

## **CIVIC RECEPTION**

18 October 2005

Town Hall, Ballarat

You Honours, Councillor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here in Ballarat and I thank you for the warm welcome we have been shown.

Yesterday at the welcome ceremony in court I reflected upon the fact that it has been 142 years since the Supreme Court first travelled to Ballarat on circuit. 142 years is a long time when we consider the fact that in 1863 convicts were still being sent to Australia from England. It is a long time ago also if you think about the fact that Ned Kelly was still only a child at this time and that a mere two years before, in 1861, Burke and Wills had perished in the Australian outback.

Ballarat itself has seen an enormous amount of change during the past century and a half. In 1863, Ballarat was a thriving and mature city of about 40,000 people.<sup>1</sup> Massive gold deposits, good soil, steady rainfall and magnificent forests encouraged economic

---

<sup>1</sup> Weston Bate, *Life After Gold: Twentieth Century Ballarat* (1993) xv.

activity. Migrants from all over the world came here not only to seek their fortune, but also to join the steadily growing metal, mining, retail and rail industries. Ballarat, by the end of the nineteenth century, had grown in such confidence as a city, that it was given the appellation of the 'Golden City', sometimes also referred to as the 'City of Statues' and the 'City of Gardens'.<sup>2</sup>

The beginning of the twentieth century was, however, less energetic. For the first fifty years of the twentieth century, the population of Ballarat declined, the forests were gone and the major factories closed.

But Ballarat's fortunes picked up yet again when the city underwent a further period of expansion during and after World War II. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the natural beauty of the region in combination with its rich history has been used with great success to stimulate tourism. Who hasn't heard of Sovereign Hill, the Eureka Stockade and the nearby Grampians? For that matter, who hasn't visited them? They are all such important parts of our State and national history.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

The municipal district of the City of Ballarat is now one of Australia's largest inland cities and the third largest city in Victoria. Whilst the city of Ballarat itself has a population of approximately 65,000 people, the municipal district as a whole has an estimated population of over 80,000 people.

It is without doubt an important hub in terms of trade, tourist and commuter travel routes.

Maintenance of contact by visits such as these to significant regional centres is of course critical to the administration of justice in Victoria. It is essential for people from regional and rural areas to grasp the notion that our justice system is accessible and that it is, moreover, transparent and impartial.

It should also be remembered that the Supreme Court serves all the people of this State. As we always have done, we continue to serve the interests of the broader community,

We look forward to our next few days here and once again, thank you so much for our warm reception.