



DAVID MORRIS MP

Member for Mornington

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment

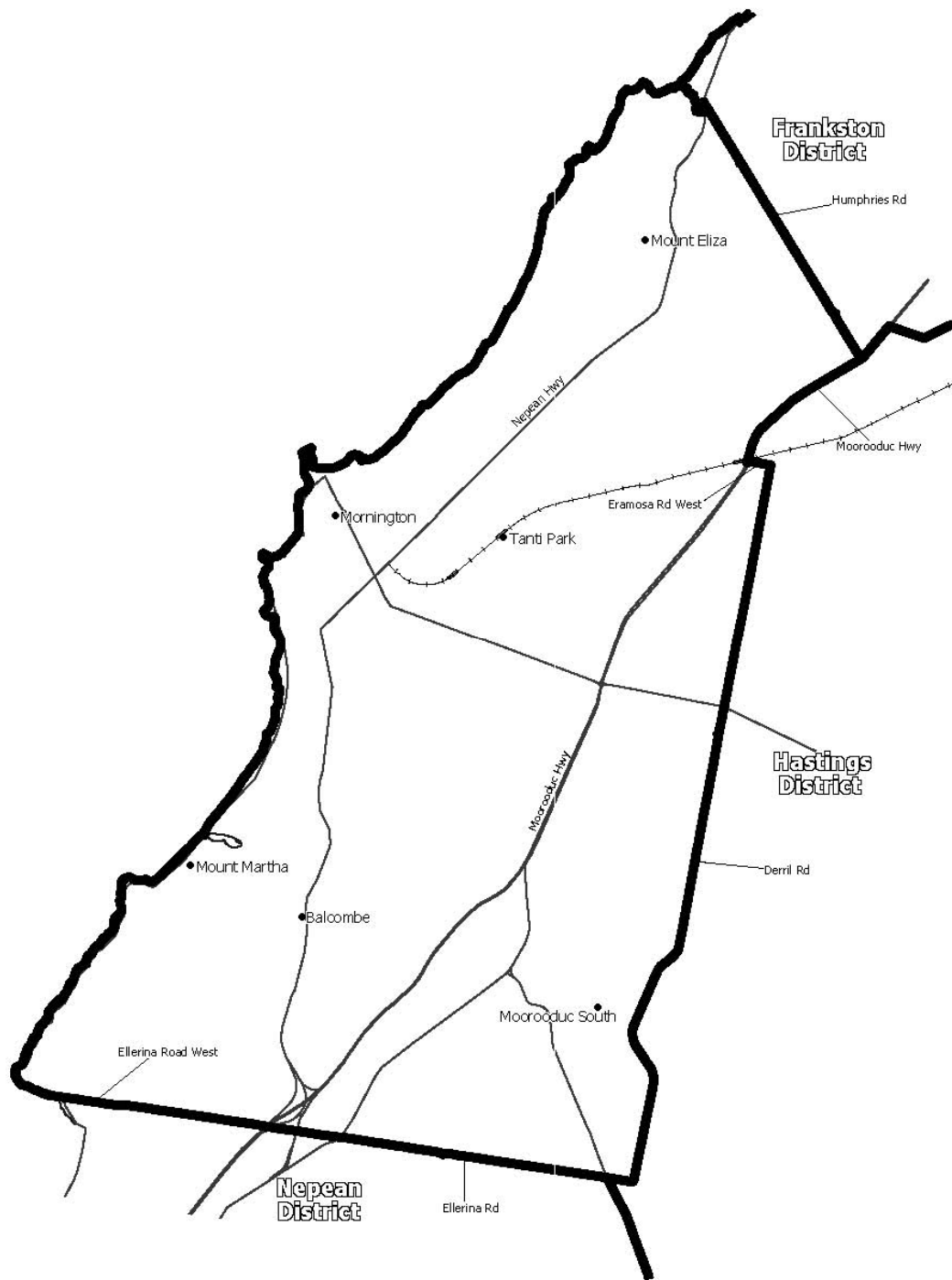
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government

ANNUAL REPORT

2009

Suite 2, 364 Main Street, Mornington 3931

www.davidmorris.org.au



The Mornington Electorate

Introduction

It is a pleasure to present my Annual Report for 2009, the 3rd year of the 56th Parliament, and the “third quarter” in the election cycle. For the Parliamentary Party the hard grind of opposition, keeping the Government to account in the Parliament and developing solid policy for the next election has continued apace.

The early weeks of 2010 have seen the release of a number of policies designed to restore order to Victoria’s streets, to combat violence on public transport and to deal with the hoons on our roads. As the year unfolds a comprehensive vision for Victoria will be unveiled.



The Electorate office continues to be a busy place as continued population growth places greater demands on our roads, and on local facilities and services. Mornington and Mount Eliza are now very much semi-urban communities, leading to many more requests this year for assistance from constituents.

The extra-Parliamentary year has been exceptionally busy with both Committee work (on four inquiries), visits to many Councils in my role as Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, in assisting with the preparation of the Families Statement delivered in Parliament by Ted Baillieu in the first sitting week of 2010. I have also had the pleasant challenge of coming to grips with my extra role as Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment (appointed November 2009).

The year ahead will be critical for our community and our State. We need to ask ourselves whether we are content to continue to put up with the way things are, to see community standards fall and public services and facilities deteriorate, or do we want change, new energy, decent standards and basic services we can depend on?

I believe Victoria needs a change and I will be working hard in 2010 to achieve it. I hope you’ll join me.

The Electorate

Shortcomings in local services and infrastructure continued to dominate the electorate in the past twelve months. Many are familiar to anyone who reads the newspapers, watches TV, listens to the radio or uses the internet, while other equally consistent themes are by-products of the rapid and sustained local population growth of recent years.

The State-wide themes of long hospital waiting lists, inadequate and unreliable public transport and a shortage of police in real terms continue to dominate. The Frankston rail line is one of the worst performing in the State, with one in four trains failing to arrive on time, increasing to one in three in the warmer months.

The Electorate (cont. from Page 3)

During the summer on average 150 services a month were cancelled. On some occasions in peak hour half the services were cancelled and the rest more than twenty minutes late.

The Government's sole response has been to stop publishing the cancellation figures, replacing them with a "reliability indicator".

Local health services continue to fall well below an acceptable level, with Frankston Hospital failing to achieve, or even come close to the State's own benchmarks in both the Emergency Department and in Elective Surgery.



Participating in Relay for Life

Fewer than 60% of ED patients stayed for less than four hours, against a State benchmark of 80% and fewer than half those requiring a bed were admitted within eight hours against a benchmark of 80%. The figures for elective surgery also fail to go close to achieving the minimum national standards.

Frankston Hospital is recognised as one of the most under-resourced hospitals in the State, and the staff do a great job despite Government neglect.

Other issues tackled during the year included primary school maintenance and replacement, offensive behaviour, public safety, traffic management and safety issues (particularly around schools), road maintenance, the installation of 'smart' electrical meters, coastal protection, and a host of matters taken up on behalf of individual constituents, including many Shire related enquiries.

Local fire protection has not unexpectedly been a big issue following the tragic events of Black Saturday. Much of the electorate is at risk from wildfire, particularly the wooded



Barbequing at Mornington Peninsula Youth Enterprises

areas of Mount Eliza and Mount Martha, and our extensive parks and reserves. The introduction of the "10/30 Rule", permitting clearance of growth close to homes has allowed many residents to undertake protection works prior to the fire season. While some predicted we would see wholesale clearance of trees and clear-felling of large areas this has not occurred, with local residents overwhelmingly taking a responsible approach.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire has also undertaken considerable work in natural systems reserves across the Peninsula, complaints about fire hazards have dropped considerably this year and I congratulate the Council for their work.

The Electorate (cont. from Page 4)

The biggest single issue in the electorate continues to be planning, and in particular the protection of the character of our townships and of the integrity of the green wedge. The Government continues to pay lip service to both issues while refusing to act.

A number of applications for developments in the green wedge have emerged this year, most of a scale incompatible with non-urban uses, some even thinly disguised proposals for residential development beyond the urban growth boundary.



In October 2009 the Minister for Planning quietly abandoned the Mt Eliza Woodlands amendment without justification, not even announcing the decision until December. The amendment had been the subject of widespread support from Woodland residents, the Council and of people right across the Peninsula. The Minister claimed that the area could be satisfactorily protected with less prescriptive controls but his department has refused to provide the Shire with any guidance as to how this could be achieved in a manner acceptable to the Government.

The issue of planning will not be resolved until the Mornington Peninsula once again has it's own, fully independent planning scheme.

Committee Work

As noted above the last year has been exceptionally busy for the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee of the Parliament, of which I am Deputy Chair.

The first months of 2009 were taken up with the final hearings and preparation of the Committee's *"Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending and Recidivism by Young People"*, which was tabled in July 2009. The Committee made a series of recommendation's intended to reduce the incidence of young people becoming involved in crime, and of dealing more effectively with offenders when incidents occur.

The Government's response to the report was tabled during the first Sitting Week of 2010 and in typical fashion they have failed to grasp the nettle, and have failed to tackle the hard issues.

Committee Work (cont. from Page 5)

The Committee identified a particular contributing factor to youth crime was a very early exit from the education system and made some strong recommendations on reducing truancy. The Government's response was to put its head firmly in the sand and to claim the current system is working. Clearly it is not!

In the second half of the year the Committee has been dealing with two references: An inquiry into *Crimes Against the Person*, from the Legislative Council, and an inquiry into *People Trafficking for Sex Work* from the Brumby Government.

A further inquiry into *The Use of Illicit Drugs in Women's Prisons* has been foreshadowed later in the year.

Parliamentary rules prevent me discussing the contents of the inquiries except to say that a considerable volume of work has been undertaken on both subjects. Both Inquiries are expected to report later in the year.

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Local Government

In 2009 I continued to work in the role of Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, clocking up many miles around the State visiting Councils to discuss the issues and to see the problems they face on the ground.

The current Government has pursued a relentless agenda to limit the powers of Councils and to distance the elected Councillors from their communities. Councils are increasingly expected to act as service delivery agents for the State. Apparently unable, or in some cases incapable, of acting in the interests of their own communities.

Two issues have dominated in any discussion: the changes to the conflict of interest provisions forced through the Parliament at the end of 2008, and the stripping of planning powers from local Councils in selected major retail precincts.

In the first, the Local Government Act has been amended to make it almost impossible for a Councillor to act as an advocate for their community and to vote on any issue in which they might be considered to have an interest. An interest includes any issue on which they may have campaigned for election. The community is effectively disenfranchised.

In December last year, following months of sustained attack and under pressure from the Opposition, the Government belatedly announced it would review the legislation, with amendments likely later this year.

The second issue was the Government's decision to strip planning powers from Councils in major activity centres, and to hand them to an unelected panel with a majority of members appointed by the Minister for Planning.

The legislation was blocked in the Legislative Council and became the subject of the first hearing of the Parliament's Dispute Resolution Committee, established by the Constitutional Amendments made during the last Parliament.

Committee Work (cont. from Page 5)

As negotiations proceeded it became clear that despite assurances to the contrary the Government did in fact plan to extend the operation of the panels to most Councils in the State, once again disenfranchising the local community.

The Bill was eventually passed in amended form, restricting its application to specific major activity centres, with the requirement that a review would be conducted post 2010.

The chasm between the Government's rhetoric about respecting and supporting local decision making and the need for strong Local Government and its Legislative Agenda is now too great for many to ignore. The erosion of local democratic rights will become an election issue.

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment

I was pleased to be asked by Leader Ted Baillieu to take on the additional role of Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment following the Shadow Cabinet reshuffle late last year.

The Environment Portfolio encompasses a huge slice of Government activity in Victoria, encompassing as it does almost all of the large Government land holdings, including the national and state parks, the regional parks and nature reserves. It also includes the Environment Protection Authority, the Alpine Resorts, Catchment Management Councils, and the various coastal Councils and has oversight of waste management in the State. There are also a number of agencies dealing with climate change and several statutory authorities including the office of the Surveyor General, the Valuer General and others

The long term health of our natural systems is of critical importance to the continued growth, development and sustainability of our State and will be a central issue in the minds of many when ballots are cast on 27th November.

The Parliament

In 2009 the Parliament:

- **Sat for 48 Days**
- **The longest sitting day was 14.42 Hrs**
- **There were no sittings after midnight**
- **The House passed 94 Bills**
- **407 Petitions were tabled bearing almost 130,000 signatures**

A full list of my 2009 Parliamentary speeches appears on page Eight of this report. Copies of individual speeches are available at www.davidmorris.org.au or from the Electorate Office.



2009 Parliamentary Speeches

3 February	Reforms to the Resources Industry
4 February	Extended Supervision for Sex Offenders
5 February	Peninsula Power Fails Again!
25 February	The Tragedy of Black Saturday
26 February	Liquor Licensing in Victoria
26 February	Support Evaporates for PCHS Self-Help Groups
10 March	Gaming Machine Allocations
11 March	Transport Changes – from Bus Stops to the Frankston Bypass
12 March	Protecting Mornington’s Heritage
31 March	Frankston Line Fails to Perform
31 March	Speed Signs Urgently Needed at Balcombe Grammar
2 April	Public Transport Changes Won’t Fix Broken System
6 May	Peninsula Ambulance and Frankston ED Still Under Pressure
6 May	Govt Slow to Act on Jobs for the Metropolitan Fringe
6 May	Planning “Reform” Leaves Communities Without a Voice
6 May	Identity Crime
2 June	Towards a National Energy Market
3 June	Brimbank City Council – the Ombudsman’s Report
3 June	Political Donations and Disclosure – Committee Report
3 June	Mobile Phone Towers – Ensuring the Industry’s Full Compliance
9 June	Defined Benefits Extended to all PSO’s
10 June	Monster Development to Overshadow Mornington Primary
10 June	Small to Medium Size Businesses and “Corporate Responsibility”
10 June	State Budget 2009
23 June	Osborne Primary – 16 New Classrooms Urgently Needed
24 June	Point Nepean – Finally a National Park for all Victorians
25 June	Food Handling Legislation – More Red Tape But No Improvement in Food Safety
28 July	We Must Protect our Green Wedge
29 July	Strategies to Control High-Volume Youth Crime – Committee Report
30 July	Human Tissue Legislation – Blood Donations
12 August	MICA Officers – A Government That Refuses to Engage
12 August	Pallas Wrong to Claim Political Bias at Mornington Peninsula Shire
12 August	Local Govt Legislation – Councillor Conflict
12 August	Motor Vehicle Registration – Repairable Writeoffs
13 August	The Kokoda Air Tragedy
1 September	Black Saturday – Royal Commission Interim Report
2 September	Reform of the Cemeteries Sector
2 September	Electricity – The Trouble with Smart Meters
2 September	The Gippsland Lakes – A Matter of Public Importance
2 September	Participating in Our Democracy
15 September	Labour’s Assault on Local Government Continues
15 September	Roads Minister Still Confused about the Peninsula
16 September	Changes to the Valuation of Land Act
16 September	Informed Debate Means Better Policy
16 September	DAC’s a Fatal Blow to Community Input
13 October	Management of Crown Land – Reservations Revoked
14 October	Melbourne’s Future Water Sources
14 October	Why Brimbank Council Deserves to be Sacked
15 October	Implementing the New Vegetation Clearance Rules
15 October	Typhoon Melor
15 October	Sentencing for Hate Crimes
15 October	New Boating Zones Needed Now!
11 November	Mental Health Services at Crisis Point
11 November	Parliamentary and Government Accountability
11 November	Regulating Medical Professionals
11 November	River Red Gum Conservation Measures
12 November	The Commonwealth and “Fair Work” Changes
25 November	Local Crime Statistics Must Not Be Scrapped
26 November	Mt Eliza Woodlands Must be Protected Now
26 November	Why Brumby-Madden Development Tax is Flawed
26 November	Faulty Logic in “Hoon Boating” Bill
8 December	The Party Bus Problem
9 December	Government Intentions No Substitute for Action