

Before resuming my seat, I thank the House for the courtesy it has shown me during this, my first speech.

The Hon. B. A. E. SKEGGS (Templestowe Province)—Mr President, and members of the Legislative Council, firstly I express my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen and support the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency the Governor. I take this opportunity of congratulating you, Mr President, on your election to the high office of President of this august Chamber. It is a very high responsibility and one that I know you will discharge with great distinction, having a personal knowledge of your long and distinguished record in the services of the Parliament and especially in the traditions of this Chamber.

I also congratulate Mr Wright on his election as Chairman of Committees of this House. I pay tribute to the immediate past President of the Legislative Council, the Honourable Rod Mackenzie, who I know served with great distinction as your predecessor, Mr President.

It is an honour to represent the province of Templestowe in this House. It is a large province that is well known to me as I previously served a large part of the province while representing the electorate of Ivanhoe in another place between 1973 and 1982. During the term of my previous representation, the electorate of Ivanhoe at one time embodied both sides of the Yarra River. That was quite unusual for the boundaries of a metropolitan electorate. It straddled not only Ivanhoe and Heidelberg but also Bulleen and Lower Templestowe. Therefore, it covered a large part of the Templestowe Province.

I pay tribute to the high tradition of representation Templestowe province has enjoyed through the years. Some of the most distinguished Parliamentarians have represented the area. I refer to Sir Raymond Garrett, who served as a President of the Legislative Council; the Honourable Vasey Houghton, a former Minister; Dr Ralph Howard, and my present colleague, Mr Miles. All those people served with great distinction on the Liberal side of the House.

My immediate predecessor, the Honourable Michael Arnold, who served the people of Templestowe as a member of the Australian Labor Party, was an excellent member. I have the highest respect for the work that he did and I pay tribute to him.

I thank my supporters for allowing me to return to Parliamentary service after some years away from it. That is a privilege in itself and I am conscious that not too many people achieve it. It is a tribute to those people who have had faith in me that I am able to serve them again. I particularly thank the Liberal Party electoral committee of the Templestowe Province which comprises many people who have worked hard during the election period and prior to the election. I thank also my own branch, the Heidelberg branch of the Liberal Party, with which I have been associated since the early 1970s and whose members have been loyal supporters.

Templestowe Province covers approximately 155 square kilometres. By country standards that is not a large province, but by metropolitan standards it is a large province and takes in the districts of Doncaster, Lower Templestowe, Templestowe, Bulleen, Heidelberg, Ivanhoe, Rosanna, Eltham, Diamond Valley and Hurstbridge. The Honourable John Miles has represented the area most diligently for some years and I look forward to working in harness with him in providing good representation for the area. Templestowe Province has approximately 180 000 residents, of whom 126 000 are on the electoral roll.

The statistical breakdown of the province is interesting. Approximately 61 per cent of the residents are over the age of 18 years and 30.9 per cent are below the age of 18 years; 17.4 per cent are over the age of 64 years. Templestowe Province has the lowest

number of residents renting housing property throughout Victoria with 0.3 per cent in that category. The province has a high percentage of home ownership with 79.5 per cent owning homes and 49.8 per cent purchasing homes; 8.6 per cent rent privately. It has the lowest unemployment rate in Victoria—4 per cent—according to statistical returns provided by the Parliamentary Library.

The province contains people with the highest annual income for those earning \$32 000 annually in Victoria, with 45.3 per cent being in that category. It ranks second as the electorate with most post-secondary and tertiary qualifications, with 6.5 per cent in that category, so it is a well educated and high-income earning province.

His Excellency, in his address at the opening of the first session of the 51st Parliament, stated:

The Government has also developed the Metplan strategy which is its vision for—and will form the basis of—the future expansion and development of the metropolitan public transport system. It will continue to implement the vision of our road system in METRAS.

His Excellency refers to government vision in the MetPlan strategy, but I question the vision shown in the METRAS plan, and I do not believe it is in the best interests of the people of Victoria or the people of Templestowe Province. The METRAS plan contains many planning uncertainties, as does the MetPlan itself. One of the fundamental aspects of the MetPlan Draft Strategy is its strategy for developing the growth of metropolitan Melbourne over the next fifteen years. If the growth develops along the lines referred to in the MetPlan Draft Strategy, it would not be in the best interests of inner and middle suburbs of metropolitan Melbourne, particularly not for people in Templestowe Province and in the Plenty corridor.

I am alarmed at the projected growth for these areas and the lack of funding and preparation in contemplating such a plan. The MetPlan Draft Strategy refers to the improved access to employment, retailing and community facilities and providing a more compact metropolitan area. It refers to increasing public transport usage, but further growth along the Plenty corridor could not be totally dependent on public transport. The road network to the area needs to be materially improved and should be an urgent priority for the government.

We are in the age of the motor car whether we like it or not and although we all believe there is a need for good and adequate public transport, honourable members must face up to the fact that increasing numbers of families have access to motor vehicles and they expect to have adequate arterial highways and freeways to service the areas in which they live.

Although some emphasis must be given to public transport needs, not enough is being done to address where the money will come from so that planning can be developed for the freeways and highways that will be required to take increasing traffic flows.

The MetPlan Draft Strategy will encourage higher residential densities in established areas, particularly inner and middle suburbs as well as developing the Plenty corridor. It will encourage higher density living in middle and outer suburban areas, which is not in the best interests of the people of those areas. The government has encouraged dual occupancy and I am disturbed by that because many people have put their life savings into developing their homes and have worked hard to acquire their homes. They are faced with an increasing population in the suburbs, including a changing lifestyle. Increasing the density of population in many inner and suburban areas is not in the best interests of the development of Victoria.

The METRAS document states that the population of Victoria will grow from 2.9 million people to 3.4 million people by 2003, although the population in middle and

inner suburbs of Melbourne is expected to decline by 8 per cent by that year. Many people will be faced with a changing lifestyle. The government is faced with a tremendous challenge as funding this development and ancillary services has not been addressed adequately through State or Federal government. Major road developments are required.

Melbourne's job opportunities appear to be located in eight municipalities around Melbourne, and 13 per cent of all metropolitan jobs are in the central activities district. Over the next fifteen years the inner suburban region will continue to have the greatest concentration of metropolitan jobs. How and where job opportunities can be developed in the growth districts is an enormous challenge, because they will require many additional community services and further infrastructure to provide employment and back-up services for those people going to work.

There is projected to be only modest growth in office-based and retail employment jobs in the eastern suburbs, so new skills and jobs will be required in areas of declining population. All these matters are of urgent planning priority.

At a conference on metropolitan planning and the Plenty corridor that was held in Heidelberg on 30 March this year, the then Minister for Planning and Environment released a document headed "Plenty Valley", which called for a number of comments from residents. A number of very interesting seminars were held following that conference and much community input was forthcoming as a result. Several concepts were put forward at the seminars—I attended the first.

Three concepts were outlined for the development of the Plenty corridor area. The first was to use the whole area for urban development, except for the Plenty Gorge and conservation areas; and for the development to expand as a narrow band to the township of Whittlesea in the north. The second concept was that existing residential areas be allowed to extend to the north, building around the Plenty Gorge and other conservation areas; that the semi-rural image in the major part of the valley be retained; and that urban development stop south of Arthurs Creek Road. The third concept was to create a unique type of development, providing an independent group of settlements relating to each other but separated from the existing urban areas by the Plenty Gorge and conservation areas; and that it be developed around the lake created mainly from the flood plain.

When considering the Plenty corridor proposition, it is envisaged by some that there will be an increase of some 550 000 people in the outer and fringe metropolitan areas in that region by the beginning of the next century. I understand that it is estimated that the scale of development of the Plenty Valley will mean an increase in population from the current 83 000 to approximately 200 000 by the year 2000. It is a rate which is said to be comparable with the growth of Canberra over the past two decades.

Another factor that would place pressure on outer areas is the growing community demand for rural living. Many people today are still seeking the opportunity of rural living but still within reasonable access of the city. With the rate of growth envisaged in the Plenty corridor area, that type of lifestyle will become less and less available.

As a first step towards the outline of the development for the Plenty corridor, the government commissioned consultants, Loder and Bayly Pty Ltd, to investigate the area and report on the possibilities for the type and density of the development under consideration. For those who are not familiar with it, I point out that the Plenty corridor is a long, narrow area astride the Plenty River and flanked by large farming areas. It also includes very generous conservation and landscape interest zones. It is most important that much of the conservation area be retained.

I express fears on behalf of many of the people who attended the seminars that much of the green areas may disappear with this development unless very careful planning takes place and attention is given to preserving them. Everyone knows that there has to be growth and population expansion and that there is a need to develop new areas, but there must be certainty about retaining those green breathing spaces that are so important for modern living. It is vital to give absolute priority to the retention of those green open spaces when considering planning of this magnitude.

The Plenty Valley has generally retained its urban character for many years, but there is no doubt that it is under some threat by this sort of development. There is a need for consideration about maintaining the physical environment and character of the area, which is unique and beautiful. I do not believe a greater concentration of housing should be allowed, with the resultant reduction in private open space, unless the government is able to ensure that adequate areas are preserved as conservation zones.

I have an extract from the *Heidelberger* of 29 June. It reported on a public meeting that took place and referred to expressions of opinion from a number of people who voiced their views on the matter. The article states:

Corridor plans may harm wildlife: expert

The Plenty Corridor's unique flora and fauna could be "wiped out" with rushed or inappropriate planning procedures, a meeting in Epping last Thursday was told.

Bundoora conservationist Mr Gerard Closs told about 300 people at a workshop on environmental and recreational planning issues of the Plenty corridor development that the area contained many rare or endangered species of plants and wildlife.

Mr Closs said the area contained stands of river red gums up to 800 years old. "I find it quite incomprehensible that we can even think of cutting them down," he said. . . Mr Closs said that before any plans for developing the corridor went ahead:

- a comprehensive flora and fauna survey of the whole valley should be carried out;
- an environmental impact statement and a management plan done; and,
- a land release policy drawn up to direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas.

Many other points were made by concerned residents at the meeting. The article reflected the concerns and fears of residents living in the region that much of the flora and fauna of the area could disappear with unplanned growth. At present, adequate funding is not even set aside to ensure that proper planning will take place. The METRAS study highlighted that no additional funding was available. The study gave priority to some projects that should receive funding. I will refer to a number of projects that should receive funding.

Investigations should be undertaken on ways to provide more trains and to speed up services. That was one of the recommendations of the Eastern Corridor Public Transport Study. It was also recognised by most people that there was a most urgent need to do something about improving the arterial roads and freeways and to make the area serviceable so as to ensure that an enormous burden would not be placed on the current roads, which extend through Heidelberg, Doncaster, Bulleen and Preston.

All those roads will be under enormous pressure with increasing traffic over the next twenty years. It will be necessary to develop an adequate road system, including the proposal that was discussed during the last election campaign by members on both sides of the political spectrum—the development of an outer ring road. That would take a lot of pressure off existing roads from the build-up of traffic resulting from the development of the Plenty corridor. There is a need to think about not only improving the road system that currently exists but also establishing other road systems, including the outer ring road, which must be given urgent priority by the government.

One must also consider what has occurred in places like Fitzroy and Collingwood, which are inner suburbs that today experience a tremendous build-up of traffic. The same heavy traffic density may be transferred to the middle suburbs, which presently enjoy a delightful residential character and a unique quality of life. However, these qualities can disappear; they can certainly be materially affected if the density of living policy is developed by the government. It is already happening to a certain extent through the dual occupancy policy, and I believe it will happen even more as pressure is brought to bear as a result of the projected outer growth.

The physical services that relate to the area must also be considered, such as the adequate supply of water, gas and power. Will they be available? Can that sort of resource be built up when there is a potential growth of up to 500 000 people throughout that region?

Is the government in a position to address itself to the enormous amount of money that will have to be applied to those services? Adequate means of providing water, gas and power to the point of demand must be a most urgent priority. Also, the existing sewerage reticulation system will have to be upgraded and, at some point, a major construction of that system must be undertaken, given the sort of population growth projected for the Plenty corridor.

The Telecom communication links will be under tremendous strain as a result of the population build-up. I realise this is a Federal problem but all of these problems will demand a large amount of planning at State and Federal levels, and a lot of funding must be made available to ensure that these provisions occur and that there is adequate protection for environmental values in the region.

One also needs to examine the magnitude of works which must be attended to in community services such as infant welfare, child-care and preschools. All of these areas must be addressed. If people are to work or move from the Plenty corridor downwards for job opportunities, it will mean pressure on all sorts of services including infant welfare, child-care, and preschools. There will be changes in demands and pressure on a number of schools in the region. Active and passive recreational opportunities must be addressed and child support services must be increased. Additional community centres will need to be developed, as well as domiciliary services, paramedical services and aged care facilities.

All of these are big demands and they need funding and planning. Before we go any further down the track on the Plenty corridor development, these sorts of issues need to be addressed.

There will be a further demand for strategic planning for the primary and secondary effects of large-scale residential developments in the Plenty Valley. Investigations will also have to be undertaken into employment provisions, retail, commercial and industrial needs. In the human services area there will be a spill-over demand so that local services will face enormous pressure.

Above all, the conservation and environmental issues are of prime concern, particularly the increased stormwater volume which must result from the great build-up of housing in the area and the increased demands on the sewerage system. All of these changes mean meticulous planning from a local and regional viewpoint and a lot of serious thinking needs to be done before we go too far down the track.

Neighbourhoods should not be overlarge, for comfortable urban living. I do not believe in density of population build-up. I do not think dual occupancy has been in the best interests of many of our suburban areas and, as one who served in local government, I understand the way people feel about these issues.

Many people have expressed dissatisfaction about the effect of dual occupancy on their neighbourhoods. It will increase the number of people living in those areas; it will increase the traffic and put pressure on available services. People in the middle suburban areas of Melbourne are genuinely disturbed at this sort of change and government policy consciously bringing about this sort of change.

I understand population development is inevitable, but I put it strongly to Parliament that care must be exercised in the way the build-up is approached so it is not at the expense of existing suburbs and alter people's way of life. It is important to preserve the good standards of living which people have worked hard to enjoy.

Another point which disturbs a number of people is the many options set out in some of the conservation strategies put forward in recent times, particularly transport strategies, which examine options for crossings of the Yarra River. During my term in the Legislative Assembly I strongly expressed the fear of local residents that another river crossing would be constructed in the Banyule Flats area. That is one of the most sensitive wetlands in metropolitan Melbourne and it would be an environmental tragedy if the Banyule Flats were violated in this way.

I know some members of the government have also strongly expressed themselves on this issue and they would probably agree with me. I hope both sides of the House will observe the need to ensure that such sensitive environmental areas are preserved for posterity and valued for the beauty they reflect in our quality of life in metropolitan Melbourne. Strong opposition exists among residents of the Yarra Valley to any river crossing in the Banyule Flats area.

At the same time it is well recognised that there has to be an upgrading of the many arterial roads, possibly with the widening of the Fitzsimmons Lane bridge to improve traffic flow there. I would oppose the idea of a six-lane highway along Templestowe and Bulleen roads, which has been suggested. Four lanes would be adequate, but obviously there has to be relief because when one reaches the Fitzsimmons Lane bridge the traffic must move into a single lane and an enormous bank-up of traffic occurs, causing environmental pollution hazards, particularly during peak hours. The bridge needs to be widened, and there has to be an improved link towards the Eastern Freeway.

The other development has to be the outer ring road. Eventually, I am sure it will draw a lot of traffic away from the existing roads being used to reach the Eastern Freeway. Environmental damage is a most important aspect to consider in keeping traffic out of residential streets and we must look for a grid of arterial roads which will provide the necessary alternatives.

So far as the link to the south-eastern suburbs is concerned, the Bell Street-Banksia Street link is about to get under way, giving access from Manningham Road and providing the capacity to link the east-west traffic volume. That is certainly long overdue and it will be started later this year.

Fears were expressed by many people about this link—and it causes some dislocation residentially, but it is one of the penalties to be paid in the need to move traffic in an east-west direction. However, it will not assist the north-south traffic flow, and that is the most important area to be addressed in the future.

The funds need to be available not only from the State but also from the Commonwealth, which is starving Victoria of proper road funding. I am sure both sides of the House would recognise that we must all fight to ensure that we obtain a much better deal from the Commonwealth for funding to improve our roads. That is an important matter to which the Parliament should address itself.

Another matter of concern is in the area of conservation. One aspect that has concerned not only me but also other honourable members is the proposed housing

developments in the Mont Park area. Housing developments are planned on the Strathallan estate, the Cherry Street site and the Forensic Drive laboratory site at Mont Park. Residents in the area are strongly opposed to the developments, not only because of the volume of traffic and the pressure on local services that would result, but also on environmental grounds.

Many residents regard that area as an important environmental buffer zone between the residential areas of the municipalities of Heidelberg, Preston, Diamond Valley and Eltham. It provides an important green belt around the area that essentially should be preserved. I hope the government's planning strategy will review the importance of that area. The problem of drainage and the situation of the site within the catchment area must also be considered. The problem relates not only to environmental concerns and the concerns of individual residents about the build-up of housing density in the area but also the drainage of the area, which presents major difficulties.

My experience in local government since I left Parliament has alerted me to the pressures being placed on local government and the emergence of what I consider to be the discriminatory taxation of ratepayers. Local government has been forced to accept responsibility for the provision of an increasing number of services, the financial burdens of which are unfair to ratepayers. Areas which were once the responsibility of both State and Federal governments are being offloaded onto local government. Local government should be assured of ongoing funding from State and Federal governments to enable it to continue to provide those services.

Honourable members will be aware that many areas of responsibility have been handed over to local government with the promise of short-term inducements. Those responsibilities have often been accepted readily but unrealistically by many municipalities. Yet, within a couple of years, the promised funding has dried up and the funding of such responsibilities has fallen upon the ratepayers—which amounts to discriminatory taxation, taxation centered on ratepayers and property owners only. I do not believe that is just.

If a State or Federal government offers to give a local municipality the responsibility of carrying out a service, the necessary funding should be sustained so that the financial responsibility does not fall on local ratepayers. Many government grants to local government have been reduced in recent times. For example, the reduced funding for library services is of serious concern to many municipalities. Although they are loath to cut back those services in many instances they have to do so simply because they have not received adequate funding. It is tragic that elderly people, students and others, all of whom rely on library services, are faced with having that service cut back because of a lack of government funding.

The level of road funding should be addressed by the Parliament. Honourable members should take the strongest possible stand on the level of road funding that is provided by the Commonwealth government. Victoria has not been treated justly as regards road funding and it is time that the injustice was redressed. Victoria has a large population, yet the roads in many municipalities are inadequate.

Local government has a responsibility to provide infant welfare centres, preschool centres, prenatal centres, creches and day nurseries, home help schemes, elderly people's clubs and amenities, preschool dental clinics, immunisations, and welfare offices. Local government also has a responsibility to provide sporting centre complexes such as swimming pools and recreation areas. The control of traffic and the provision of road safety require works and equipment, all of which must be attended to by local municipalities. Aged persons' homes and the meals on wheels service are examples of

services which require funding from local government as well as funding by the government.

Many ratepayers are concerned that this transfer of responsibilities is continuing. Ministers visit municipalities with bright, spanking new offers, offers that are hard to resist. Municipalities are offered funding for one or two years. Often, after that time, the funding dries up and local municipalities are left holding the baby. If local government is to be treated fairly, and if ratepayers and property owners are to be considered, the system of funding must be redressed. If local government is to continue to be given the responsibility for providing the services to which I have referred, greater justice and equity must be demonstrated in both State and Federal government dealings with local government.

It is a great honour to represent Templestowe Province. I have always believed it would be a great privilege to serve in this House, especially after having served as a member of the Legislative Assembly. Only a limited number of persons have had the honour of serving the people of Victoria in both Houses of Parliament. I look forward to serving the electors of Templestowe Province for a number of years, as well as serving the Parliament. I intend to uphold the highest principles of our Parliamentary system—the Westminster system of democracy—which is better enshrined in this House than in any other House of Parliament in Australia.

Mr President, I again congratulate you on attaining the high office of President of the Legislative Council.

The Hon. B. E. DAVIDSON (Chelsea Province)—Mr President, I congratulate you on your election to the position of President of the Legislative Council. Although I am a new member, I have worked in and around the precincts of the House for the past seven or eight years. I am aware that you are held in the highest esteem by honourable members from all political parties for your honesty, your integrity, and your vast knowledge of Parliamentary procedures and practices. It is with both anticipation and pleasure that I look forward to my term in the Chamber under your direction.

Chelsea Province has been very fortunate to have been represented by such fine members as the Honourable Eric Kent, Mr Mal Sandon and Mrs Lyster. During the election campaign, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of people who approached me and asked after Eric Kent. They asked whether he was still working hard for the Labor Party and what he was doing in his retirement. Eric Kent was one of Victoria's best liked and most capable Agriculture Ministers. He left his mark in Chelsea Province as a genuine socialist and a caring, competent local member.

The honourable member for Carrum in the other place is well known for his work with the elderly and for his care for the environment, particularly Port Phillip Bay. During his time in the House he became known as the local member for Port Phillip Bay! With his help and advice I hope to continue his work in the House. I am sure he will make his mark in the Legislative Assembly.

Mrs Lyster is building a reputation as a fine and caring local member, especially because of the work that she does on behalf of disabled people, which is of great benefit to the community. The electors of Chelsea Province have come to know Mrs Lyster well. I hope to emulate the high standards that have been set by both Mrs Lyster and my other Labor predecessors in Chelsea Province. I thank the Labor Party for selecting me as the candidate for the Chelsea Province. I thank the electors of Chelsea Province for electing me and for continuing to support the policies of the Australian Labor Party.

Chelsea Province is a diverse electorate which extends from Moorabbin to Mount Eliza, from the seaside of Port Phillip Bay to the rural area of Baxter, and then north