital role to play in that municipality during this term of Parliament.

As a councillor of the Melton Shire, I have witnessed a massive expansion of population over the past few years. The Cain Labor Government's economic strategy, which was initiated in 1982, and in which inflation and unemployment were to be fought at the same time, is very much in evidence in Melton today. Last year the number of dwellings commenced was in excess of 900, which is the highest ever total, and the same tempo is being maintained this year. When one considers the pessimism that existed in the community in 1981 and that Victoria now has the lowest inflation rate and the highest employment rate, it is a creditable achievement.

In 1960, the population of Melton was 250; in 1974, along with Sunbury, it was declared a satellite city; today, its population is more than 25 000, and I should add growth and confidence in Melton had slowed considerably in the years 1980 and 1981. This has presented a formidable challenge and has placed extreme demands on ratepayers, councillors, shire officers, engineers and staff, and I pay tribute to their splendid efforts. This challenge has required significant co-operation between all sectors of government and, particularly, a partnership between State and local government.

The eastern side of the electorate that I represent includes the areas of Albanvale, Deer Park and Ardeer, whose increases in population are starting to have an impact upon the poor planning decisions of previous Administrations. Notably, there is a lack of provision for new school accommodation and for passive recreation reserves, and a lack of facilities and services expected in suburbs of these sizes.

The Labor Government is attempting to remedy mistakes of the past. I pay tribute to the Minister for Planning and Environment and to his constructive and positive approach to these problems.

His involvement with the planning and environment issues of the region is much appreciated by the residents. I take this opportunity of thanking all Ministers who have assisted in the development of the western suburbs which, Mr Speaker, as you will be aware, have a larger population than Tasmania and half the population of Adelaide.

Before becoming the Parliamentary representative for the electorate of Derrimut, I was employed as an industrial officer with the Australian Workers Union. It is pleasing to note that next year the Australian Workers Union will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The union's ability to grow through 100 years of change is testimony to the way in which it conducts its affairs, and I am proud to have been associated with the organization.

Although the union has advanced 100 years, the present Queensland Government appears to want to turn the clock back 100 years by initiating oppressive and unprecedented legislation which represents a denial of human rights and which amounts to a refusal to discuss the present mammoth industrial dispute in any forum. The Victorian Government's approach is one not of confrontation but one of consultation in regard to industrial relations. Its three year history is well recorded. There were more disputes in one year under the former Liberal Government than there has been in the past three years of Labor Government in Victoria.

His Excellency, the Governor, referred to the proposed workers compensation scheme and said that it would require extensive legislation and that workers compensation was a high priority of the Government. I was encouraged by those remarks because, prior to the election, I was an employee representative on the Industrial Training Commission Farming Trades Committee. The Industrial Training Commission was previously known as the Apprenticeship Commission. On numerous occasions the high cost of workers compensation premiums for a fourth year farming apprentice was raised by employers and the figure mentioned was approximately \$1500 to \$2000 a year. I assume that this prohibitive cost arises from accident statistics assessed historically from that industry.

Figures supplied by the then Department of Labour and Industry reveal that the fatality and injury rates of persons connected with tractor usage is incredibly high. I mention this because it is relevant to workers compensation reform, to occupational health and safety and to making work places safe for all.

In 1972, 30 people were killed in Victoria in tractor accidents. The statistics for subsequent years are: In 1973, 14 deaths; in 1974, 17 deaths; in 1975, 13 deaths; in 1976, 16 deaths; in 1977, 15 deaths; in 1978, 12 deaths; in 1979, 15 deaths; and in 1980, 10 deaths.

For each fatality there are, on average, five accidents involving serious injury. It was only with the introduction of tractor legislation in 1981 that the deaths and the maiming were somewhat reduced. The average for the next five years was just under ten fatalities a year. I use those figures to demonstrate that, although confronted by horrendous statistics year after year, without the teeth of some form of legislation, matters drifted and there was no turning around of those terrible trends. The 1981 legislation went only part of the way; much more needs to be done. To simply say that industry alone can be relied upon to act in the best interests of workers and their families and that there is no need for excessive Government interference has not worked; nor will it work until we have effective participation by unions, workers and employers.

His Excellency also referred to the underpinning of workers compensation by occupational health and safety requirements. The need for these reforms is compelling, because they will

bring about a reduction not only in the pain and suffering of workers and their families but also in the massive cost to the community generally. On a conservative basis, industrial accidents cost the Australian community more than \$6 billion a year. A concerted attempt to reduce this figure must surely be a worth-while objective.

The current legislation is deficient, firstly, because it does not have a real commitment to effective participation by workers, their unions and employers in the setting of standards; secondly, it is half-hearted in its recognition of the need for worker and union involvement in forcing or adopting realistic standards in the work place; thirdly, the Act makes no commitment to a licensing system to control dangerous work processes and chemicals. In relation to that aspect, I instance the incident that occurred at Footscray over the week-end and the accident in which two young boys, aged fifteen and sixteen, died as a result of trichlorethylene poisoning in 1981.

In closing, I point out that what appears to be overlooked by the critics, the pundits, the press and the Opposition is that, when the Cain Labor Government took office in 1982, it inherited from its predecessors the legacy Of a deficit of \$400 million. By demonstrating sound economic leadership, the Government has reached a stage where Victoria's Consolidated Fund is now in surplus, where Victoria has the lowest unemployment rate of any State in Australia and, in the process of reaching that position, has created more than 120 000 new jobs. In addition, this State has the lowest inflation rate, the highest retail sales and the best industrial relations record in Australia; it has gained the confidence of business and has created a good investment climate. The partnership works and will continue to do so as the Government enters its second term of office-the partnership of government, local government, unions and business.

I look forward to serving and representing the constituents of Derrimut in that atmosphere of partnership. I believe this term will be challenging, and the Government will be judged on its record. I look forward to that challenge with optimism and enthusiasm.