



DAVID MORRIS MP

Member for Mornington

Inaugural Speech

Legislative Assembly 20 December 2006

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — Speaker, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to your high office and to wish you well in discharging your duties over the next four years.

I feel greatly honoured to stand in this place today as the member for Mornington — honoured to be a member of this house, of course, but particularly so to be representing the seat of Mornington. The electorate lies on the eastern shore of Port Phillip Bay and comprises three distinct townships, Mount Eliza, Mornington and Mount Martha. It also contains a good slice of the district and village of Moorooduc. Despite substantial population growth in recent years, owing to the foresight and planning of successive councils, the area retains its charm.

Unfortunately the Melbourne 2030 activity centre provisions now threaten. This is a critical time for the Mornington Peninsula. We are in serious danger of becoming simply a southern extension of metropolitan Melbourne, a scenario emphatically rejected by the peninsula community. That is certainly a debate we must have, but perhaps it is more appropriate to leave it to another day. As I speak, much of the seat remains rural land, home to cool-climate viticulture, extensive grazing, fine food and, of course, the racing industry. We are on the metropolitan fringe. The Mornington Peninsula Shire is an interface council, with all the challenges that go with that particular designation.

I have spent most of my adult life on the peninsula. From almost my first day I was aware of the fierce local pride that people who live on the Mornington Peninsula — and particularly those who have lived there for a while — have in the area. It is a pride which I quickly came to share and which has made me a passionate advocate for the community that I now have the pleasure of serving in this place.

The other constant in my adult life has been small business. It was small business that brought me to the Mornington Peninsula, and it is small business that to a large extent has guided the course of my life over the last 26 years.

As all good traders know — and I think as all good members of Parliament know — it is of vital importance to be involved in your local community. Early on in my time on the peninsula I joined a number of local groups, including the Mornington Chamber of Commerce.

Not long after that the chamber developed a fairly strong difference of opinion with the then Mornington council as to what the future shape of the Mornington township should be. It was a difference that threatened to escalate and poison what had been previously a pretty good relationship between those two bodies over the years.

In a bid to understand the council's view of things I started sitting in the gallery right through council meetings, and of course rather than simply taking note of what happened in terms of the planning issues, I started to get interested in all the other bits and pieces that were going on as well. Fortunately our differences were resolved pretty quickly, but not before I was well and truly bitten by the local government bug, and before long I had been elected to the Mornington council.

My local government service, which was in the pre-amalgamation days, was certainly one of the high points of my public life to date. To serve as mayor, or shire president as it was in Mornington in those days, was a great privilege, as was the opportunity to serve on public bodies such as the Peninsula Regional Library Service and the Westernport Regional Planning Committee, to advise the Minister for the Arts on library funding or to be nominated by my peers to negotiate the merger of the Shire of Mornington with the shires of Hastings and Flinders.

But undoubtedly the most rewarding part of local government was the opportunity it gave me to engage directly with so many people who make our community great — the traders who give their time, and often their money, to make local festivals happen; the Rotary clubs and the Lions clubs, which contribute so much in so many ways; the volunteers who support the Meals on Wheels services — and without the volunteers they simply could not happen; and many, many more. Such people are an integral part of the active and vital community that is the Mornington electorate, as they are of so many other communities across Victoria.

In the past few days — and unfortunately now, weeks — there has been no better example of service to the community than the efforts of the Country Fire Authority volunteers, a number of them from the Mornington electorate, who have left their homes and their jobs to battle the menace of the fires which have laid waste to vast areas of our state. These brave men and women deserve our recognition and our thanks for their tremendous commitment to the public good. I am sure the thoughts of all of us are with them in their duties.

I come into this Parliament as a proud member of the Liberal Party, a party I joined in November 1975 at the age of 19. Over the years I have been an active member and have had the opportunity to contribute in many ways. I am a Liberal because I believe in individual freedom, in individual responsibility and in a society committed to freedom of thought and freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of association and free enterprise.

I believe in a community that values initiative, enterprise and individual achievement over compulsion and conformity — a place where people are able to buy a home, raise and educate their children in the way they choose, and create the life to which they aspire.

I would not have the privilege of standing in this place this evening had I not had tremendous support from many people. I firstly want to recognise the support I have received from the former member for Mornington, the Honourable Robin Cooper. Robin has been a friend for almost 20 years, a great mentor and a great supporter. I also particularly want to thank Diana and Erich Goetz, Terry Leech, Alan Underwood, Frank and Trish Winter, Arthur Ranken and David Chapman. Their efforts have been way beyond the call of duty, as have those of Darren Disney, Julian Sheezel and all in their team.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention another good mate — the Honourable Bruce Billson, Minister for Veterans Affairs and the member for Dunkley in the commonwealth Parliament. Bruce and I have shared many political adventures since we first crossed swords on a regional library committee in 1987.

I am also particularly fortunate to have enjoyed great support from my family for my political endeavours over what is now an extended period. That support has come from my parents, Bob and Dorothy Morris, from my sister, Robyn Tredinnick, and her husband, David, and lately their children, Caitlin and Andrew, and from my newer family, Simon, Tim and Carolyn Wilson, but most of all from my wife, Linda, who worked at full stretch for every day of what was a 22-month campaign. I simply would not be here without her love and support.

I thank the house for the courtesy with which I have been heard this evening, and I look forward with great enthusiasm to the years ahead.
