

Mr MICALLEF (Springvale) - I wish, first of all, to thank the staff and the members of this House for helping me to make the transition to Parliament; it is different.

The Springvale by-election has demonstrated to the people of Victoria that the Cain Government is at a very popular ebb. The Springvale by-election has given a clear mandate to the Cain Government to continue the way it is going. The result was a magnificent win and showed for the third time in less than twelve months that the Opposition has little credibility in the electorate. Each time the Labor Party has gone to the electorate in a by-election the result has improved.

The Springvale by-election came about as a result of the sudden death of Kevin King and, from a personal point of view, it is a sad way to come into Parliament. The work that Kevin King did in the electorate came out clearly in the campaign. The standing of Kevin King as a person was extremely high in the electorate, and I acknowledge the work that Kevin did.

I am very proud of the people of Springvale and thank them for the confidence they have shown in me. I would like to thank Kevin's family for their support, and also Peter Batchelor, an organizer for the Australian Labor Party, for the way in which he directed the campaign. The party activists in the Springvale area rallied behind us magnificently.

It used to be said that by-elections went against governments. The Labor Party is changing that rule. Victoria has changed this concept remarkably. The Government has won its third by-election and increased its vote each time. This illustrates that people were fed up with 27 years of conservative government. The honourable member can laugh; the results are on the board.

The electorate of Springvale is a diverse electorate. It is a good electorate from which to obtain a sample of how the community is thinking. The top half of the electorate, Mulgrave and Wheelers Hill, is a newer area and it has the problems of newer areas.

The area has had 27 years of nothing. All previous governments did was to put a football ground in the middle of it and they did not even bother servicing it, providing transport and so on. They just left the area to develop without any proper planning. The present Government is now working on picking up the pieces.

The southern end of the electorate contains the City of Springvale itself, which is an established area with an industrial base. The concerns of the people of that area that came out during the election campaign were the concerns on which we concentrated and the policies to deal with those problems are the policies being pursued. We are trying to do something about the massive unemployment in the area that we inherited as a result of 27 years of conservative government in this State and the policies of the Federal Fraser Government. We are also trying to pick up the pieces in that area.

There are approximately 2000 young unemployed people in Springvale and that is a disgusting situation. Obviously, unemployment creates all sorts of associated problems. Unemployed people have great difficulty in obtaining decent housing because the social service benefits they receive do not give them adequate living standards.

The electorate of Springvale is extremely cosmopolitan. It has large Italian, Yugoslav, Greek, Vietnamese and South American communities, as well as many other smaller ethnic groups. The social problems suffered by those communities are enormous. It is obvious that people who are trying to settle down in a new environment, a new country, with different cultural ties bear the

brunt of any economic recession. The queue at the Springvale legal aid service clearly illustrates the problems.

I shall now explain to honourable members some of my background. I was born in Australia of Maltese parents and the Maltese community tells me I am the first person of Maltese extraction to be elected to Parliament. I am proud to have that honour. I worked in industry for some twenty years and became a shop-floor delegate for the Amalgamated Metalworkers and Shipwrights Union. I am sure this information will create a little interest in the House and honourable members will remind me of it in the future. I expect this. I am proud to have been associated with Australia's largest union, which develops people particularly well. As is reflected in this House, it develops one's social conscience.

After working as a shop-steward and representing many diverse groups, I developed an interest in occupational health, and was appointed as an occupational, health and safety officer with the AMWSU. I became the first full-time occupational health officer employed by a union in Australia. That was three and a half years ago. I helped to evaluate the occupational health programme for the union and in the development of the Labor Party policy in this area, as well as promoting occupational health throughout the community. If I had the time, I could tell honourable members about the things I had to do to try to overcome the bungling that took place during that 27 years of conservative rule in this State. There are 27 Acts covering occupational health and safety in this State. It is an absolute mess