

celebrate



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Parliament travels to the regions

Parliament to visit Geelong and Colac

Next month's sittings of the Legislative Assembly in Geelong and Legislative Council in Colac are significant for two important reasons. Firstly, it is only the second time the Assembly has met outside Melbourne and only the third time the Council has done the same. Regional sittings offer Victorians the opportunity to see their elected representatives at work and to learn the processes of Parliament. Secondly, the November sittings will also mark the official launch of Parliament's 150th anniversary celebrations – a historic milestone in the State's history.

The November launch coincides with the anniversary of the proclamation of the *Constitution Act 1855* and 25 November 2006 will mark 150 years since Parliament officially opened as the seat of democracy in Victoria. It is fitting that the anniversary celebrations be officially launched at the 2005 regional sittings given that regional Victoria has a proud history of contributing political representatives to our 150 years of Parliamentary history.

Costa Hall—Deakin University, Geelong



Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre, Colac



Count down to Parliament's 150th anniversary launch

Mark your diaries because preparations are in full swing for the start of Parliament's 150th anniversary celebrations next month.

Following the official launch of the 150th celebrations at the regional sittings in Geelong and Colac on 17 November, the travelling exhibition will be launched in Castlemaine on 23 November 2005.

The exhibition – *Bills, Bells and Ballots – 150 years of Victoria's Parliament* – will travel to Ararat, Bairnsdale, Castlemaine, Mildura, Morwell, Parliament House, Portland, Shepparton, Warracknabeal, Wodonga and the 2006 Royal Melbourne Show. Taking the exhibition across the State will give as many Victorians as possible the chance to learn more about their democratic traditions, institutions and personalities. Check overleaf for a full list of dates and locations.

OUR LEADERS

James Munro was elected Premier in November 1890. He was renowned for espousing uncompromisingly moral views, and as a result attitudes toward him were polarised by those who agreed with him and those who did not.

Munro inherited a poisoned chalice, the land boom that had been a vital part of Victorian economic affairs collapsed in 1891, leaving many including Munro himself in dire financial straits.

After standing down as Premier in February 1892 Munro was recalled from London (in the same year) to face the insolvency courts where it was revealed he had lost 608 000 pounds of his own money and owed 309 000 pounds. While he was not required by the courts to refund the money he owed he was publicly vilified as being corrupt and incompetent.

The event for which Munro was most famous was not in fact of his own doing. In late 1893 Munro was verbally abused, and physically assaulted, by disgruntled labourer and ex-Munro property investor George Davis (Davis had used his life savings to invest one of Munro's schemes). Mr Davis just happened to see Munro walking down Collins Street when he decided to take matters into his own hands. The incident left Munro unconscious and Davis under arrest.



James Munro 1832–1908

Who stole the mace?

Parliament scandalised!

Early in the morning of Friday, 9 October 1891, the Legislative Assembly mace was stolen. Initially police suspected parliamentary engineer Thomas Jeffery but were unable to discover motive, witnesses, evidence or the mace.

One year later the *Sydney Bulletin* published a story suggesting it had been removed by tipsy MPs and taken to a nearby bordello. A board of inquiry found no evidence to support the story. Nor did the police.

The board was established by Speaker Thomas Bent. Due to his larger-than-life personality, Bent's name somehow and quite incorrectly became linked to the theft. So agreeable was this explanation that for more than a century the story has persisted that Thomas Bent definitely stole the mace.

The missing mace has not yet been recovered. In 2001 the Parliament of Victoria, in conjunction with Victoria Police, posted a reward of \$50 000 for information leading to its return. The reward remains as yet unclaimed.

Want to hear more stories like this one? Why not visit Parliament's travelling exhibition: *Bills, Bells and Ballots*:

Castlemaine

23 November – 18 December 05

Portland

16 January – 10 February 06

Ararat

18 February – 13 March 06

Mildura

18 March – 17 April 06

Warracknabeal

22 April – 14 May 06

Shepparton

20 May – 11 June 06

Melbourne — Queen's Hall

19 June – 30 June 06

Wodonga

15 July – 5 August 06

Bairnsdale

14 August – 1 September 06

Royal Melbourne Show,

Ascot Vale 14 Sept – 24 Sept 06

Morwell

30 September – 22 October 06

For venue information please visit www.parliament.vic.gov.au/150th/exhibition.asp

More dates for your diary

As part of Parliament's 150th anniversary celebration, major events will take place in Melbourne to complement the State-wide travelling exhibition.

Dates have been confirmed for the following three events:

6 – 24 March 2006

Cartoon Exhibition, Parliament House – will feature published cartoons of former Premiers and significant political events from Melbourne's newspapers and political journals.

9 October – 1 November 2006

Petition Exhibition, Parliament House – over the last 150 years many petitions have been presented to Parliament; this exhibition will give Victorians a chance to lift the archive lid and view a variety of rarely seen petitions, ranging from quirky one-off petitions to those that have influenced Victorian legislation.

29 October 2006

Open Gardens at Parliament House – developed in stages between 1856 and 1929, Parliament's Heritage-listed gardens will be open for members of the public to wander through on self-guided tours.

1891 Women's Suffrage Petition Project

By Vicki Court, Royal Historical Society Victoria

In 1891 members from the Woman's Christian Temperance Union together with other women's suffrage groups collected signatures from women throughout Victoria requesting the right for the women in the colony to have the vote. The petition stated 'that government of the People, by the People and for the People should mean all the People, not one half'. It was also noted 'that all Adult Persons should have a voice in Making the Laws which they are required to obey'. Signatures were collected from women living in country towns as well as in the suburbs. More than 28,000 signatures were recorded on sheets of paper which were then glued together forming a giant petition presented to the Parliament. It was to be many years before women in Victoria received the right to vote, but the petition of 1891 demonstrated that women were becoming politically active and should not be ignored.

In 2005, Parliament's Presiding Officers, Judy Maddigan and Monica Gould, arranged for the petition to be digitised and through the combined efforts of the Genealogical Society of Victoria, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Public Record Office Victoria and the Parliament of Victoria, the Women's Suffrage Petition was digitally transcribed and developed into a searchable database.

The teams of indexers from the Genealogical Society of Victoria and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria undertook the task of transcribing the names and addresses of the petitioners to be entered into a database. Scanned pages of the petition were provided on CD-Rom for the project. In some cases, deciphering the writing was a challenge and often the indexers resorted to tools such as phone books, street directories, Sands and McDougall directories as well as internet resources to try and decipher names and streets.



Women's Suffrage Petition, 1891

Photograph: Laura Daniele

Some names could not be read, but because the database will allow searching by locality as well as by name to lead researchers to appropriate sections of the petition, researchers may still be able to locate a signature not included in the index. The database will provide a valuable resource for family history researchers and people undertaking local history research.

On 14 November 2005, as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations, the Women's Suffrage Petition will be launched on-line and available for all to search. Stay tuned for further details.

Snapshot:

Victoria's Parliament - an evolutionary process

The 1850s and 1860s were eventful decades in the history of Victoria. For example, in 1861 the Melbourne Cup was first run and Bourke and Wills perished at Coopers Creek in their, now famous, attempt to discover more of inland Australia.

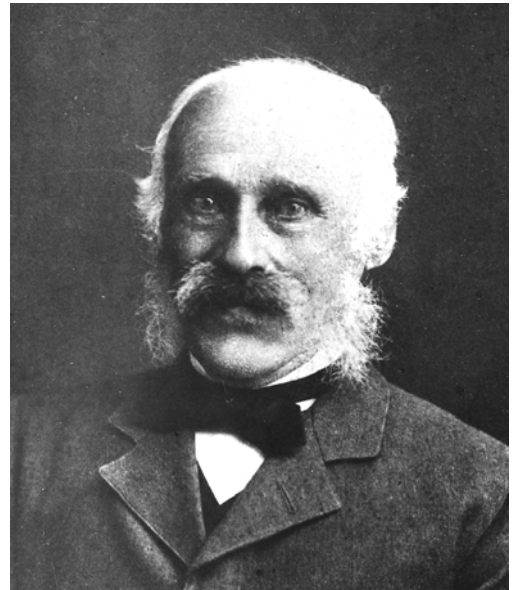
Victoria's fledgling democracy and its new Parliament also continued to evolve during this period. In 1858 work began on the East Wing of Parliament House which was to include dining facilities and the Parliamentary Library. The services of Peter Kerr, responsible for construction of the two Legislative Chambers, were commissioned to undertake the work. By 1860 construction was complete, which would turn out to be the last work done on the building for 17 years.

The changes to Parliament House were mirrored by various legislative changes to Victorian democracy. In 1857 manhood suffrage was granted for the election of Members to the Legislative Assembly. In addition, property qualifications were also removed as a requirement for those

wishing to stand for election to the Legislative Assembly. 1858 saw an increase in the number of Legislative Assembly Members from 60 to 78 and an increase in the number of electoral districts to 49.

In 1869 the property qualifications for Members of the Legislative Council were also reduced. While restrictions on those wishing to stand for, and vote in, the Legislative Council remained, the requirements (based on wealth and property) were halved.

By 1870, only 15 years after the State was established, Victorian democracy had displayed its ability and tendency to modernise its practices and institutions.



Peter Kerr



Library, c.1920



Eastern Wing façade, c.1870. The rear of the Council (left) and Assembly (right) can be seen.



West façade under construction, c.1880

www.parliament.vic.gov.au/150th

If you would like to know more about the 150th anniversary celebration for the Parliament of Victoria then go to the 150th anniversary website or contact the project office on 9651 8576