

HISTORY OF GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION IN VICTORIA

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OVERVIEW

Government and its administration are the cornerstones of our modern civil society. Without them we would live in a state of anarchy which was described as a 'state of nature, red in tooth and claw' by Thomas Hobbs in the 1650s.

The form of government enjoyed in Victoria is commonly known as the 'Westminster' system which has a tradition going back to the 11th century in Britain and back to the eras of Greece and Rome where many of the concepts we use, such as 'democracy', were first enunciated. The key points in the development of our form of government include: the conquest of England by the Normans in 1066 which imposed unified rule on the country and the Magna Carta of 1215 which gave the nobility guarantees against arbitrary government and led to development of the concept that the realm was a community which should be government by representatives of it, and the first courts of parliament that were called to achieve that goal. In 1265 representatives from Boroughs were called to parliament for the first time and by 1295 all the elements of the modern parliament were in place although parliament was called only by the Crown. Parliament asserted its dominance over the Crown in the 17th century during the English Civil War in the 1640s which saw parliament depose the king and the revolution of 1688 which stated the practical subordination of the Crown to parliament. In the period following 1688 the English parliament developed a party system and traditions such as government by the majority in the lower house which empowered an executive government. It was still appointed by the Crown in the form of 'cabinet' and it controlled the functions of government, increasingly through the administration of government departments.

The Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 brought the English middle class into parliament but in the turmoil of Britain in the Industrial Revolution other classes also began to demand access to parliament and government. This resulted in popular movements such as Chartism and trade unions which again changed British government by the end of the 19th century.¹ By this time, however, the British colonies in Australia were beginning to develop their own political institutions so that, while the development of government and administration in Victoria is built on the foundation of British political achievements, it began to take a similar but different path from the 1840s.

This report focuses on government and administration in Victoria, not on the political activities which are, admittedly, an important part of the business of government. While struggles between people and political groupings have played an important part in shaping government and administration in Victoria they are outside the scope of this report and are only included where political activities had a significant and direct impact on government and administration.

¹ The dates used here are from the Encyclopaedia Britannica CD.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Introduction

The history of government and administration in Victoria is given shape by its settlement as a British colony. Beginning in the early 19th century this settlement took place in three distinct but interlinked phases; during the 1830s and 1840s when pastoralism was the primary motive for settlement, the decade of the 1850s when gold rushes were the primary motive and from 1860 to about the end of the century when closer settlement and agricultural development were the primary motives for settlement. Perhaps by co-incidence, or perhaps as a result of the impact of these waves of settlement, the development of government and administration in Victoria falls into these three main periods. By the beginning of the 20th century almost all the arable land in Victoria had been settled and the trend of future developments in government and administration was set. Additionally, the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia at the beginning of the 20th century led to a consolidation of State government and administration rather than significant changes to it.

Pastoral settlement - 1830s and 1840s

At the beginning of the 19th century the area now known as Victoria was officially part of the British colony of New South Wales and administered from Sydney. It was, however, unexplored by Europeans and its coastline uncharted.² Following expeditions into Bass Strait by George Bass in 1797 and Matthew Flinders in 1798 a small establishment of about 300 convicts with a marine guard, a small party of free settlers and a small civil establishment sailed from England, arriving in Port Phillip Bay in October 1804 and settling near Sorrento. The settlement was not successful and was abandoned in January 1804.³ Another attempt was made to establish a base in the region in November 1826 when a small contingent including 21 convicts and 20 troops settled near Corinella in Western Port, but it was abandoned in December 1827.⁴

These bases were established because of British fears that the French would lay claim to the region but this motive was not strong enough to support permanent settlement. Successful colonisation had to rely on a more enduring motive; profit. For successful colonisation to occur the land had to yield up resources that could be sold profitably on the other side of the world in the markets of Britain and Europe. The long transport distances and costs and risks involved meant only goods that returned high profits in relation to those costs could make colonisation of the region worthwhile.

Victoria's first expendable resource was seal skins and sealers were almost certainly operating in the western stretches of Bass Strait by 1790s. However sealers exploited the

² Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation, South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, January 1996, p.27.

³ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, pp.27-28 and George Tibbits & Angela Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial 1830-1851*, an exhibition at Irving Benson Hall, Latrobe Library, State Library of Victoria, 1989, p.9.

⁴ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.28 and Tibbits & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.10.

resource so ruthlessly that the industry was effectively finished by 1830. Whaling began in Bass Strait around 1831 and by 1836 there were about 100 men operating from Portland and Port Fairy but, again, ruthless exploitation soon led to the industry's decline.⁵ However, in New South Wales and Tasmania settlers discovered that wool was also valuable enough to make profits on the other side of the world. In 1820 Australia supplied just eight per cent of Britain's wool imports but by 1840 that figure had grown to almost 50 per cent. This rapid expansion was only made possible by rapidly settling new areas.⁶

The colonial government based in Sydney tried to restrain new settlement by making it illegal to occupy land outside certain boundaries but that did not stop some pastoralists. Thus, although it was illegal to establish pastoral runs in the new region there were considerable motives to do so and the government made little real moves to stop new settlement.⁷ Edward Henty made an initial assessment of the land around Portland Bay in 1833 and the Henty Family settled at Portland Bay from Tasmania in November 1834, proposing to develop business in grazing, wool growing and whaling.⁸ The area around Port Phillip Bay was settled by two groups, also from Tasmania, led by John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner, which had taken up much of the land in the region by 1835. Others followed rapidly, some coming overland from the north, so that by the end of the 1840s virtually all the land in the region suitable for pastoralism had been occupied.⁹

The beginning of government

At first there was no authority in the region except that of the pastoralists. In June 1836 the settlers at Port Phillip Bay met to discuss matters concerning their future protection and passed a series of resolutions binding them all and asking the Governor in Sydney to appoint a resident magistrate to enforce law and order in the area.¹⁰ In April 1836 the British government approved settlement of the Port Phillip region and in September 1836 the Governor in New South Wales authorised settlement there. Also in September 1836 the Governor appointed a civil and military establishment led by Captain William Lonsdale who was appointed Police Magistrate with additional powers effectively making him superintendent of the settlement. Two ships carrying government personnel, stores, equipment and building materials arrived in Port Phillip on 29 September and 5 October 1836, the beginning of government and administration in the region.¹¹

⁵ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.31.

⁶ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.36.

⁷ Dingle, *Settling*, p.23 and Bernard Barrett, *The Civic Frontier, The origin of local communities and local government in Victoria*, Carlton 1979, p.3.

⁸ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, pp.34-35 and Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.3.

⁹ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.10 and Andrew Ward & Charles Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government Offices/Halls in Victoria, report for the Historic Buildings Council, July 1996, p.31.

¹⁰ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.5-6.

¹¹ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, pp.11-12 and Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.6.

In 1839 the Governor of New South Wales declared the 'Port Phillip District' of New South Wales which, in December 1840, he defined as being south of the Murray River and east of the border with South Australia (which had been established as a separate British colony by this time).¹² Charles LaTrobe was appointed to act as the Superintendent (and later the Lieutenant-Governor) of the Port Phillip District and Lonsdale continued as Police Magistrate and Sub-Treasurer of the District from April 1840.¹³ The first government officials included a Customs Department, Survey Department, Colonial Storekeepers Office, military contingent and a convict labour party.¹⁴

The arrival of government brought with it an array of government services and buildings. Port towns such as Melbourne, Geelong and Portland required social structures such as police services and public works including markets, roads and docks. When Lonsdale arrived at the Port Phillip settlement in 1826 he found about 200 people living there and a few dozen huts gathered around rapids in the Yarra River (near today's Queens Street) which separated fresh water from tidal water in the river, giving the settlement a water supply and shipping access. Lonsdale selected a convenient spot near the existing settlement and erected residences, barracks, stores and other buildings.¹⁵ The New South Wales Governor visited the settlement in March 1837 and brought Robert Hoddle to supervise surveying in the settlement. While he was there the place was named Melbourne and its basic grid layout chosen.¹⁶ By June 1837 the first sales of surveyed land in Melbourne and Williamstown were held and within 22 months much of the land within the present centre of Melbourne had been sold. Some suburban land in Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond was sold in 25 acre allotments in February 1838. Surveys and land sales commenced in Geelong in 1838 and Portland in 1840.¹⁷ Many early towns developed in an unplanned fashion before surveys could be carried out but when surveyors set out towns they provided the roads and township blocks and set aside reserves for government services and facilities such as schools, police buildings, cemeteries and parks.¹⁸

LaTrobe established a new government centre on Batman's Hill (near the corner of present day Flinders and Spencer Streets) occupying John Batman's former house and other buildings bought by the government in late 1841.¹⁹ Government buildings tended to be located at the western end of Melbourne not far from Flagstaff Gardens which was a communications link with the port and the docks on the Yarra River. When land in Melbourne was surveyed for

¹² Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.5.

¹³ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.27 and Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.43.

¹⁴ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.13.

¹⁵ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.8 and Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.13.

¹⁶ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.17.

¹⁷ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.21 & p.53 and Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.41.

¹⁸ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.43.

¹⁹ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.27.

sale most government buildings were on Block 16 (bounded by Spencer, Bourke, King and Collins Streets) so it was not sold and became commonly known as the 'Government Block'. This western area of Melbourne remained the focus of government activity in Melbourne until the 1850s when significant new government buildings were erected at the eastern end of the city and Block 16 was subdivided and sold.²⁰

Government buildings

Government buildings were important in establishing government authority in Victoria. Not only did they provide shelter, they showed residents the government was present and active. The size and shape of government buildings indicated the hierarchy of government and its functions with court houses, gaols, offices, stores and residences, all providing symbols giving a sense of authority. Initially government buildings were designed in Sydney by the Colonial Architect's Office there, often to an established pattern. Initially buildings were constructed by convicts but as the settlement expanded and private builders established themselves tenders were called so that, by 1840, construction of government buildings by convicts had given way to construction by private builders.²¹ In March 1837 a Clerk of Works, Robert Russel, was stationed in Melbourne to superintend the erection of government buildings.²² When LaTrobe arrived in 1840 he appointed a new Clerk of Works, James Rattenbury, and around this time the Clerk of Works became responsible for design as well as construction. Rattenbury oversaw the construction of several significant building in Melbourne including the Customs House, Melbourne Gaol, old Supreme Court and old Post Office.²³ In 1846 he was replaced by Henry Ginn who remained in this position until 1853.²⁴

The building work overseen by Russell, Rattenbury and Ginn had to suit the location and functions of the time. In remote areas government buildings were often simple, even primitive in construction and form, probably constructed of split timber with thatch or shingled roofs. In the towns, however, some of the more important buildings were quite substantial and in Georgian and Regency styles. In some areas where good stone was available, such as the coast of the Western District, some buildings such as customs and court houses were constructed of readily available bluestone.²⁵ Customs houses were among the first major government buildings to be constructed; in Melbourne in 1838-1841, in Geelong the first one was erected in 1838 and replaced by a substantial building in 1856, in Portland

²⁰ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.22 and Frances O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, Melbourne 2000, p.24.

²¹ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.24.

²² Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, pp.5-6 and p.24

²³ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.24 and pp.27-28.

²⁴ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.42 and Bruce Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department of Victoria - 1851-1900, an architectural history', University of Melbourne 1975.

²⁵ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.6 and Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.42 & p.44.

work commenced in 1849 and was completed in October 1850.²⁶ Powder magazines were constructed at various places in the colony to safely store the dangerous explosive after an accidental explosion in a gun shop in Melbourne in 1839.²⁷ A lunatic asylum was constructed at Yarra Bend, commencing in 1846 and facilities for migrants were constructed in Melbourne and Geelong, commencing in 1848.²⁸ (Many police stations, court houses and post offices were also constructed but they are outside the scope of this report.) Perhaps the most significant building constructed during this period was the Government Office on Block 19 (now the site of the Supreme Court), a fine example of Regency architecture comprising ten rooms on two levels which was completed by early 1846. LaTrobe and Lonsdale moved there from the house on Batman's Hill and by the early 1850s many offices of government departments were located in the area around it, in buildings that had probably been rented or purchased by the government.²⁹

The development that took place in the years up to 1851 was steady but not spectacular and the buildings of the period were made in the same spirit, solid and unpretentious. In comparison to later government buildings they were perhaps primitive and insignificant and many of them were washed away in the immense wave of development that took place from the 1850s.³⁰

Representative government in the Port Phillip District

From the beginning of British colonisation of New South Wales in 1788 the responsibility for government lay with the Governor who was assisted by an appointed Council. The Lieutenant Governor of the Port Phillip District was also responsible to the Governor. Until 1842 the settlers at Port Phillip District were largely ignored by the Governor and his Council but that year the Legislative Council was restructured, still with limited powers but with an increase in membership to 36 (12 nominated and 24 to be elected) six of them from the Port Phillip District (one from Melbourne and five from the remainder of the District).³¹ It soon became apparent that the cost and time Port Phillip District members spent in travelling to and attending Council meetings was prohibitive and that, in any event, New South Wales and Sydney members consistently outvoted them. By 1844 all Port Phillip District members lived in Sydney and became involved locally so people living in the District had little effective say in their government. By the end of the 1840s electors of the District felt so neglected that they voted Earl Grey (Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, living in London) onto the

²⁶ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.29, p.55 and p.58, Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, pp.69-70.

²⁷ DNRE, 'Gold Mining' and Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.44.

²⁸ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, pp.45-46, p.49 & p.58, Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.41 and Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department'.

²⁹ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, pp.39-41.

³⁰ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department' and Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.5.

³¹ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.5.

Council as their representative in Sydney.³²

In 1848 the pastoralists were finally given some measure of long term security over their land with 14 year leases and the option of purchasing at the end of their lease. This gave them the ability to build up large freehold estates and a long term interest in the future of the colony.³³ The government establishment that was built up in the Port Phillip District remained, however, under the direct control of the Governor and Legislative Council in Sydney so, as early as 1840, landholders and pastoralists in the District were agitating the government in Britain for separation from New South Wales and their own government.³⁴

Towards the end of the 1840s the British government considered the future of the colonies in Australia and decided that legislative councils should be established in each colony with the power to draft constitutions based on the British parliamentary model.³⁵ The Port Phillip District was separated from New South Wales and renamed Victoria and those two colonies, along with Tasmania and South Australia, were permitted to establish Legislative Councils which would, among other things, draft constitutions for the long term government of those colonies.³⁶ News of the British government's decision reached Melbourne on 11 November 1850 and the Victorian Legislative Council met for the first time on 13 November 1851.³⁷

Gold - 1850s

When the news of separation and self-government reached Victoria in November 1851 the colony was basically a large sheep run with a few towns dotted along the coast, a few tiny farming centres and some stopping places on the main pastoral tracks. There was very little infrastructure outside the main towns and pastoralists were the predominant power group.³⁸ However the next ten years, during which the discovery of gold reshaped the physical and political landscape, saw their dominance threatened and the population of Victoria increase from 77 000 in 1851 to 540 000 by 1861.³⁹

³² Wright, *A People's Counsel*, pp.7-9.

³³ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.36, Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.32 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.37.

³⁴ Joanna Monie, *Victorian History and Politics, European Settlement to 1939; a survey of the literature*, Bundoora, p.113 and Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.7.

³⁵ Monie, *Victorian History*, p.115 and Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.9.

³⁶ T H Irving, '1850-70' in, Frank Crowley (ed), *A New History of Australia*, Melbourne 1974, p.127.

³⁷ Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.65.

³⁸ David Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis, Melbourne 1850-1891*, Carlton 1984, p.44, Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department' and Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 'Gold Mining: The role of the government goldfields administration and public buildings/places associated with gold mining in Victoria', unpublished paper.

³⁹ Elizabeth Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix, A Celebration of the 50th Parliament of Victoria*, Melbourne 1985, p.1 and O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.6

From 1851 Victoria became one of the richest goldfields in human history with 21 million gross ounces of gold worth £95 726 872 mined by 1860.⁴⁰ Victoria's gold-bearing land stretched over a vast area from Wahgunyah and Rutherglen in the north to Stawell in the west and Omeo in the east. The greatest riches were found in a crescent of land that bulged out westward of a line between Ballarat and Bendigo.⁴¹

A major gold rush to California in 1848 had established a body of experienced gold miners, some of them from Australia who returned knowing what kind of land was most likely to be rich in gold. Small discoveries had been made in New South Wales and the Port Phillip District prior to 1851 but well publicised discoveries in New South Wales threatened to take resources from Victoria so discoveries there were encouraged. Modest discoveries were made at Clunes and near Warrandyte in early July 1851 but by September the first gold was being mined at Ballarat. Within a month six to ten thousand people had been attracted to the Ballarat field and by Christmas that discovery had been eclipsed by huge discoveries at Mount Alexander (centred on Castlemaine) and over 20 000 people were working there.⁴²

It took a year before news of the gold discoveries reached Europe and America and gold seekers from there began arriving in Victoria. They flooded onto the diggings, 510 000 by the end of 1853, 110 000 by the end of 1855 and 147 000 by the end of 1858.⁴³ A few struck it rich, most struggled to survive on the diggings and either moved from field to field following new discoveries or drifted off to find other employment.

The gold rushes and rapid population increase overwhelmed existing government facilities and brought several new responsibilities including supervision of the goldfields, provision of enlarged port facilities and provision of accommodation and public services for the rapidly swelling population of Melbourne.⁴⁴ Initially Crown Land Commissioners were responsible for the goldfields but their capabilities soon proved inadequate so, in January 1852, the newly formed Legislative Council passed legislation to provide a more comprehensive system of regulation by establishing a Goldfields Commission. The Commission, under the leadership of a Chief Commissioner appointed by the government, was a quasi-military organisation which set up camps on the new goldfield from which it administered a licence system, collected fees, settled disputes, provided gold escorts and maintained order on the goldfields through the police and justice systems. The maintenance of law and order remained the responsibility of the Police Commissioner and the Goldfields Commission and Police co-operated in supervising the goldfields although the relationship between the two organisations was unclear and overlapped in some areas.⁴⁵ This system was considered heavy handed by many gold miners and there was considerable resistance to the way the goldfields

⁴⁰ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.11

⁴¹ David Dunstan, 'Smaller Greater Melbourne', in Andrew May (ed), *The Living Heart: Images and Prospects for Central Melbourne*, Monash Publications in History No 15, p.41.

⁴² DNRE, 'Gold Mining' and Dingle, *Settling*, p.39.

⁴³ Dingle, *Settling*, p.39 & p.54.

⁴⁴ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department'.

⁴⁵ DNRE, 'Gold Mining'.

administration operated, culminating in the rebellion at Eureka near Ballarat in December 1854.⁴⁶

Further significant disruption on the goldfields came from the presence of Chinese, there were a few in 1851 but by 1853 organised groups were being shipped in. They were not welcomed by existing diggers for a variety of reasons including additional competition and racial prejudice. By 1855 there were nearly 20 000 Chinese on the diggings and resentment resulted in anti-Chinese protests and riots. In June 1855 the government passed legislation to restrict Chinese migration and set up a special administrative system in which official Protectors encouraged the Chinese to live separately to reduce conflict and advise and assist them in disputes. The system of Chinese protection continued until 1860 and restrictions on Chinese migration continued until 1865.⁴⁷

After the disruption at Eureka and other protests about the government's administration of the goldfields the Governor appointed a Royal Commission and in 1855 the Legislative Council appointed a Select Committee into the management of the goldfields. The outcome was new legislation introduced in June 1855 which abolished the Goldfields Commission and established a system of local courts in mining districts with nine members, five elected by the miners. The courts had limited jurisdiction but could settle some disputes and frame rules about claims and use of machinery on the diggings. This relatively democratic system, which was changed to a 'Court of Mines' system in 1857 and further amended in later years, resolved many of the grievances of the miners, as did the replacement of the high licence fee with a much cheaper 'Miners Right' permit system. However, by the second half of the 1850s the initial rushes were over and working on the goldfields had become much more organised as partnerships developed to dig the deeper mines that had become necessary. In June 1863 a Department of Mines was established and from 1864 the Mining Statutes generally met the needs of both the remaining small surface miners and the larger deep mining companies that had come to dominate the industry.⁴⁸

Gold and prosperity

Gold enriched Victoria, not just in monetary wealth and population but in the kinds of people who came in search of it. All kinds of people came, factors workers, sailors, farm labourers, merchants, lawyers and doctors, all generally well educated with a determination to achieve material success. Many were also committed to radical politics, those from Britain coming from the Chartism movement that had flourished in the 1830s and 1840s and many from Europe who had been involved in the political upheavals of 1848.⁴⁹

The discovery of gold and the immense influx of people dramatically challenged the political

⁴⁶ There is a vast literature on the events surrounding Eureka, perhaps one of the most useful in general terms in the special edition of *Historical Studies* devoted to the topic.

⁴⁷ DNRE, 'Gold Mining', Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, pp.53-54 and A G L Shaw, 'Violent Protest in Australian history', *Historical Studies* volume 15/60, April 1973, pp, 557-558.

⁴⁸ DNRE, 'Gold Mining' and Monie, *Victorian History*, p.87.

⁴⁹ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.33 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.40.

stability of Victoria. Wool and sheep products which had previously accounted for over 90 per cent of the colony's exports now took second place to gold which was even more valuable and cost effective to transport. Additionally, while pastoralism had not brought any significant population to the inland areas of the colony the gold rushes did. For example, the population of the Western District which had been 24 380 in 1851 jumped to 138 280 in 1861.⁵⁰ The newcomers were very large in number, radical by political inclination (at least for their time) and many decided to make their homes in Victoria. They were opposed by the pastoralists who were much smaller in number, generally conservative, wishing to protect what they had gained in the previous decade or so and who wished to maintain their preeminent place in Victorian society. The political struggle for control of the colony would be played out over the following forty years or more.

The creation of representative government

At the beginning of the 1850s political power was placed firmly in the hands of the pastoralists and they used it to create an environment that suited them best. The British legislation that established the Victorian Legislative Council gave it 30 members, ten official nominees and twenty elected. As was the norm for the time, there was a property requirement for voters who had to be male, 21 years or older, holders of land or tenements valued at £100 a year or freehold worth at least £2000 and Melbourne and Geelong, which represented two thirds of Victoria's population were allocated only seven of the 20 elected positions. The Council was enlarged to 54 members in 1853 and 66 in 1855 but the ratios of one third nominated and two thirds elected and between the urban and rural areas remained.⁵¹ This ensured that the government of the colony remained in the hands of the pastoralists because, although the Council had only limited powers and the day-to-day running of the colony remained in the hands of the Governor, the Council had the responsibility of framing the new constitution for the Colony.

The Legislative Council met for the first time on 13 November 1851 in St Patrick's Hall in Bourke Street, it was only one of three buildings in Victoria at that time big enough to accommodate the Council. The government rented the hall and refurbished it with the upstairs room serving as the Council chamber and downstairs dedicated to administration. The Council used the building until the new parliament house was ready in 1856.⁵²

In September 1853 the Council appointed a constitutional sub-committee to frame the new constitution which was passed on 2 March 1854.⁵³ While the committee was framing this constitution the democratic aspirations of the miners was demonstrated at Eureka and the events that followed, leading to a more democratic constitution than might otherwise have been created, at least in part. The proposed new constitution followed the British model with the Crown being represented in Victoria by a Governor, an upper house called the Legislative

⁵⁰ Dingle, *Settling*, p.53 and Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.40.

⁵¹ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, pp.9-15.

⁵² Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.13, Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.65 and Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.1.

⁵³ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.16.

Council and a lower house called the House of Assembly.⁵⁴ The Legislative Assembly was to comprise 60 members representing 37 electoral districts, some with multi-member representation and they would hold their seats for five years. Candidates had to meet a small property qualification or possess a 'Miners Right', as did electors. The Legislative Council comprised 30 members representing six electoral provinces and candidates had to be at least 30 years of age, own freehold property worth £5000 or an annual value of £500 and electors had to be over 21 years of age, male and own freehold property valued at over £1000 or leased property with a minimum value of £100 or be a member of the professions (such as medical practitioner, lawyer, military officer or university graduate).⁵⁵ The Legislative Assembly had some powers that the Council did not possess so most of the business of government originated there but the Legislative Council had the right to veto any legislation sent to it from the Assembly. This gave the Council the ability to preserve the interests of the conservative Council against the more radical Assembly. This proposed constitution was sent to Britain where it was slightly altered and given Royal Assent on 16 July 1855. Victoria's first parliament under the new constitution was officially opened on 25 November 1856.⁵⁶

Government buildings

Gold gave the new colony of Victoria the wealth, optimism and drive to undertake the public building works necessary to meet the needs of the greatly expanded population and the new economic environment as well as reflect the aspirations of the population. Gold also brought an influx of young and talented architects as well as highly skilled builders and tradesmen capable of undertaking major public works. During 1853 competitions were announced for designs of public buildings including Parliament House, Government House, the Public Library and the first university buildings.⁵⁷

When Victoria was separated from New South Wales the provision of most public buildings came under the control of the Colonial Architect, Henry Ginn, who became responsible for most of the buildings in government camps on the goldfields until the creation of the Goldfields Commission.⁵⁸ When Ginn resigned in 1853 the Colonial Engineer, Charles Pasley was appointed Acting Colonial Architect, a temporary position until the Colonial Architects' office was absorbed into that of the Colonial Engineer in January 1854. In January 1856 Pasley was appointed Commissioner of Public Works, responsible for both public building and engineering works although the professional staff of the new department consisted mainly of architects.⁵⁹

The Victorian public works programs for 1853 and 1854 were very ambitious but when Governor Hotham arrived in June 1854 he embarked on an economy drive to reduce

⁵⁴ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.16.

⁵⁵ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, pp.17-18 and Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.2.

⁵⁶ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.18 and Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.7.

⁵⁷ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department' and Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.65.

⁵⁸ DNRE, 'Gold Mining'.

⁵⁹ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department' and DNRE, 'Gold Mining'.

extravagant expenditure and the public works program was curtailed. In June 1855 it was suspended altogether.⁶⁰ However, the spread of settlement and the wealth generated from gold provided the need for a major public works program centred on the goldfields and the Public Works Department that was established in January 1856 undertook the work. Design and construction began on many court houses, police barracks, gaols, powder magazines, post offices and government offices across the goldfields regions as well as major buildings in Melbourne.⁶¹ In 1859, however, the government announced a significant reduction in government expenditure including that for public works. The Public Works and Roads and Bridges Departments were combined and William Wardell was appointed Inspector-General and Chief Architect from 1 January 1861.⁶²

The public buildings that were constructed or planned in this period expressed a belief in progress and the power and prestige of the government (where that was considered necessary). Governor LaTrobe created a green belt around the city and commenced the program of public works that included the museum, public library and parliament in Melbourne as part of a systematic program of physical and moral improvement in the colony.⁶³ The choice of classical architectural forms for Melbourne's public buildings came from an association with European models that were attractive to the immigrant culture.⁶⁴ In the goldfields permanent structures were built in the government camps on the larger and well-established gold fields and these public buildings reflected the importance of the goldfields administration.⁶⁵ Buildings were provided for general goldfields administration, wardens offices, survey offices and sub-treasuries where gold was collected and stored before being sent away to Melbourne.⁶⁶

The gold rushes made the existing government buildings in Melbourne inadequate to meet new demands and unrepresentative of the aspirations of the new colony. The Government Block and Government Office in the western end of the city became incapable of meeting new demands and the Legislative Council's decision in April 1854 to construct the new parliament on Eastern Hill overlooking Bourke Street and the city began the process of transferring the government and its administration to the eastern end of Melbourne.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department' and DNRE, 'Gold Mining'.

⁶¹ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department', DNRE, 'Gold Mining' and O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.29.

⁶² Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department'

⁶³ Graeme Davidson, 'The changing image of central Melbourne', in Andrew May (ed) *The Living Heart: Images and Prospects for Central Melbourne*, Monash Publications in History No 15, pp.24-25.

⁶⁴ O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, pp.6-7 & p.12.

⁶⁵ DNRE, 'Gold Mining' and Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.71.

⁶⁶ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department', DNRE, 'Gold Mining' and O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.29.

⁶⁷ O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.4 & p.9, Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.41 and p.65 and Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.23.

In September 1853 the Legislative Council established a sub-committee to oversee the design and construction of the new parliament house and a competition for the design was won by John Knight and Peter Kerr of the Colonial Architect's Office. Their design was ambitious, elaborate and decorative, just what Council members wanted. (Kerr tried to provide an open space at the front of the parliament building but the politicians didn't agree for fear that the space might be used for unlawful assemblies and public demonstrations.⁶⁸) The first stage of the building was chambers for the Council and Assembly, work started on Boxing Day 1855 and the first meetings of the Victorian Parliament were held in the incomplete but habitable buildings in November 1856.⁶⁹ The rest of the building was constructed in stages, the library, refreshment room and eastern facade completed in 1860, Queen's Hall and Vestibule in 1879, the western facade in 1892 and the north-east wing and additions in 1893. The grand dome of the original design was never built.⁷⁰

With parliament house under construction at the eastern end of the city and the need for new government buildings, development of an administrative centre began on adjacent land at the top of Collins Street. The Government Printing Office was constructed in 1856-1858, the Treasury Building was commenced in 1858 and completed in 1862 and foundations laid for a second administrative building in 1859 although work halted with the cutbacks in expenditure that year.⁷¹ The construction of the printing office showed the importance of administration to the colonial government; government papers, official stationary, forms and documents and the Government Gazette were printed there.⁷² The Treasury Building became the office for the most important officials in the government; the Governor, the Chief-Secretary (known as the Premier after 1883) and Treasurer, among others. The Treasury was also used to store gold bought in by government gold-escorts and had vaults built into the basement for that purpose.⁷³

Closer settlement - 1860s to 1890s

In 1861 the population of Victoria was 540 000, seven times what it had been in 1851.⁷⁴ New gold fields that continued to attract diggers were discovered in remote parts of the colony for several decades to come but by the late 1850s many gold mining communities were undergoing major changes as mining moved from shallow to deep mining.⁷⁵ The large independent workforce that had moved around the goldfields in the 1850s in search of wealth

⁶⁸ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.23, Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.5 and O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.9.

⁶⁹ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.25 and Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.5.

⁷⁰ Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.5 and Wright, *A People's Counsel*, pp.40-44.

⁷¹ O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.4.

⁷² O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, pp.18-19.

⁷³ O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, pp.29-30.

⁷⁴ Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.11 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.77.

⁷⁵ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.58 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.34.

settled down to become the labour force for the companies which alone could raise the necessary capital to undertake deep mining.⁷⁶

Land selection

The settled population needed to be fed and additionally some diggers who had not succeeded on the gold fields began to agitate for access to the land to take up farming. Consequently the government began selling agricultural land and by 1857 nearly two million acres had been auctioned - more than double the area previously in private hands. The pastoralists bought most of it because unsuccessful diggers could not afford the prices reached at auction.⁷⁷ The large population wanted more land to be released from the control of the pastoralists so many who had been unsuccessful on the goldfields, and those who aspired to a life on the land as small scale farmers, could achieve their dreams. These aspirations did not suit the pastoralists who wanted to retain control over their leases and the conflict between these two forces was played out in the new Victorian parliament. Generally speaking the older generation that represented the pastoralists controlled the Legislative Council and the new gold generation controlled the Legislative Assembly and, although the Assembly represented the greater number of people, the Council's veto powers made it extremely difficult to achieve any significant changes except through exerting political pressure on Council members.⁷⁸

Almost from the moment the two houses first sat they became locked in dispute about land reform which attracted much popular interest. In 1858 there was a mass torchlight procession to parliament house and in August 1860 a riot outside the parliament that frightened both houses and forced them to a compromise.⁷⁹ The resulting 1860 Land Act sold 900 000 acres of land, mostly in the Western District and mostly to pastoralists. Further attempts at land reform were made in 1862 and 1865 but they were political compromises necessary to get them passed through the Legislative Council and they achieved little better. All three Acts enabled the pastoralists to turn crown leaseholds into vast freehold estates, particularly in the Western District with roughly two thirds of the sold land ending up with about a hundred men.⁸⁰

Even with these problems there was considerable settlement of small farmers on the land and this continued with the 1869 Land Act which introduced free selection before survey and a system of deferred payment. By this time the pastoralists had most of the land they wanted and failure of wool prices in the 1860s left them unable or uninterested in taking up more land. Under the 1869 Act the plains of the Wimmera, the northern districts of the Colony and

⁷⁶ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.57 and Dingle, *Settling*, pp.54-56.

⁷⁷ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.34 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.60.

⁷⁸ Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.44 and p.108.

⁷⁹ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, pp.45-46. Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.11, Dingle, *Settling*, p.61 and Shaw, 'Violent Protest', p.556.

⁸⁰ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.36 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.61.

the forests of Gippsland were all transformed to freehold land owned by farmers.⁸¹

The selectors who moved onto these farms from 1860 faced very harsh conditions in clearing land and planting and harvesting crops. Despite the assistance given to them by the government many selectors considered themselves oppressed by large landholders and the government which they believed repressed them, resulting in outbreaks of petty resistance that occasionally became notorious, as in the case of Ned Kelly.⁸² Generally selectors concentrated on grain production, another primary product that could be profitably exported to the other side of the world, this time to feed the labour force feeding the industrial revolution in Europe. By the 1870s Victoria had become a major grain exporter and, as gold decreased in importance, wheat took its place as the colony's most important export.⁸³

Metropolitan expansion

By the 1880s rural Victoria had been largely settled and the remainder of the century saw settlers push into the Mallee while, in the early 20th century, irrigated farming commenced on closer settlement blocks resumed from large landholders.⁸⁴ At the same time that rural Victoria was being more closely settled the population of Melbourne doubled to over half a million, becoming the centre of finance and communication in Australia and making it the world's 22nd largest city by 1891.⁸⁵ Melbourne's population was 45 per cent of Victoria's total, an increase fuelled by both natural population growth as the gold rush generation had families and by migration from the country, particularly from gold mining areas as the yield of their mines slowly declined.⁸⁶ Much of the population growth occurred in the inner suburban areas such as Collingwood, Fitzroy and South Melbourne (where the population swelled from 17 083 in 1871 to 41 580 in 1891) which became working class areas while outer suburbs grew around the edge of the city in places like Essendon, Coburg, Northcote, Kew, Hawthorn, Camberwell, Malvern and Caulfield.⁸⁷

During this period of rapid rural and metropolitan expansion the government came to play a major part in the provision of infrastructure such as railways, in part because private enterprise could not raise the capital necessary to provide the facilities. Private enterprise invested in the buildings and equipment necessary for immediate wealth production while the government, which could borrow heavily on the London money markets, invested in major infrastructure such as roads, bridges, drainage, water supply and sanitation that did not offer immediate or worthwhile returns. These developments were undertaken 'in the national

⁸¹ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.36 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.63.

⁸² This point of view is well debated but see Molony who supports it. John Molony, *I am Ned Kelly*, Ringwood 1980.

⁸³ Dingle, *Settling*, p.75.

⁸⁴ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.36.

⁸⁵ Susan Priestly, *The Victorians, Making their Mark*, Sydney 1984, p.45, Dingle, *Settling*, p.152 and O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.7.

⁸⁶ Dingle, *Settling*, p.153 and Priestly, *Making their Mark*, p.45.

⁸⁷ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.37 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.158.

interest' to foster Victoria's development.⁸⁸

During the period from 1860 William Wardell (Inspector-General of the Public Works Department) was responsible for buildings designed and constructed by the Public Works Department. They were uniformly classical because he believed public buildings should be as simple as possible, 'the simpler the better - so long as proper architectural effect is preserved'. There was a lull in major public building work during the 1860s but from 1869 a number of substantial public buildings were constructed including many post offices and courts and the Mint (1872), Government House (1872), Customs House (1873), Law Courts (1873), New Treasury Building (1873) and the Williamstown Customs House (1873).⁸⁹ Political developments in 1878 had an important effect on public buildings. The conflict between the two houses had come to focus on payment of members and the Council declined to pass the government's appropriations bill which had a provision for payment of members attached to it. The government quickly began to run out of money and on 9 January 1878 it sacked most of its senior public servants including judges, magistrates, wardens and department heads, around 200 in all including Wardell.⁹⁰ After his departure the architectural style of the Department diversified so buildings, mostly post offices and courts, began to be constructed in a range of styles including Queen Anne, Elizabethan, Gothic, Decorated Gable, Moorish, Boom Classical and Romanesque.⁹¹ Major buildings, however, tended to follow more traditional forms, including the Crown Law Offices (1890), the old Public Records Office (1899) and the State Government Offices at 2 Treasury Place that was completed on the foundations that had been built in 1859.⁹²

As Victoria's agricultural areas were developed more public buildings were erected there including post offices, court houses, railway stations, offices for state administration and residences for its employees. In 1883 the responsibility for providing school buildings was transferred to the Public Works Department.⁹³

1890s Depression

In 1893 Victoria entered a severe economic depression which rapidly curtailed expansion and the public building program. Between 1891 and 1906 Victoria lost population. Farm yields

⁸⁸ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.1, Dingle, *Settling*, p.79 and Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, pp.15-16, p.24, p.30 & p.37.

⁸⁹ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department', O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.12 and Helen Lardner Conservation and Design, 'The Former Royal Mint, 280 Williams Street, Melbourne; Conservation Analysis & Management Plan', August 1999, p.17.

⁹⁰ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department', Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.12, Wright, *A People's Counsel*, 86-87 and Monie, *Victorian History*, p.119.

⁹¹ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department'.

⁹² Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department' and O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, pp.31-35.

⁹³ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department', Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.43, p.49 & p.71 and DNRE, 'Gold Mining'.

began to decline as did world prices, resulting in a decline in the rural population.⁹⁴

Twentieth Century

With the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901 Victoria became a State of the new nation rather than a British Colony. The new Commonwealth took over some of the most important functions that the colonies had previously performed including customs, defence and posts and telegraphs while the States retained responsibility for education, public health and State development.⁹⁵

Until a permanent home for the Commonwealth Parliament was ready the Victorian Parliament loaned the Commonwealth its chambers, offices, library and public rooms and the Victorian Parliament met in the western annex of the Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton Gardens.⁹⁶ At the same time the State Governor moved to Stonnington, a grand house in Malvern, so the Governor-General could occupy Government House.⁹⁷ In 1927 the Commonwealth Parliament moved to Canberra and the Victorian Parliament re-occupied its building on 6 July that year. The Commonwealth gave the State a gift of £50 000 for allowing it to use its buildings and the money was spent on refreshment rooms constructed on the north east corner of the complex in 1927-1930.⁹⁸

By the beginning of the 20th century most of the turmoil between the two houses of the Victorian Parliament had lessened as development of the party system moved the focus of political debate, although it was not until 1950 that universal adult suffrage was introduced for the Legislative Council.⁹⁹ Around the turn of the century perhaps the most important political question was whether women should be allowed to vote. This was highlighted by the suffragist movement that began in the early 1890s and the meeting of the Women's Parliament in the Assembly Hall in Collins Street in 1904 to show that women were capable of debating the problems of the day. Women were granted the right to vote when the Commonwealth was created but Victoria was the last State to give them the right to vote in State elections in 1908. Women remained ineligible to stand for election until 1923 and the first woman was not elected until 1933.¹⁰⁰

The depression of the 1890s continued to have a major effect on Victoria into the 20th century and it was not until after 1905 that public works expenditure returned to pre-depression

⁹⁴ Trethowan, 'The Public Works Department', Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.289, Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.13 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.4.1

⁹⁵ Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.16 and Don Wright, 'An Open Wrestle for Mastery: Commonwealth-State Relations, 1901-1914' in Bruce W Hodgins, Don Wright & W H Heick (eds), *Federalism in Canada and Australia: The Early Years*, Canberra 1978, pp.220-221.

⁹⁶ Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.16 and Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.115.

⁹⁷ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.114.

⁹⁸ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, pp.157-158.

⁹⁹ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.187.

¹⁰⁰ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.115 & p.135 and Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.17.

levels. Victoria's population had been decreasing as people moved to other states so in 1910 a campaign was launched to attract migrants to Victoria and in three years to 1914 Victoria's population was increased by 50 000, 42 000 from Britain.¹⁰¹

Returning economic confidence resulted in the 1904 Closer Settlement Act and related irrigation schemes to make the land even more productive by increasing population density on it.¹⁰² After World War I soldier settlement schemes were created to give returned soldiers a stake in the land, the Victorian government resumes some land previously held under crown leases, especially in the Mallee, bought some existing farms and purchased some large pastoral properties for the scheme. Within a few years it became clear that the scheme had been overly optimistic and it failed with many walking off their allotments while the government ran up a debt of £11 million by 1937.¹⁰³ Nevertheless new towns emerged wherever farmers took up land, leading to greater demands for government services. Melbourne began to expand again in the 1920s and the suburban frontier pushed out to Box Hill, Heidelberg, Sandringham, Mordialloc, Coburg, Malvern and Caulfield.¹⁰⁴

Another depression overtook Victoria in the 1930s with unemployment reaching 27 per cent in 1931 but reducing steadily through the rest of the decade. This brought major public building to a halt. All public works that were not related to national defence halted again in the first half of the 1940s during World War II.¹⁰⁵ After the end of the war there was a dramatic increase in family formation which led to a large increase in population that was made even greater by the post-war migration program so that Victoria's population reached four million by 1983. This population growth was accompanied by expansion of manufacturing and services that led to a rapid expansion of the economy.¹⁰⁶

Despite this overall expansion the percentage of people employed in primary industry fell from 22.2 per cent in 1921 to 10.9 per cent in 1961 and in some places small towns virtually disappeared. This reduction was the result of increased farm mechanisation which reduced the need for rural labour while the popularity of motor transport allowed farmers to travel to the larger towns rather than relying in nearer townships.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, Melbourne continued to grow, in the first post-war census its population had been 1 266 409 and by 1976 that had grown to 2 480 951.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.41 and Janette Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria, 1901-1932, An Overview' University of Melbourne 1987, p.8 & p.20.

¹⁰² Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', p.20.

¹⁰³ Dingle, *Settling*, pp.179-186.

¹⁰⁴ Dingle, *Settling*, p.216.

¹⁰⁵ Dingle, *Settling*, p.218 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.43.

¹⁰⁶ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.43, Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.195 and Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.20.

¹⁰⁷ Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.44 and Dingle, *Settling*, p.209.

¹⁰⁸ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.43.

Government buildings

The organisation of public building works did not change significantly immediately after the 1890s depression but, with the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, public works were divided with the Commonwealth taking over responsibility for many important works such as defence and posts and telegraphs. In addition the State government established several statutory authorities such as the Country Roads Board, State Electricity Commission and Closer Settlement Board which undertook their own works, reducing further the responsibilities of the Public Works Department. Until about 1905, however, the Commonwealth used the State public works authorities as agents to undertake much of their work including post offices so it was not until around 1905 that the Commonwealth began undertaking its own building work.¹⁰⁹

In 1909 an investigation into the procedures of the Public Works Department Architectural Branch resulted in administrative changes and standardisation of plans, specifications and details for smaller buildings. This reduced the cost of new buildings but also the scope for architectural innovation that had previously existed. In general there was not much scope for innovation until the mid 1930s that allowed expression of the new architectural movements and this trend did not develop more fully until after World War II.¹¹⁰ In the post-war period large buildings, including public works, followed the rest of Australia in adopting modern building technology and architectural trends sometimes known as the 'corporate international style' and many buildings of earlier ages were demolished to make way for them. By the 1990s, however, there was a greater appreciation of older buildings and many, including the buildings on Treasury Reserve, were restored to recreate their earlier appearances in the midst of later building styles.¹¹¹

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Introduction

Municipal government is one of the well-springs of political life, it is often where politics and daily life meet through the provision of local services such as roads, rubbish collections, library services, sewerage and parks and gardens.¹¹² Power over the form and activity of local government lies with the State government which defines how municipal governments will operate.¹¹³ Local government in Victoria is more circumscribed than in Britain and many other countries and plays little part in police or education which remain the responsibility of

¹⁰⁹ Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', introduction, p.2, pp.4-5, , p.7 & p.50.

¹¹⁰ Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', pp.17-19 & pp.62-63.

¹¹¹ Conrad Hamann, 'Against the mainstream: the inclusive tendency in Victoria's architecture, 1890-1984', in AGL Shaw (ed) *Victoria's Heritage, Lectures to celebrate the 150th anniversary of European settlement in Victoria*, North Sydney 1986, p.164 and O'Neill, *The Treasury Reserve*, p.37.

¹¹² Marc Fiddian, *Civic Places, A tableau of Australian town halls*, Pakenham 1986, p.42 and Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.6.

¹¹³ Dunstan, 'Smaller Greater Melbourne', p.2 and Advisory Committee for Inter-governmental Relations, 'Local Government Boundary Changes and Amalgamations; an historical overview', Paper 12, p.20.

the State government. Between 1841 and 1985 a total of 620 local authorities have been constituted in Victoria but from around the 1870s until the 1990s the number of local government authorities in operation in the State at any one time was in the order of 200.¹¹⁴

Municipal government became an important aspect of the government of the colony, particularly in the second half of the 19th century. Before the development of the modern party system of politics in Colonial politics the election of local members depended on the benefits they won for the electorate such as public works and parliamentarians saw this task as an overwhelming primary responsibility. Local governments also actively worked to encourage a range of business and industry in their area to provide jobs, thus encouraging more residents and increasing the prosperity of the area. The condition of a municipality's roads and public buildings was also an indication of the success of local councillors in fostering the development of their area.¹¹⁵

Early municipal governments - to 1850

At the beginning of government and administration in the Port Phillip District the services later provided by local government were provided by the central government through the police magistrates who had some municipal functions such as public health and preventing nuisances and obstructions.¹¹⁶ In 1842 the British government empowered the New South Wales Governor to establish district councils which would have some powers over local public works and by-laws. People in the 30 existing Police Districts in New South Wales were permitted to elect councils which would form local government authorities.

In the Port Phillip District two Districts were created, the District of Grant centred on Geelong which extended as far inland as today's Ballarat, Maryborough and Camperdown and the District of Bourke which extended as far inland as today's Alexandra, Seymour and Castlemaine. Later other Districts were also proclaimed including the Murray District and Wimmera Districts. (The Districts were divided into 'counties' and 'parishes mainly for the purposes of registering land transactions.)¹¹⁷ Councils were established for the Districts of Bourke and Grant but pastoralists were suspicious of them, fearing they would result in taxation so both councils failed.¹¹⁸

Another form of local government came from the need to provide roads in the colony. The Roads Act of 1840 enabled local landholders to establish parish roads trusts to make roads but, again, there was little interest and only two were established. Only one, the Heidelberg

¹¹⁴ 'A Short History of Local Government in Victoria, a summary of proclamations, unifications and minor and major changes which resulted in today's municipalities', report held in Department of Infrastructure Library, Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.19 & p.35 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.38.

¹¹⁵ Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.34 & pp.71-72 and Priestly, *Making their Mark*, p.45.

¹¹⁶ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.7 & p.17.

¹¹⁷ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.69-70.

¹¹⁸ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp.31-32 and Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.70-74.

Road Trust, succeeded in constructing two miles of macadamised road to provide a road link with Melbourne.¹¹⁹

The Melbourne Corporation

The seeds of successful local government were planted in October 1839 when the New South Wales Legislative Council passed legislation enabling elected councils to establish markets in large towns. In August 1841 the government authorised Melbourne to proceed with establishing a market with commissioners chosen by public election. Electors had to meet a property qualification of £20 rental or £200 freehold value and the city was divided into four wards (with Bourke and Elizabeth Streets marking the boundaries between them) with two commissioners from each ward. About only 3 000 of Melbourne's population of 9 000 were eligible to vote and only 328 enrolled. The election was held on 2 November 1841 and within a month Melbourne's first general market was opened.¹²⁰

In August 1842 the New South Wales Legislative Council passed legislation to establish a local government in Melbourne, motivated by the need to raise finance for local services ranging from making and cleaning streets to providing a water supply and drainage that were then the responsibility of the central government. The legislation established the Melbourne Corporation, modelled on the English city corporations of provincial cities, that continued the division of the city into four wards and the property qualification for electors and councillors. The first election of the Melbourne Corporation, which replaced the Market Commission, was held on 1 December 1842. Its first meetings were held in the Mechanic's Institute in Collins Street until the first town hall, constructed on the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets, was completed in 1853.¹²¹ In October 1849, following a petition from local residents, another act was passed to establish a similar corporation in Geelong along the lines of the one in Melbourne.¹²²

Melbourne and Geelong were the second and third municipal government to be established in New South Wales and they were responsible for undertaking several local activities including local public works. The central government allocated Melbourne £200 a year to help with these works conditional upon the Council raising a similar amount in property rates.¹²³ During the 1840s the Melbourne Council was the only elected body in the Port Phillip District and it became the main political theatre in the District. The Council also became a vehicle for expressions of discontent with the New South Wales government and was at the

¹¹⁹ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.31, Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.35 and 'Short History of Local Government in Victoria'.

¹²⁰ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.21, p.23, pp.27-28 & pp.36-37, Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.44 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.32.

¹²¹ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.39-44 & p.62, Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.8 & p.45, Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.32 and Tibbis & Rosenfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial*, p.62.

¹²² Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.75-78.

¹²³ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.40 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.32.

forefront of separation activities during the decade. However, the Melbourne Council quickly lost political importance when Victoria was given its own government.¹²⁴

Creating municipal government - 1850-1900

Municipal government developed rapidly in Victoria after 1850. This occurred mainly to give the Colonial government a way of funding and overseeing administration at a local level, and to encourage residents in local areas to assist in the provision of local facilities and services.

Among the first actions of Victoria's Legislative Council was the appointment of a Select Committee on Roads and Bridges. It recommended the formation of a Central Roads Board and district roads boards to oversee construction and maintenance of a roads network in the colony and legislation along those lines was passed with the Central Road Board being appointed in March 1853.¹²⁵ The Board had power to establish local road boards at the request of residents and among the first to be created were boards for Barrabool Hills, Portarlington, Port Fairy and Warrnambool.¹²⁶

The title of these boards suggests their primary function, the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and culverts in the areas under their control. Generally they did little more but in some cases they took care of a number of government reserves, impounded stray stock, collected dog licences, supplied towns with water and handled sewage.¹²⁷ The Central Road Board was abolished in 1857 but its successor, the Board of Land and Works, absorbed many of its functions including co-ordination of the activities of local road boards.¹²⁸

In 1852 the Legislative Council appointed a Select Committee to investigate why the earlier District Councils had failed and, in 1854, another Select Committee on the Administration of Local Funds to consider how local needs should be met from other than general revenue and who should administer such funds. While this Committee concentrated on the operations of the Melbourne Corporation its recommendations led to legislation that would begin the development of municipal government across the colony.¹²⁹ The proposed legislation was designed to meet metropolitan and rural needs but it was strongly resisted by pastoralists who feared it would infringe on their interests. The most important change they made was to reduced the minimum area of municipality from 36 square miles to a maximum area of nine square miles and to increase the minimum population from 200 to 300 households. The

¹²⁴ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.40 & pp.103-104 and Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.8.

¹²⁵ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.86 & p.89, Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.50 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.33.

¹²⁶ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.33, Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, p.50 and Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.90.

¹²⁷ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.38.

¹²⁸ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.93.

¹²⁹ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.84 & pp.117-118 and Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.50 & p.56.

result was that municipalities would be much smaller and more densely populated than originally intended.¹³⁰ The Municipal Institutions Establishment Act was passed in December 1854 and in April 1855 the first municipal districts were proclaimed; East Collingwood, Prahran, Richmond and St Kilda in the metropolitan region and Bendigo and Castlemaine in the country. Later in 1855 Ballarat and Emerald Hill (South Melbourne) were also given permission to establish local councils.¹³¹

The development of municipal government

Municipal councils could only be established at the request of a meeting of local residents (passing a property qualification) and the realisation that local governments would levy taxes in the form of rates created some resistance to their formation. However the government also promised to make generous grants to newly established municipalities so there was an incentive to form a municipal council so government money would be made available for improvements in local areas.¹³² The government decided that the Melbourne Corporation would not expand as the metropolitan area did, leading to areas such as Collingwood and Fitzroy petitioning for and being granted their own municipal governments. Other areas such as South Melbourne, North Melbourne and Port Melbourne, which were at one time included in the Melbourne Corporation, became separate municipalities with their own councils.¹³³ In addition to municipal districts in the metropolitan region, road districts were established on the rural-urban fringe near Melbourne where the population was not sufficient to warrant a municipal council. The first was the Boroondara Road District just beyond the municipality of Richmond and next the Gardiner Road District just beyond the municipality of Prahran.¹³⁴

Division of existing municipalities took place outside Melbourne as the populations there grew. In Geelong the municipalities of South Barwon (1857), Newton and Chilwell (1858) and Geelong West (1875) seceded from the original Geelong Corporation and in Ballarat the original municipality divided into two separate local governments, Ballarat and Ballarat East.¹³⁵ By the end of 1856 there were 15 municipalities in Victoria (including Melbourne and Geelong) and during the next six years the number of municipalities grew at the rate of about six a year. The importance of gold mining to the population of the colony was demonstrated through the number of municipalities created in the goldfields during the same

¹³⁰ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.33 and Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.133.

¹³¹ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.140 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.33.

¹³² Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.143 & p.176 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.33.

¹³³ Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.42, p.62 & p.65, Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.123, p.208 & pp.217-222, Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp.37-38 and Dunstan, 'Smaller Greater Melbourne', p.5.

¹³⁴ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.196 & p.198.

¹³⁵ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.228-229 and p.236.

period, about four a year.¹³⁶ A Legislative Assembly enquiry into local government in 1862 found that generally the establishment of local government in Victoria had been successful but that many municipalities were too limited in population and income to do their business effectively. Too many had been created solely for the purpose of obtaining the government grants to new municipalities and more than half all the works performed by municipal authorities was paid for by the Colonial government.¹³⁷

By 1863 Victoria was almost completely covered by systems of local government.¹³⁸ In that year local government was reorganised with the introduction of legislation covering the municipal and road district arrangements. The Municipal Institutions Amendment Act introduced the terminology 'borough' to replace the earlier 'municipal district' and 'mayor' replaced the term 'municipal chairman'. The Act also introduced plural voting for large landholders.¹³⁹ The Road District and Shires Act, also of 1863, continued the arrangement of road boards but enabled those with an area above 100 square miles and an annual general rate of over £1000 to become 'shires' with the powers to borrow money for permanent works, collect licence fees and administer certain minor government acts. Some boards automatically became shires while others had to amalgamate to achieve that status.¹⁴⁰ Between 1862 and 1868 the number of urban municipalities increased from 54 to 62 and the number of road districts and shires increased from about 70 to 101. In 1868 Victoria's total population was 674 316, about 343 600 were living in urban municipalities, another 306 900 were in shires and road districts and only about 33 800 were not living in local government areas.¹⁴¹

In 1869 the Shires Statute abolished all remaining road districts and converted them into shires and the Boroughs Statutes permitted any 'borough' with an income of more than £10 000 to apply to become a 'town'.¹⁴² In 1874 a new Local Government Act abolished the dual system of local governments and allowed the wealthiest towns to become 'cities'. In the metropolitan area several towns became cities (Melbourne, Collingwood and Richmond, for example) and several boroughs became towns.

By 1874 there were 170 local government authorities in the colony and, although the 1874 Act was considerably amended and consolidated from time to time, it remained the basis of

¹³⁶ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.194 & p.236.

¹³⁷ Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.67 & p.69, Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.35 and 'Short History of Local Government in Victoria'.

¹³⁸ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.292.

¹³⁹ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.293-295 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.36.

¹⁴⁰ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.298, Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.36 and Advisory Council, 'Local Government Boundary', p.6.

¹⁴¹ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.298.

¹⁴² Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.298 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.36.

Victoria's local government for over a century.¹⁴³ By the early 20th century the number of authorities had grown to 206, a process that occurred over time as the remaining areas of the Colony were more closely settled and more local authorities were created from the division of older ones.¹⁴⁴ For example, The Shire of St Arnaud (which was proclaimed in November 1864) originally stretched from Navarre in the south to Kaneira (beyond Wycheproof) in the north and from Charlton in the east to Warracknabeal in the west. The original Shire of Echuca originally extended almost as far as Wangaratta.¹⁴⁵ The process of fragmentation is demonstrated by the Shire of Dimboola which was originally part of the Shire of Wimmera and became part of the Shire of Lowan when the Shire of Wimmera was divided in December 1875. In 1885 some ratepayers in the Shire of Lowan petitioned for severance and constitution as a separate municipality which would occupy an area a little over 3 000 square miles with a population of between 2000 and 3000 which would increase as more farming allotments were taken up. They said the Shire of Lowan was too large to be managed efficiently and the new shire would be cheaper to operate. As a result the Shire of Dimboola was created in 1885. Even with the creation of that Shire ratepayers were able to change their allegiances as in 1890 when some ratepayers asked for their area to be transferred to the adjoining Shire of Wimmera, in 1893 when some ratepayers petitioned to be annexed to the Shire of Borung, 1897 when other ratepayers were transferred to the Shire of Karkarooc and 1931 when some parts of the Shire of Karkarooc were transferred back to the Shire of Dimboola. In all cases the changes were made because people living in those areas did their business in towns in the other shires and therefore found it convenient to do their local government business there as well.¹⁴⁶

By the 1870s local governments had taken on a wider range of responsibilities, depending on the resources at their disposal and the areas they served. In 1874 the Melbourne City Council was responsible for maintaining roads and bridges, inspecting building sites, cleaning streets, removing domestic rubbish and sewage, policing public health, maintaining parks and gardens, inspecting nuisances, lodging houses, weight and measures and hackney cabs. The City of Ballarat had similar responsibilities but also employed a mine surveyor, a superintendent of the baths, a curator of botanic gardens and a pond keeper.¹⁴⁷ Smaller authorities with less resources could do less but, by the early 1890s, the larger metropolitan and provincial local authorities had staffs of 10 to 12 undertaking these duties. The authorities had to provide offices to accommodate them and many municipal offices sprang up around the colony.¹⁴⁸

Municipal buildings

¹⁴³ Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.300, Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.36 and Advisory Council, 'Local Government Boundary', p.6.

¹⁴⁴ Advisory Council, 'Local Government Boundary', p.19

¹⁴⁵ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp.36-37.

¹⁴⁶ 'Short History of Local Government in Victoria', pp-166-167 & p.327.

¹⁴⁷ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.39.

¹⁴⁸ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.39.

One of the most important and visible activities of a local authority was construction of a public hall which became an important meeting and entertainment place for the community.¹⁴⁹ Before getting a town hall many Victoria municipalities used the facilities of the Mechanic's Institute, an institution which had come to Australia as part of an adult education system from Britain in the early 19th century. Port Phillip had its first Mechanics Institute in 1839 and its first Mechanics Institute building in 1842. In 1856 the government offered grants for the construction of Mechanics Institutes, usually subject to similar amounts being raised locally, with the result that they sprang up all over the colony. In some cases Institutes were established in existing buildings, in more wealthy places they were housed in elaborate buildings with many purpose built rooms such as libraries, meeting rooms and kitchens while in rural areas they tended to be much simpler with one or two rooms and a larger hall.¹⁵⁰

Halls constructed by local authorities combined several functions; providing a meeting space for the community, providing a meeting chamber for the council, providing offices for the municipal administration and expressing civic pride. In some cases they also included other government services such as post offices, police stations and court buildings which were paid for by the Colonial government.¹⁵¹ Unlike Colonial government buildings, however, that were constructed by or under the supervision of the Public Works Department, the town halls erected by local authorities were much more varied in size and style, depending on the aspirations of the councillors at the time, the resources they had and the architectural styles of the day. Consequently there was a great variation in the kinds of buildings erected but, in general, those constructed during the boom of the 1870s and 1880s were optimistic and flamboyant buildings expressing the spirit of the times.¹⁵²

When the depression came in the early 1890s rates could no longer be collected, loans were no longer available on low rates and quite a few councils were in trouble with debts they had incurred earlier, sometimes to pay for their grandiose town halls.¹⁵³ Construction of new municipal buildings almost came to a standstill although some town halls that had been commenced earlier were completed in this period.

Twentieth century municipal government

Rural Victoria was in decline, or at best standing still during the period from the 1890s depression until the end of World War II. Attempts to make the land more productive such as the Soldier Settlement Scheme of the 1920s were not successful and increased farm

¹⁴⁹ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.40 and Fiddian, *Civic Places*, p.21 & p.23.

¹⁵⁰ Barrett, *The Civil Frontier*, p.257 and Land Conservation Council, *Historic Places Special Investigation*, pp.71-72.

¹⁵¹ DNRE, 'Gold Mining' and Fiddian, *Civic Places*, p.15 & p.23.

¹⁵² Fiddian gives a good general impression of the kinds of town halls constructed during this period in *Civic Palaces*, pp.7-58.

¹⁵³ Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.239 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.38.

mechanisation saw a substantial decline in the rural population and only a slight increase in the non-metropolitan urban population.¹⁵⁴ The decline in non-metropolitan population was made worse by the virtual exhaustion of the goldfields by the early 20th century which reduced municipalities that had previously been relatively prosperous to virtually nothing - the municipality of Browns and Scarsdale having only 210 rateable properties by 1906, Raywood only 96, while the two separate municipal authorities in Ballarat amalgamated in May 1921.¹⁵⁵ Amalgamations similar to that in Ballarat were repeated across the goldfields following a 1915 amendment to the Local Government Act which permitted dissolution of boroughs with a revenue of less than £300 and shires with less than £1 500. As a result the 38 goldfields boroughs that had existed in 1906 were reduced to 27 in 1916 and 23 by 1928.¹⁵⁶

After World War II the economy picked up in rural areas but technological improvements meant the population did not. There was no increase in population in the rural shires but a dramatic rise in the metropolitan region where Melbourne had 38 per cent of Victoria's population in the 1850s, 41 per cent in 1891 and 71 per cent by 1984.¹⁵⁷ By 1911 Melbourne had recovered from the depression of the 1890s and growth began to pick up with the population growing from 484 103 in 1901 to 991 934 by 1933. New suburbs began appearing around the metropolitan area; working class suburbs such as Coburg and Preston and more middle class suburbs such as Camberwell, Caulfield, Malvern, Oakleigh, Box Hill and Sandringham.¹⁵⁸

In the economic boom conditions that followed World War II the metropolitan region continued to grow, particularly around the fringes while there was a population decline in the central and inner city municipalities. This new wave of expansion was encouraged by the ready availability of the motor car which released people from the necessity of using public transport. Ringwood, for example, which had been a self-contained town of 4897 in 1947 expanded to a suburb of six times that population by the late 1960s when it had been engulfed in the metropolitan sprawl that took in suburbs as far out as Frankston, Chelsea, Moorabbin, Doncaster, Templestowe, Heidelberg and Sunshine.¹⁵⁹ In most cases no new local authorities were created and the existing local authorities expanded their operations to cope with the expansion. This created many problems in planning the expansion of the city and had particular impact in central Melbourne where the small municipalities that had been created a century earlier faced declining populations and therefore income. The only change of significance occurred in 1965 when the Melbourne City Council expanded to incorporate

¹⁵⁴ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp.42-43.

¹⁵⁵ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.37 & pp.41-42.

¹⁵⁶ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp.41-42 and Advisory Council, 'Local Government Boundary', p.19.

¹⁵⁷ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.44 and Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.9.

¹⁵⁸ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.42.

¹⁵⁹ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp.43-44 & p.46 and Fiddian, *Civic Places*, p.95.

North Melbourne, Flemington and Kensington.¹⁶⁰

The creation of a large number of relatively small local government authorities made it very difficult for them to provide their communities with many of the facilities and services necessary in a large city. Individual authorities could undertake limited water supply and sewerage works but not the capital intensive public works that crossed many municipal boundaries or provide facilities in one place that served the entire metropolitan area.¹⁶¹ As a result the State government took a major role in providing these services which included creation of the Board of Commissioners of Sewerage and Water Supply (1853) to construct the Yan Yean water supply system, the Harbour Trust (1877), the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (1891), a metropolitan fire fighting service (1891) and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (1918).¹⁶² In 1922 the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission was established and although it did a lot of work in preparing unified plans for the development of the metropolitan region they were not put into effect because there was no authority with the power to do so.¹⁶³

Expansion of municipal services

After World War I local authorities began to expand their activities with some involvement in personal services which included infant welfare after 1917, antenatal medical services after World War II and, from the 1950s, expansion into the provision of services and facilities for elderly citizens. Later these services expanded to include community and youth centres, family counselling, migrant welfare and emergency financial relief services. Other activities included a major extension of local libraries, provision of local galleries and cultural centres and involvement in festivals and local cultural groups. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 brought local authorities into the town planning process and amendments to the Local Government Act in 1956 and 1959 enabled local governments to control some of the new suburban developments taking place.¹⁶⁴ These new services and the facilities required for them were costly and local authorities could not fund them from their traditional revenue base of rates and fees. Instead, much of this work was funded from increased grants from State and Commonwealth governments which used local governments to deliver services at the local level.¹⁶⁵

Municipal buildings

¹⁶⁰ Advisory Council, 'Local Government Boundary', pp.19-20 and Dunstan, 'Smaller Greater Melbourne', p.8.

¹⁶¹ Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p. 233 & pp.251-254, Dunstan, 'Smaller Greater Melbourne', p.7 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.42.

¹⁶² Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, pp.275-276, Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.3 & pp.12-13 and Dunstan, 'Smaller Greater Melbourne', p.9.

¹⁶³ Dunstan, *Governing the Metropolis*, p.4 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.42.

¹⁶⁴ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.42 & p.44.

¹⁶⁵ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp.42-44.

Local authorities needed greater and more modern accommodation to provide these services and, by the middle of the 20th century, existing accommodation in municipal offices and halls was insufficient and outdated for the new needs. Even in areas which had not experienced growth there was still the need for modern administration. Many local authorities built new offices and vacated the old halls and offices, demolishing them or leaving them for other uses.¹⁶⁶

After the worst of the 1890s depression local authorities continued constructing halls, particularly in areas where metropolitan expansion significantly increased the population and the need for facilities and services. Newer town halls tended to be more individualistic in character, moving away from the traditional architecture of the pre-depression era. In the 1920s design came under the Art Deco influence with sharper lines of exterior architecture and more modern functional aspects of the interior in marked contrast to Victorian tendencies. Even through the depression of the 1930s several new halls were constructed in the metropolitan region to replace buildings that no longer met the needs of their communities.¹⁶⁷ In some cases existing halls were renovated, upgraded and extended, in other places they were demolished to make way for new buildings.¹⁶⁸

In the immediate post World War II period the general housing shortage made it all but impossible to construct public buildings so it was not until the mid-1950s that significant new municipal buildings were constructed. By this time the earlier concept of a town hall with a central auditorium on the ground floor, the council chambers upstairs and municipal offices to the side was replaced by the 'civic centre' with multi-purpose halls complemented by smaller meeting rooms and more utilitarian spaces for municipal functions. In addition the popular adoption of motor transport meant that public buildings had to have extensive off-road car parking space to be useable by the community. New complexes along these lines that combined a number of functions and capabilities in one large building were constructed in the outer suburbs while some halls and municipal facilities in the older suburbs were converted to meet the community needs of the day.¹⁶⁹

Radical change - the 1990s

As far back as the inquiry of 1862 the government had recognised that a large number of small local government authorities was inefficient. In 1962, 1972 and 1979 more inquiries made similar findings, as did the Local Government Commission that operated between 1985 and 1992. Despite this knowledge the reform of local government was either too difficult or

¹⁶⁶ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', pp-44-45 and Fiddian, *Civic Places*, p.32 & p.37.

¹⁶⁷ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.43 and Fiddian, *Civic Places*, p.59 & p.81.

¹⁶⁸ Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.43 and Fiddian, *Civic Places*, p.49, p.84 & p.96.

¹⁶⁹ Fiddian, *Civic Places*, p.38, p.69, p.84, p.89, p.94 & p.96.

insufficiently important so nothing was done.¹⁷⁰

During the 1980s, however, Commonwealth and State governments oversaw wide ranging reforms in many areas of administration such as the reorganisation of tertiary education and the public service which set the scene for a reform of local government. In August 1993 the State government established the Local Government Board to review the structure and operation of local government in Victoria and advise on the improvement of its efficiency, including a review of municipal boundaries. The result was major changes to the number of local government authorities in the State. In 1993 the City of Greater Geelong Act created the City of Greater Geelong comprising six entire old local government areas and parts of two more and the City of Melbourne Act redefined the city boundaries to take in a number of 'capital city' assets and to pass a number of residential areas to adjacent cities. Following the recommendations of the Local Government Board the government ordered, during 1994 and early 1995, the widespread amalgamation of the State's local government authorities, reducing them from 210 in number in May 1993 to 78 by January 1995.¹⁷¹

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

Introduction

The entire continent of Australia comprised several British colonies so some form of cooperation between them seemed desirable. In 1853 Select Committees of the New South Wales and Victorian Legislative Councils reported in favour of a General Assembly to be summoned occasionally to consider matters of inter-colonial concern but no formal move was made to form such an assembly.¹⁷² A resolution was passed at an inter-colonial convention in 1883 for the establishment of a Federal Council of Australia which held meetings between 1866 and 1899 but achieved little. There were also a number of other inter-colonial conferences on many issues such as posts & telegraphs, stock & agriculture, military & naval, maritime, meteorology, statistics, quarantine and immigration in the 1880s and 1890s.

These conferences and meetings, together with concerns about mutual defence and trade between the colonies and a growing public sentiment, led through various stages led to the federation of the Australian colonies.¹⁷³ The process is generally considered to have begun with a speech given by Henry Parkes in October 1889 which led to a series of meetings and conferences in 1890, 1891, 1893, 1895, 1897 and 1898 which agreed on general principles and then drafted a constitution, leading to referenda in all the colonies which eventuated in the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Local Government Board, 'New Municipalities of Victoria - a guide to their names', March 1995, p.5, 'Short History of Local Government in Victoria' and Dunstan, 'Smaller Greater Melbourne', p.2.

¹⁷¹ Local Government Board, 'New Municipalities', pp.5-6 and 'Short History of Local Government in Victoria'.

¹⁷² Monie, *Victorian History*, pp.160-161.

¹⁷³ Monie, *Victorian History*, pp.165-169.

¹⁷⁴ Wright, *A People's Counsel*, p.111.

By the time of Federation all the colonies except Western Australia had enjoyed five decades of self rule and developed their own political and civil institutions with separate traditions, albeit within a common British framework. The link with Britain bound them culturally and politically while geographic proximity bound them economically and the creation of one nation was seen as a way of simplifying inter-colonial relations under the umbrella of the British Empire. There were many areas in which the colonies were rivals, most notably in trade policy, but the stresses of the 1890s had made it apparent that ways had to be found to reduce that conflict and develop new common policies in such areas as trade and customs, industrial relations, transport and communications and social welfare. In creating a federation the states did not see themselves giving up their individual sovereignty but creating a political entity that would act as an agency for managing three areas of common interest; customs, communication and defence.¹⁷⁵

Commonwealth/State relations

The operations of the proposed federation were established under its constitution which recognised the existing colonies with their existing constitutions, laws and administrative arrangements and created a new central government with functions and powers circumscribed by the constitution. It set up the Commonwealth parliament, executive, judiciary and other elements of government. It regulated relations between the States and Commonwealth and established a common economic market with free trade between the states. The men who wrote the constitution did so to create two levels of government operating independently in most affairs with the High Court to resolve disputes. The constitution was a general statement of principles and necessarily vague on many points which the High Court was to resolve as they arose.¹⁷⁶

The Federation did not develop as its founders had expected. Although they wanted to create a central government they saw it as the servant of the States rather than their master. However the Commonwealth government gradually became more powerful and started to exert its own influence on the States. One reason was that the new Commonwealth Parliament was attractive to the most capable politicians in Australia and began to take centre stage while State politics began to lose their intensity - just at the Victorian Legislative Council had replaced the Melbourne Council as the centre of Victorian politics, so the Commonwealth replaced the State parliament as the highest level to which politicians could aspire.¹⁷⁷ Areas in which the Commonwealth began to assert its powers were international affairs where relations with other nations could dictate the course of government action (in the most extreme case, declaring war), the legal relationship between the states under which the Constitution provided that Commonwealth powers prevailed over States powers in any case of consistency and the decisions of the High Court which tended, over time, to favour

¹⁷⁵ Advisory Council, *Local Government Boundary*, p.16, Wright, 'An Open Wrestle', p.211 & p.227 and Ronald Norris, 'Federal Politics and Social Policies', in Bruce W Hodgins, Don Wright & W H Heick (eds), *Federalism in Canada and Australia: The Early Years*, Canberra 1978, p.269 & p.273.

¹⁷⁶ C P Harris, *Relations between Federal and State Governments in Australia*, Canberra 1982, pp.3-4, Wright, 'An Open Wrestle', p.212 and Norris, 'Federal Politics', p.268.

¹⁷⁷ Wright, 'An Open Wrestle', pp.227-228 & p.234 and Norris, 'Federal Politics', pp.274-275.

the expansion of Commonwealth powers at the expense of the States.¹⁷⁸

The factor that was most important in increasing the Commonwealth's power was finance. Around the time of Federation most of the income the colonies derived was from land sales and customs and excise duties. By the first decade of the Commonwealth the Victorian government had sold almost all the land available to it and had handed its powers over customs and excise to the Commonwealth. The Constitution provided that for the first five years the Commonwealth returned to the States all the money it collected from customs in each State and for the following five years it could return the money on any basis it thought fair. That clause of the Constitution expires after ten years, allowing the Commonwealth to do as it wished with customs revenue. During this first period the Commonwealth raised three times as much revenue as that raised by the States and transferred 70 to 80 per cent of total revenue back to the States.¹⁷⁹ From 1908 the Commonwealth began keeping customs surpluses for such purposes as defence and the old aged pension scheme that began in July 1909, rather than returning them to the States. In 1910 the Commonwealth committed itself to paying the States 25 shillings per head of population each year for the following 10 years to replace earlier arrangements.¹⁸⁰ During World War I the Commonwealth started collecting income tax to help finance the war effort and continued collecting it after the war and, by 1918-19, its income from income tax was about as much as it derived from customs and excise. Until 1923 the States collected income tax separately and from that time the States agreed to joint collection with the Commonwealth.¹⁸¹

The Commonwealth continued to pay grants to the States based on population until 1927 when the Commonwealth and States agreed to set up the Loan Council to co-ordinate public borrowings by both levels of government. This gave the Commonwealth the responsibility of arranging all public borrowing and replaced the earlier system of grants. When this system was introduced the Commonwealth also made special grants to some state to compensate them for losses under the new scheme and over time the practice of special Commonwealth grants to the States expanded so that the Commonwealth Grants Commission was established in 1933 to formalise arrangements for making grants to the States.¹⁸² The Commonwealth also began the practice of making tied grants to the States for works and services that it thought desirable, beginning in 1926 with special funding for roads. This money could not be spent on other purposes and was usually closely administered by the Commonwealth so the State governments virtually became agents of the Commonwealth in undertaking those activities.¹⁸³ Finally, in 1942 the Commonwealth took over all income tax collection due to the pressure of war, but did not return it to the States at the end of hostilities. In 1957 this was contested by the States in the High Court but the Commonwealth's role was upheld

¹⁷⁸ Wright, 'An Open Wrestle', pp.213-217 and Harris, *Relations...*, pp.4-5 & pp.10-11.

¹⁷⁹ Harris, *Relations...*, p.12.

¹⁸⁰ Wright, 'An Open Wrestle', pp.222-223.

¹⁸¹ Wood Ellem, *Victoria Felix*, p.17 and CH, p.14.

¹⁸² Harris, *Relations...*, pp.14-17 & p.26.

¹⁸³ Harris, *Relations...*, p.11.

there.¹⁸⁴ The outcome of this process in which the Commonwealth gradually took control of the most lucrative forms of revenue left the States as the servant of the Commonwealth in many areas of activity rather than remaining superior, as had been expected when the Commonwealth was created. In 1908-09 the States had been responsible for over two thirds of total government outlay while local authorities were responsible for one seventh and the Commonwealth for one twelfth. By 1975-76 the Commonwealth and the States were each responsible for about half government expenditure and local authorities only a tiny proportion.¹⁸⁵

The evolution of relations between the Commonwealth and State governments can be said to have passed through three phases. The first was a co-ordinated federal system which lasted until the beginning of the 1920s during which the States had real independence from the Commonwealth. The second phase was a co-operative system which lasted until 1942 in which the Commonwealth and States co-ordinated their policies and operations. The third and longest period was what can be called 'coercive federalism' in which the Commonwealth took the dominant role and controlled the activities of the States in many areas through its domination of most areas of revenue raising. Some Commonwealth governments have tended towards centralizing government powers while others have tended towards allowing the States more freedom (for example the Fraser government's 'New Federalism' which promised to return more powers to the States and the Howard government's Goods and Services Tax which promises to provide more revenue directly back to the States) but in all cases the Commonwealth government became dominant in most areas of government and administration and any changes in relations with the States was under the control of the Commonwealth.¹⁸⁶

The Commonwealth government also began taking an interest in local government after World War II when municipal services generally expanded while their sources of revenue did not. By the 1970s the Commonwealth was making grants to the States that were passed on to municipal authorities for expenditure on activities the Commonwealth wanted to support and in the early 1970s the Commonwealth passed legislation to allow it to make grants direct to municipal authorities, bypassing State governments.¹⁸⁷

Commonwealth public buildings

At first the Commonwealth did not have a major public building construction program and so it did not require a separate public works department so this function was included in the Department of Home Affairs. The most important Commonwealth functions were undertaken by three departments that took over State activities; the Commonwealth Departments of Trade and Commerce and Defence and the Postmaster General's Department. Buildings such as customs houses, post offices and defence facilities passed to Commonwealth control and it became responsible for their design, construction and

¹⁸⁴ Harris, *Relations...*, p.11 & p.39.

¹⁸⁵ Harris, *Relations...*, p.43.

¹⁸⁶ Harris, *Relations...*, p.28 & pp.70-72 and Wright, 'An Open Wrestle', p.230.

¹⁸⁷ Harris, *Relations...*, pp.78-79 and Ward & Fahey, 'Typological Study of Local Government', p.44.

maintenance.¹⁸⁸

Initially the Commonwealth used the State Public Works Departments to undertake its work but in New South Wales and Victoria, where the volume of work was greatest, it established Public Works Branches within Home Affairs in 1904 with small professional staffs to administer the work done for it by the States.¹⁸⁹ As the professional staff of the Public Works Branch expanded it began to take over responsibility for new Commonwealth public works and smaller buildings such as post offices appear to have been the work of the Branch from around 1912. By 1914 there were 22 permanent staff working in the Branch in Victoria, 14 in Central Office overseeing the work of the Branch across the Commonwealth and 8 working in the Victorian Branch. The small number of staff meant there was little diversity in architectural development during this period.¹⁹⁰

In the second decade of Federation the Commonwealth public works program expanded rapidly so in 1913 the Commonwealth parliament established the Public Works Committee to give it oversight of the provision of major public works. In November 1916 the Department of Works and Railways was established to take responsibility for Commonwealth public works. During the 1920s it undertook many significant defence works and constructed 48 new post offices to designs based on standard plans with general guidelines and elevations. The depression of the 1930s brought Commonwealth public works to a virtual halt and the Public Works Committee suspended sittings between 1932 and 1936 while the Department of Works and Railways was absorbed into the Department of Home Affairs in April 1932.¹⁹¹ Public works increased rapidly in the second half of the 1930s and the Department of Public Works was created in November 1938 to undertake urgently needed defence works in preparation for war.¹⁹²

Commonwealth government buildings

Before 1914 the Commonwealth constructed only one major building in Victoria, the Commonwealth Offices in Treasury Place which became the centre for its administration at the time when the Commonwealth Parliament was sitting in Victoria. The work was undertaken in two stages, the first in 1912 which faced inwards to the garden and the second completed in 1914 facing Gipps Street West.¹⁹³ As the Commonwealth administration grew the Commonwealth occupied other buildings around the city so another Commonwealth Office was constructed at 315 Post Office Place, completed in 1926. Other major works completed in the period up until the depression included additional office accommodation in Victoria Barracks, the Federal Taxation Building, the Note Printing Office in Victoria Parade

¹⁸⁸ Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', p.1.

¹⁸⁹ Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', pp.2-4.

¹⁹⁰ Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', pp.26-27.

¹⁹¹ Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', p.31, p.33, p.34, p.53 & p.61.

¹⁹² *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No 70, Friday 25 November 1938, p.2751.

¹⁹³ Kirby, 'Public Buildings in Victoria', p.28.

and the Mail Exchange in Spencer Street.¹⁹⁴

In the post-World War II period the rapid expansion of the Commonwealth administration led to rapid growth in demand for office accommodation in Melbourne which was still the headquarters for several major operational departments. A major office building (since demolished) was constructed in Spring Street and at one stage the Department of Civil Aviation alone occupied space in seven office buildings in central Melbourne which were, as with most government offices, rented accommodation.¹⁹⁵ Also during the post war period rapid expansion of Commonwealth involvement in health, education and social welfare led to establishment of Commonwealth offices in places where they had not been needed earlier when many Commonwealth services were provided through post offices. Again, however, most of these services could be located in existing or newly constructed office buildings that had little to distinguish them from any other office buildings.

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¹⁹⁴ Kirby, ‘Public Buildings in Victoria’, p.32 & pp.55-56.

¹⁹⁵ *Department of Civil Aviation Annual Report 1965/66*, p.66.

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