



Moreland City Council

1997

Mayor's Speech

1997 Mayor's Speech

Speech delivered to the Moreland City Council at its Ceremonial Council Meeting held to elect the Mayor on 10 March 1997

Councillor Rod Higgins

Motion

The Mayor's Speech be received and endorsed as Council policy, and that it form the basis for development of the 1997 Council Plan.

Introduction

Immediately after the historic election of Moreland's first Local Government in March 1996, Bishop Michael Challen delivered the Maurice Blackburn Address on the topic of local democracy. He told us that 'the resource all communities have and can offer is their citizens. That is the key to the success of community life. Individuals accepting the challenge of coming out of their cocoons of isolation and disempowerment and entering into the strength and satisfaction of human solidarity built about and for the common good.'

It was a fitting topic and an appropriate speaker to assist the people of Moreland to reclaim the democracy which had been denied to us for more than eighteen months. The task of rebuilding democracy, local accountability and community values, of engaging people in realising the common good of our municipality, has since been tackled with dedication and vigour by Moreland's elected Local Government.

The first elected Moreland Council made a commitment to appointing a full-time and adequately remunerated Mayor to manage the demands of such a large municipality and to provide political leadership for this community. The Council established the principle of annual rotation of the mayoral position to ensure an opportunity to serve and lead the city through this office was available to a maximum number of residents.

I thank my fellow Councillors for asking me to fulfil the mayoral role for the next twelve months. My role as Mayor will be to maintain a clear focus for the Council and to provide ongoing leadership for the very strong Council team elected last year by the voters of Moreland. Tonight the Mayor might change, but the commitment and direction will remain clear.

Nearly twelve months ago, all ten Moreland Councillors set a three year agenda for the governance of the City of Moreland. This agenda, which was spelled out in the 1996 Mayor's Speech, delivered by Councillor Mike Hill, has become the basis of the program of the Council. Even though this agenda was based upon the platform,

Labor – Bringing Moreland Together, of the ALP candidates who stood for election last March, it has subsequently been endorsed by all ten Moreland Councillors and it has become the major yardstick by which the Council assesses its progress. These past twelve months have been marked by a strong sense of teamwork. The group of individuals elected in March 1996 has become a strong team and, like Mike Hill over the past twelve months, I am going to rely heavily on ten dedicated people working together to continue the implementation of the progressive agenda of the democratic City of Moreland.

The Mayor's Speech is a critical part of the good and democratic governance of Moreland. It is the bedrock on which Council's long term vision is based. It is a key reference point for both officers and Councillors, being the glue that binds them to mutually agreed principles and strategies. It sets the scene for our annual plan of action and it helps to determine our budget priorities.

While last year's Mayor's Speech may have spelled out an agenda for the entire three year term of this Council's election, it is now time to:

- review our developing knowledge and understanding of the aspirations and needs of the Moreland community;
- check the vision of the Council;
- reiterate and restate some of our goals;
- assess our progress in year one; and
- develop some priorities for the next twelve months.



Moreland City Council

The Vision for Moreland

In the 1996 Mayor's Speech a clear sense of direction for the new city was outlined. Three key parts of that vision have underpinned Council activity in the first twelve months of an elected local government.

1. Local government under the ownership of and accountable to the local community has a key role to play in building a stronger and more cohesive community.
2. Local government provides the most important and accessible opportunity for citizens to be involved in shaping their own communities.
3. Good local government is achieved through open leadership and sensitivity to community needs, interests and aspirations.

Based on the belief that local government is the foundation stone on which democratic government and practices in the nation must be built and the point at which most people experience their first direct interaction with government, we will continue the close partnership between Council, local communities and the staff of the City of Moreland to create responsive, consultative Local Government in which resources and programs will be equitably distributed across the full community.

In practice this means Council is equally committed to:

- responsible financial management;
- sound environmental management;
- open and inclusive decision making which actively seeks out views of the community;
- community education; and
- influencing decision making by other spheres of government.

Council is using these tools to achieve the five key goals it has set for itself using the following headings:

Governance/democracy/political leadership

Nurturing a democratic culture, enhancing the community's knowledge of government, being an advocate for the interests and concerns of the local community; and giving residents confidence that their views and aspirations will be respected.

Accountability

Ensuring that Councillors are wise and careful stewards of municipal assets and revenues and that they act with the authority and consent of constituents.

Social justice

Bringing fairness and distributive justice to the allocation of resources and the planning of services. Ensuring that all residents have the right and capacity to participate in decision-making and community life; encouraging mutual respect for the diverse people and communities of Moreland.

Economic activity

Encouraging a fair and prosperous local economy which maximises employment opportunities, builds on the traditional strengths of local industry and develops new opportunities in areas such as the arts and culture, and environmental services.

Quality of living

Developing improved social cohesion, an enhanced urban landscape through investment in open space, recreation, transport and cultural services. Building a sense of belonging and community for all residents, providing quality services that meet the physical and cultural needs of residents; making a positive contribution to the sustainability of Moreland and the broader metropolitan environment.

These five areas are the building blocks for the Council's vision for Moreland. Throughout 1996 we have worked hard to develop policies and strategies that give life to the values and principles embodied in this vision. In the process we have drawn on the

knowledge and experience of the former Councils that make up Moreland as well as realising the opportunities and limitations of a much larger municipality. Our approach to strategy development has reflected the need to prepare consistent and accepted policies for the whole City, to truly bring Moreland together. A year ago we set ourselves the task of achieving a degree of ownership and participation for the people throughout this large and diverse city. We have made great strides towards achieving a sense of identity for Moreland of which the community can be proud; this will continue to be our major goal in 1997.

In doing so, we have used a community development model and have restored the local to Local Government through: open, transparent, accessible and public decision-making, opening up more opportunities for community input into Council's decision-making. Acting as a facilitator of community debate, through constant provision of information to the community; and through the use of community committees.

The Governance of Moreland in our first year

In the space of twelve months, your Local Government in Moreland has established a reputation for its commitment to democracy, its ability to provide political leadership to the community and its determination to stand up for the interests of the community that voted it into office.

Perhaps more than any other Local Government in Victoria, Moreland has found its feet and has worked towards the implementation of a clear long term vision. The ten elected Councillors have certainly worked together closely as a team through an extremely difficult period in which new protocols, new relationships and new definitions had to be developed. My colleagues campaigned hard to get elected and have worked hard since the election to represent their wards and to help create the new Local Government in Moreland. Indeed, many elected members and officers in Local Government have looked to Moreland for guidance and support as elected Councils have begun to reconstruct local democracy and to reinforce community values and ideals.

Accessibility to the Community

Council has nurtured a democratic culture in Moreland, has helped to build a sense of belonging and community for all residents and has been an advocate for the interests and concerns of the local community. Council has taken steps to become more accessible and open to the community.

Council meetings now include extensive opportunity for direct community input. They are rotated in venues across Glenroy, Coburg and Brunswick and meetings are also planned for Fawkner in 1997. The regular Council Forum for the open discussion of community issues has been instituted and will continue on a monthly basis in 1997.

Community Consultation and Participation

Consultation with residents and other key stakeholders has been taken seriously. The range of issues on which we have commenced a dialogue with residents is comprehensive and includes:

- overhead telecommunication cabling;
- City Link and the widening of Tullamarine Freeway;
- the needs of specific ethnic communities in Moreland;
- the so-called 'race debate' and its impact on our multicultural community;
- the impact on Moreland of service cuts from State and Federal Governments;
- Greening Moreland, the state of Parks and Gardens and indigenous planting;
- the proliferation of gaming and its social and economic impact;
- waste reduction and the introduction of a new waste collection system;
- pet management and particularly the access of companion animals to parkland;
- the Premier's Drug Advisory Council Report on drug law reform;
- environmental sustainability (Local Agenda 21);
- Council's contract specification for the Parks and Recreation areas;
- enhancing public transport links;
- energy conservation strategy;
- Powernet, the state authority managing Victoria's power grid system;
- electromagnetic radiation and the need for local government action and policy;
- cultural diversity;
- development of Council's Financial Plan; and
- gate closures along the Upfield Railway Line.

The Local Government of Moreland is anxious to develop a much more inclusive governance process acknowledging the community's right to information and to open decision making. Significant issues for consultation this year include the CCT (Compulsory Competitive Tendering), specification and contract monitoring process; participation in the formulation of the Council's annual Plan of action; and the investment and distribution of capital from the sale of the Municipal Electrical Undertakings owned by the previous Brunswick and Coburg Councils and forcibly sold by the State Government.

A crucial means of achieving a strong and ongoing level of meaningful community involvement has been through the establishment of Council and community committees. Council and community committees, which now report direct to Council, cover a number of areas including: health; environment; housing; libraries; women's forum; waste minimisation; economic development; education; recreation; land use planning; festivals; energy management; telecommunication facilities and electromagnetic radiation.

Cultural Diversity

The greatest single asset of Moreland is the cultural diversity of its people. 32.3% of our population was born in non-English speaking countries and more than 50% of the population is defined as coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. We have embraced people from one hundred and thirty-two nationalities.

Council has participated at every opportunity in the so-called 'race debate' precipitated by Prime Minister Howard's ill-conceived comment that free speech was now possible in Australia and his equivocation in response to racism and cultural hatred. More than ever, a vibrant multicultural community such as Moreland needs to come to the fore to show the world how effective multiculturalism can be.

The municipality's multiculturalism and cultural diversity policy was launched on 5 March, and commits Council to ensuring the needs of all cultures and faiths are met by this Local Government. Implementation of and addressing issues in this policy will be a key task for Moreland in the next twelve months.

In 1996 positive steps were taken to meet this commitment:

- the launching last week of Australia's first Language Link Project, which is designed to provide instant language access for those not (yet) fluent in English;
- establishing interfaith gatherings to enable leaders of all faiths to share ideas and concerns in an atmosphere of cooperation and fellowship;
- developing a close working relationship with the Moreland Ethnic Communities Council including a ceremonial flag raising service for national groups;
- the Migrant Heritage Project which has identified sites of significance for inclusion into the register of the national estate and laid the foundation for the Friends of Bonegilla;
- recognising Refugee Week, including the launch of Moreland's Refugee Housing Strategy by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs;
- commencing a Community Radio Project with local community radio North West FM to involve and inform a wider range of language groups;
- conducting a forum for members of Moreland's Chinese community and extending the special relationship with Xian Yang in northern China;
- placing a strong emphasis upon Citizenship Ceremonies and promoting debates about the nature of citizenship;
- recognising prior sovereignty of indigenous people through inclusion in civic events eg. Australia Day activities;
- embarking upon a program for aboriginal reconciliation to be followed up further through involvement in the Australia Consults program.

Relations with other Governments

Moreland is a leader in articulating the need for Local Government to be regarded as a fully autonomous sphere of government in its own right, and became the first Council member of the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA).

The VLGA has played an important role in highlighting and challenging continued State Government interference in the affairs of Local Government through:

- rate capping;
- the Local Government Amendment Bill;
- threats to extinguish Councils;
- the impact of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) on local communities;
- support for a farcical referendum and retention of commissioners in Melton;
- uncalled for interference in the internal affairs of Local Governments such as Geelong and Darebin;
- privatisation of building regulatory services; and
- continuing Ministerial intervention in local planning matters.

The Kennett State Government has not been an easy Government to work with. The government chose a high-handed, autocratic model for its restructure and it retained commissioners in situ for a far longer period than was necessary to achieve the creation of the new local government entities. The State Government has used this period of commissioners as a period of State control over Local Government and it has continued to treat the democratic Councils as though they are accountable to Spring Street rather than to those whom they represent. Moreland constantly advises the Minister for Local Government to support and facilitate rather than interfere with and hinder the emerging Local Governments as they go about the task of establishing the new municipalities.

The level of cooperation between Moreland Local Government and all of our State and Federal Members of Parliament has been extremely positive at least in part due to the establishment of regular semi-formal meetings with these representatives.

Telecommunications Rollout Campaign

Moreland's active part in the historic campaign against the rollout of overhead cables by the telecommunications carriers, Optus and Telstra has earned it a unique place among Australia's local governments.

Moreland's long term goal is to ensure that all overhead cables, including the existing power lines, are eventually placed underground and Council will advocate vigorously for this option throughout 1997. There are emerging signs that our campaign may be successful with Local Government throughout Australia moving strongly behind the campaign.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

The State Government's enforced system of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) is undemocratic. In line with the principles outlined in the 1996 Mayor's Speech, a moratorium was placed on the CCT process to enable Councillors to review the direction, processes and costs of CCT.

Moreland Council has been a leader in efforts to minimise some of the worst effects of CCT and has consistently highlighted the impact of the system on service delivery and accountability. Since the election of the democratic Council, 95% of tenders have so far been awarded to in-house bids because in-house teams with Council support have been able to demonstrate their ability to deliver better value for money to our residents.



Moreland City Council

Key first year initiatives

The Local Government of Moreland has placed strong emphasis on services that assist and support those residents in the greatest need. Moreland is known for its multicultural commitment; its municipal health plan; its support for public education; its commitment to recreation and leisure services; its belief in the dignity of older people; its attention to the role of women in the community; and its interest in the question of affordable housing.

Councillors were faced with a 1996–97 budget that had been in the process of preparation well before the March election revealed the clear character of the elected Council. The first major opportunity to take full control and ownership of the budget came during a mid year budget adjustment process in January. Important community development objectives such as an enhanced community grants program and identifying and mapping the loss of community services in Moreland in recent years were funded in the budget adjustment.

Some services such as Home and Community Care programs and community-based child care centres have been under severe pressure due to cutbacks in funding from other spheres of Government. These programs and others are likely to continue to experience difficulties as other spheres of Government withdraw funding and shift resources to the private sector. Council must ensure that it protects these services by strong advocacy and lobbying; resourcing user groups with campaign skills and information; and maintaining its own funding commitments. In January, Council allocated a further \$330,000 to maintain current levels of home care for Moreland residents.

Towards a Sustainable Future

Moreland's action towards ensuring an environmentally sustainable future has so far focussed on: waste minimisation; creation of quality open space linkages; preference for indigenous plants; energy conservation; and transport alternatives to the car. Moreland's Local Agenda 21 Committee is developing programs for action to achieve environmental sustainability. We recognise that local government perhaps has more ability to have an influence on protecting and improving our environment than any other form of government.

Perhaps the most significant new program initiative in 1996 was the introduction of one of Australia's most comprehensive waste minimisation programs. This program aims to make a genuine attempt at attaining the goal of halving the amount of waste going to landfill by the year 2000.

Council recognised that bin sizes can only be reduced when alternative collection systems exist for other materials, so an enhanced kerbside recycling scheme, which includes the use of a recycling crate was introduced and a fortnightly kerbside greenwaste collection system was developed to collect garden waste. In November, Council adopted the waste management strategy to increase awareness of and opportunities for waste minimisation, and to achieve a uniform waste collection service across the municipality.

These initiatives have been overseen by a community-based waste management reference group which continues to provide advice to Council and will focus in 1997 on:

- continuing the waste minimisation program;
- improving a recycling system for public places and public spaces; and
- litter reduction.

Work has commenced on an integrated transport strategy for Moreland, at an initial cost of \$70,000. The strategy will assist our Local Government to promote public transport and bicycle use. It will build on traffic calming principles, and on the improvements to bike paths across the municipality, including the existing Merri Creek path, being constructed this year at a cost of \$125,000.

Greening Moreland

Early in the life of the new Council, I established the Greening Moreland group with the aim of providing community advice and input into a range of issues connected with Council's open space and nature policies. This group has now taken on a formal role and will serve as a community implementation committee for the Moreland Open Space Strategy (MOSS) and as an overseeing group for the development of the very important Moreland Streetscape Strategy.

The budget funded a vital environment initiative by allocating more than \$800,000 for the first stage implementation of the MOSS. Our aim must be to improve the overall extent and quality of tree cover and open space in Moreland and to generate further community interest in our local environment and broader ecological issues.

Close to half a million dollars, including \$200,000 obtained as a result of the compulsory acquisition of land required for the construction of City Link, will be ploughed back into improvements of the Moonee Ponds Creek. These funds will be used to apply maximum pressure on the State Government, water authorities and construction companies to show their dedication to improving Melbourne's urban waterways. The mid year funding package also will result in significant improvements to a number of parks, additional tree planting and an integrated heritage study.

Social Infrastructure: Education, Housing, Culture and Recreation

Education and housing were target areas in the 1996 Mayor's Speech and the budget allocated \$100,000 for new education and housing programs. Council used a portion of this budget to support local state schools when they were threatened with closure.

A housing officer has been appointed and a comprehensive housing strategy has been adopted. Council's key objective in this area to maintain the affordability of residential housing stock in Moreland and to make better use of existing infrastructure such as residential opportunities above shops and offices. A pilot shop-top housing program has been funded this year.

At its meeting on 24 February Council adopted a recreation, sports and arts plan (the Leisure Plan) that will significantly improve the provision of these services to the Moreland community. As a first step towards the implementation of this plan, Council allocated an additional \$150,000 in funding in the 1996–97 year. Additional funds have already resulted in improvements to the appearance and functional use of the Glenroy Library. Implementing the Leisure Plan blueprint will be a major priority for Council in 1997.

Employment and Economic Development

Moreland needs a sound and thriving local economy, particularly to ensure enhanced employment opportunities for a work force that has borne more than its fair share of unemployment. Initiatives in 1996 included Economic Development Forums for local businesses; capital works in retail shopping strips; and participation in North Link, the region's body for the co-ordination of economic development issues.

The key strategies and policies of our first year

In the first year of elected government in Moreland much of the Council's energy was devoted to putting foundations in place. Council has carefully laid out the extensive policy and strategic framework for the full implementation of the 1996 Mayor's Speech.

Major areas of policy development and implementation have included:

- the waste minimisation strategy was substantially implemented during the past twelve months and will be largely in place at the time of the next Council election;
- the Moreland open space strategy is completed and is being implemented with a substantial budget allocation made for this purpose;
- a recreation, sports and arts development strategy or leisure plan which aims to integrate and improve recreation and arts facilities;
- an urban character study for Council's planning scheme is in progress;
- a new multicultural (cultural diversity) policy has been launched and is now in the consultation period;
- Council has undertaken a review of existing immunisation policy and procedures;
- a program for maintenance and upgrade of library services has been prepared;
- development of an economic and employment strategy for Moreland is in process;
- a Council financial plan, which aims to extend ownership of the City's financial direction and make Moreland's budget easier to understand and access, has been prepared for consultation;
- Professor Nancy Milio launched Moreland's municipal public health plan which is now in implementation phase with a strong community working party;
- the housing policy has also been completed and is in implementation phase;
- the youth services plan is completed and is in the consultation phase;
- the consultation strategy is completed and has gone to the community for further comment;
- a communications strategy is still being put together;
- the Moreland street landscape strategy is being prepared;
- a review and clarification of planning codes is also in process;
- a Moreland parking strategy is nearing completion;
- partly as a result of widespread community concern, an electro magnetic radiation (EMR) policy is being developed;
- a Pentridge conservation management plan has been completed;
- the process for putting together Moreland's Local Agenda 21 program (local conservation strategy) is now underway aided by a community committee;
- the Moreland integrated transport strategy is nearing completion;
- the need for a heritage conservation study has been seen as very important and it will now be brought forward for the 1996/97 financial year through the budget review process;
- a number of initiatives aimed at improving Council's responsiveness to its community have been established, including: an Action Management System (AMS); a Council asset assessment process; a user and citizen satisfaction assessment and feedback across Council services; and the preparation of the Council Plan, which is an ongoing responsibility;
- the first draft of an important energy conservation management strategy has been completed;
- Council is already implementing an environmental audit of Moreland Council which aims to reduce Council's own energy consumption; and
- Council has also undertaken an organisation status audit and has implemented most of its recommendations, including: preparation of an overall financial strategy; development of an internal audit program; and devolution of responsibility for financial management to managers across the organisation.



Moreland City Council

Key initiatives for our second year

The work of the Council over the next twelve months will focus on maintaining the momentum of the first year of Moreland's elected Local Government. The year will be dedicated to commencing the implementation of a number of strategies now developed and widely supported in the community.

Council has determined some key priority areas for attention and implementation in 1997. In 1996, the development of a waste minimisation program and commencing work on the implementation of Moreland's Open Space Strategy were key program and funding priorities. These priorities will continue.

One new priority, and perhaps your Local Government's most important objective over the next twelve months, is to ensure wise and productive investment in the gradual rebuilding of Moreland's physical, social and cultural infrastructure.

This is a great challenge given the tight financial situation of Victorian Local Government and the diminishing level of support for capital projects from other spheres of Government. Council will be guided in its approach by its own financial strategy which has been developed over the past year and by the imperatives of the Moreland Leisure Plan.

Implementation of Recreation, Sports and Arts Development Strategy (Leisure Plan)

With the amalgamations of the former municipalities, and significant changes to the demographic composition of the municipality, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to restructure recreation, sports and arts services to:

- improve planning, promotion and coordination to ensure maximum use of existing resources;
- adjust the relative proportions of expenditure on recurrent and capital requirements;
- provide funds to previously underfunded areas such as the arts and cultural fields; and
- to identify and address key funding needs for sporting infrastructure.

In the next twelve month period, recognising that this is a unique opportunity, Council will provide special and additional funding for the implementation of the Leisure Plan. In addition to the mid year injection of \$150,000 for implementation, Council has an on-going commitment to maintaining at least its current level of recurrent expenditure on recreation, sports and arts as a proportion of its total budget.

Preceding Councils saw the need to provide some 120 open spaces, 114 playgrounds, 25 halls/community meeting places, 50 playing fields, 17 soccer facilities, six lawn bowls facilities, six aquatic centres, five libraries, two athletics centres and more... but failed to see the need for even one purpose built arts facility. Council believes that the need for arts facilities is of the highest priority. During this year Council will actively work to ensure the availability of a range of arts and cultural opportunities.

The Plan is now available for further public comment and feedback to Council prior to the implementation phase. We believe the Plan is an important tool to achieve a more equitable distribution of recreation, sports and arts resources through the community and to encourage an integrated planning response to recreation, sports and arts needs of the community. It provides Moreland with a clear direction for its recreation, sports and arts services and activities based upon the principle of Council and community partnership.

The Moreland Financial Strategy

Council has developed a financial plan over the past year that includes a framework for the resolution of the use of funds derived from the compulsory sale of the Municipal Electrical Undertakings (MEU) of the former Brunswick and Coburg Councils. The Strategy sets out proposals for the gradual repayment of outstanding debt; minimising or eliminating the use of overdraft facilities to fund Council operations; and the maintenance of an income stream from investments to replace the loss of earnings resulting from the forced sale of the MEU businesses.

The Financial Strategy seeks to maximise the options available to Council over the next three to five years. The key goals are to:

- retire outstanding debt prudently so as to enable income to be spent on recurrent programs or capital projects rather than on debt repayments;
- provide Council with additional capital resources in order to meet the needs identified in the Leisure Plan, the Open Space Strategy, the Energy Conservation Plan, improvements to Moreland's transport and pedestrian infrastructure, and other projects;
- establish clear and equitable principles and practices for the charging of rates, levies and fees;
- identify and address possible sources of additional non-rate income for Council; and
- secure a funding base over the long term for social justice programs in areas such as education and housing.

Australia Consults

Early this year Council allocated \$15,000 towards a community based implementation of the Australia Consults program which, in Moreland, will focus on issues of citizenship, cultural diversity, Aboriginal reconciliation and constitutional change as Australia takes steps towards becoming a republic. Part of this discussion needs to focus on the place of Local Government in the Australian constitution and participation in the constitutional convention to be held later this year.

Greening Moreland

The Greening Moreland group will support the Council objective of establishing Moreland as an environmentally sustainable city. It will co-operate with municipalities abutting Moreland and with regional bodies and authorities concerned with open space, land management and the environment. It will encourage the identification, restoration, maintenance and preservation of indigenous flora and fauna in private and public open space and the identification and eradication of environmental weeds and vermin. We have an opportunity to ensure parks and footpaths are places of delight and interest for the children and elderly who are their

major users as well as the general community. Through our programs and policies we will promote the active participation and co-operation of the people of Moreland.

Council is now in a better and stronger position to begin implementing its policies to create an environmentally sustainable municipality. A key group charged with assisting Council with this aim is the Local Agenda 21 Committee.

Council will use the City Link project and its own injection of half a million dollars to attempt to achieve some major improvements to the Moonee Ponds Creek that accord with the Moonee Ponds Creek concept plan. In co-operation with other agencies and the City Link contractors, we can begin the process of reversing three decades of devastation to the Moonee Ponds Creek. My vision is to see large eucalypts such as red river gums planted across the wide expanses of the Moonee Ponds valley. We trust that TransUrban will meet their Chairman's stated commitment to return the Moonee Ponds Creek back to its natural environment.

Revitalisation of the Creek is also linked to the implementation of the Moreland Open Space Strategy and the development of a network of local, district and city-wide parks and open space for outdoor recreation, promoting biodiversity and reducing the greenhouse effect.

During this year Council will:

- introduce a purchasing policy to facilitate conservation, recycling and fuel efficiency;
- introduce a water conservation project;
- begin the development of sustainable open space management practices to remedy the potential waste of water and energy in Moreland's parks and recreation areas;
- promote energy conservation in public, commercial, industrial, and domestic spheres;
- continue the implementation of the Moreland Open Space Strategy and ensure an appropriate budget allocation for the Strategy in 1997-98;
- examine the feasibility of using in-house urban design and landscaping expertise to ensure consistency in Council projects;

- reduce the Council's dependence on external consultancies;
- utilise indigenous plants in street and other plantings;
- investigate the sale of indigenous plants;
- promote the use of indigenous plants within the community; and
- commence pilot projects in selected parks that encourage responsible pet ownership and management of dog litter.

I look forward to continuing my close personal involvement with this process. I aim to involve as many community groups and residents as possible in improving Moreland's natural environment.

Energy

The enforced sale of the former electricity supply departments of the municipalities of Brunswick and Coburg has left Moreland with some funds (most of which must be used to sustain an ongoing income stream) and some obligations. Moreland believes, and so many members of the community continue to reinforce this, that it needs to continue and expand the energy conservation programs initiated by the former Brunswick municipality which were recognised around the world.

Last Monday Council launched its draft Energy Strategy at a forum attended by many Moreland residents. The debate on the strategy and its implementation was very constructive. The Energy Strategy will go through a six week period of seeking further community comment and input.

After this, the development of energy conservation programs probably through the establishment of an Energy Trust, will be a key objective of the Council in 1997.

Implementation of the Moreland Integrated Transport Strategy

The proportion of people in Moreland who depend on public transport is one of the highest in Melbourne. During this year your Local Government will put in place a number of key demonstration projects to test ways of making public transport even more accessible and attractive to a wider group of people. Our objective is to maximise the benefits of public transport, cycling, and walking, and minimising the need for car based trips. We are providing

tangible support to assist the Public Transport Users Association.

In the long term the projects could include:

- the redevelopment of Coburg railway station to ensure smoother integration between bus and train modes of transport;
- an improved bus-train interchange at Gowrie station;
- development of a major east-west bicycle route;
- a faster tram service along Sydney Road through a number of means such as intersection improvements; and
- improved information, publicity, driver training, bus shelters and traffic management measures to reduce waiting times and increase patronage on at least one key east-west bus route.

We will support the State government's transport strategy, Transporting Melbourne, and continue to advocate for the extension of the Upfield and Broadmeadows railway line to Craigieburn.

New transport corridors such as City Link and the Western Ring Road are expected to contribute to the more efficient movement of goods around Melbourne. However, given the concentration of Moreland's key industries and commercial areas within a network of narrow streets with access difficulties, Council will closely monitor the impact of City Link and the other new road infrastructure, and work with local businesses and residents to ensure access to factories, shops and offices in a way that does not impact negatively on local residential amenity.

City Link

This Council maintains its position of opposing the City Link project. We continue to work for better results on noise barriers, landscaping and the Moonee Ponds Creek. We remain unconvinced by traffic management solutions and assurances regarding pollution and the environment. Council is deeply unimpressed by the project's lack of meaningful response to the concerns of Local Governments and communities. Council will continue to assist and resource local residents concerned about the impact of this major freeway on their amenity, their environment and their properties.



Upfield Railway Line

Moreland Council remains committed to keeping the Upfield line open. We applaud the decision of the State Government to invest \$24 million to the upgrade, but see the six month closure of part of the line as a breach of faith with this community and remain unconvinced by the stated reasons for this planned closure. Moreland Council will continue to work with and to resource its community to avoid any closure and is committed to holding this State Government to its word on the Upfield line.

Away With 'Customers'

The new era of Local Government following the Kennett Government restructure has spawned a new language. Many residents and community members have objected to being called 'customers'.

During this year Council will replace this term with one, such as citizen for example, which better describes the democratic governance relationship that exists between members of the broad Moreland community and their Local Government.

Employment and Economic Development

Efforts to combat growing youth unemployment and high levels of long-term unemployment in Moreland will be made this year. Council will bring together local businesses, labour market program providers and employment placement agencies to develop a coordinated response to these issues. Recent 'work for the dole' proposals are the result of policies of despair but they do make us realise the importance of developing alternative economic policies and programs at the local level.

Council will examine participating in a program of Traineeships and Apprenticeships to give new opportunities to our young people. Council's policies will also be scrutinised to see whether we can make a greater contribution to supporting local businesses and local employment. Council is committed to playing its part in increasing the employment opportunities for Moreland residents by helping to improve their ability and skills in the labour market and reviewing Council's own recruitment strategies.

Council is actively monitoring the level of employment of non-English speaking

background workers and newly arrived refugees in its own workforce and will actively use Equal Employment Opportunity principles to ensure that these groups have fair access to employment that is available.

Council will discuss the Productivity Commission reports advocating further rapid reductions on tariffs for the car and the textile/clothing/footwear industries and we will work with local businesses and North Link to lobby the Federal Government to maintain government support and assistance for these important industries in Australia, and this region of Melbourne in particular.

We will continue our strong support for the local retail centres in Moreland. As spending patterns change, as gambling consumes more household income, and as trade drifts away from strip shopping to the big retailers and large suburban centres, our traditional retailers are under increasing threat. We will strengthen Council's partnerships with local retailers and continue the special rate schemes to improve the appearance and standard of our key shopping strips. We will work with local Chambers of Commerce and retail associations to attract new businesses to these centres and to improve the marketing and promotion of our shopping strips.

Organisational Issues and Restructuring

After a year of elected government, the Council is now actively reconsidering the appropriate organisational structure to ensure responsiveness to the Moreland community in the delivery of services and the development of policy. We will establish efficient and effective organisational structures which focus on goal achievement.

We will reduce rigid dependency on structural splits between so-called 'purchasers' and 'providers' of services, a division that has characterised local government organisations across the state since the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering in 1994 and resulted in considerable inefficiency and role confusion. Of course, Council will need to be mindful of maintaining probity and competition in tendering processes, and ensure that all bids continue to be dealt with fairly. Appropriate internal protocols and systems will ensure that each staff member

recognises their relevant 'purchaser' and 'provider' roles and responsibilities. Stronger integration and communication between Council departments should result in tangible benefits through better planning and coordination of services and reduced costs. Once again Moreland is providing leadership for Local Governments throughout the state.

Collocation of Staff and Offices

Council has recognised that efficiency, co-ordination and community service would be enhanced by having all its strategic management functions operating out of the Coburg headquarters. Our service to the community will be enhanced through the provision of integrated service points in Brunswick, Glenroy and Coburg and by significant use of the Brunswick buildings, following the move to Coburg. A range of appropriate community and Council uses will be examined for the Brunswick sites, including the development of a major community arts centre. Funds to commence the collocation project have been set aside, planning for the move has begun, and some implementation of the plans will occur during this mayoral year.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT)

This year your Local Government will undertake a thorough review, using external expertise, of Moreland policies, practices and implementation of CCT. The review will have an appropriate allocation in the 1997-98 budget and we will ensure substantial opportunities for community input into the review. In addition, Council will examine how adequately environmental issues are dealt with under CCT, reviewing purchasing policy to assess how Council can make a greater contribution to the local Moreland economy, and how CCT can be used to support ethically sound suppliers of goods and services.

Industrial Relations

Moreland Council is dedicated to establishing sound industrial relations with its workforce. It is recognised that workers in local government have been through an extremely difficult period and that the provision of services of the highest quality to the community is best achieved as a partnership between direct employees of

council and the community. Union membership is encouraged and local work area agreements have been implemented with the support and cooperation of the relevant unions. Council granted all workers a \$100 bonus payment at the end of 1996 in recognition of the staff commitment and achievements through the extremely difficult period that has been traversed in Local Government in Victoria.

Moreland City Council will actively oppose the policies and actions of any Government that undermines the rights of workers and unions. In light of further attacks on wages, conditions and the job security of workers and their families by both the Federal Government as well as the Kennett Government, Council reaffirms its commitment to defend the fair rights of workers and their unions.

Moreland Council will confirm its leadership within local government by maintaining the safety net of certified agreements with its workers that are underpinned by the award.

In partnership with the unions we will develop innovative enterprise bargains that reflect both the needs and aspirations of employees and improve the delivery of services to the Moreland community. A secure and valued workforce is essential to Council's vision of innovative, responsive Local Government.

Review of Local Laws

Council will review all its Local Laws during the year. Legislation is a key element of the governance function and it is important that Council's Local Laws meet Council and community needs and are easy to understand and enforce.

Information Technology and Community Access

In 1997, Council will develop its own Home Page for the internet, enabling residents and businesses to electronically access Council information and community resources in Moreland. In conjunction with a range of community agencies, Council will work to: improve community access to information technology; and publish a community directory which will be regularly updated.

Local Government decision-making is subject to the provisions of State Government legislation regarding Freedom of Information.

In 1997 Council will develop a Freedom of Information policy to enhance public access to issues of importance in the Moreland community.

Multicultural Programs

Implementation and monitoring of Moreland's Multicultural Policy will require the setting up of an internal Implementation Committee with membership of senior managers from all Council departments, and a community based Advisory Committee. Terms of reference, membership and structure of these committees will be recommended to Council by early April. Gaining support and ownership of multicultural issues across the whole organisation and integration of these concerns into the organisational culture will be the challenge for this year.

Some specific initiatives will include:

- the Migrant Heritage Project will be extended to include three new groups and will examine the inclusion of migrant heritage sites in the local planning scheme;
- a review of Council employment practices to ensure that all immigrant groups, and especially new settlers, have access to Council's work force;
- provision of dual handset telephones and language identification sheets at all public counters;
- intensive training in the use of interpreters as a module for all counter staff;
- a training program for staff on cross cultural communications;
- provision of interpreters on request at Council meetings and forums;
- conducting further language specific 'get to know your council' forums along the lines of the Chinese and African forums;
- some measures to facilitate written communications in languages other than English;
- establishing ethnic reference networks and better communication between ethnic communities; and
- adoption of a strategy to develop connections and collaboration with indigenous organisations with a progress report to be presented mid year.

Community Safety

The Moreland Health Working Party has established a Community Safety sub committee which is applying for funding to work on a Safer Moreland strategy. Council will ask the sub committee to consider:

- undertaking safety audits of public areas;
- conducting education campaigns aimed at reducing violence in the home and public spaces;
- researching possibilities of a community transport scheme at night;
- special approaches to improving safety for women; and
- improving safety on public transport.

Women's Programs

International Women's Day, celebrated only two days ago, was a timely opportunity to draw attention again to the many needs and interests of women in this municipality. Many women across Moreland participated in a variety of events to mark the day. In 1998, as part of an objective to achieve greater participation of women in sport, recreation and the arts, Moreland plans to celebrate International Women's Day with a Women's Sports Day.

A women's taskforce has begun the process of identifying areas of need and relevance to women where Council can provide critical support. It will address the task of ensuring equal access for women to services, facilities, activities and to equal opportunity in decision making. Council will also ask this group to provide advice on: advocacy and lobbying on behalf of women in Moreland; development of proactive women's policy, particularly in relation to employment, housing and income support; conducting regular forums to discuss issues of relevance to women; facilitating a more positive and supportive environment for women (eg. eradication of offensive advertising, and input into urban planning issues).

Gambling

The Moreland community has shown a high level of anxiety at the increasing prominence and impact of gambling in our shopping centres, clubs and hotels. Your Local Government has been a notable advocate of examining ways of regulating gaming through its planning scheme. Funds have



been allocated for a study to support this objective. Widespread level of concern is reflected in the Prime Minister's recent comments on the matter.

When the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority (VCGA) releases its final terms of reference for its study into gaming impacts in parts of Victoria including Moreland, Council will commence work on its own study that will investigate any gaps in the approach of the VCGA. Council has committed \$35,000 to this project this year.

Our key objective is to enable the Moreland Local Government to develop a clear policy to manage and regulate the proliferation of gaming machines and venues.

Youth Support

Major issues affecting young people which Council must continue to address include: employment; training; school retention rates; housing; drugs of dependence, leisure, recreation, culture and sport; adequate income; and social support and advocacy.

Young people are bearing the brunt of the major economic transitions currently being experienced in Australia. This is reflected in high youth unemployment, and rising youth homelessness, drug dependence and suicide rates. The Federal Government is shifting educational resources from the public to the private sector, restricting higher educational opportunities, while offering marginalised young people nothing more than punitive 'solutions' such as 'work-for-the-dole' schemes. Media coverage of young people consistently portrays them in a negative light.

In 1997 Council will make youth policy and youth services a major priority. During the year we will offer young people substantial opportunities to be involved in Council policy-making and in influencing our strategic directions. We need to better understand youth cultures and thinking and adapt our decision-making and communication structures to more closely reflect their needs and aspirations. We need to offer young people the freedom to express their ideas and share their creativity in positive ways. Council's planning of public spaces, cultural policy, and recreational/entertainment needs and services must take into account of the

attitudes and preferences of young people. They need to be actively involved in the great political and constitutional debates at the close of the twentieth century.

Aged Care and Health

Like many communities, Moreland faces the challenge of an ageing population, many of whom will require community support as they continue to go about their daily pattern of life and relationships, and many of whom are from Non English Speaking Backgrounds facing particular difficulties as they age. With State and Federal funding constraints and changes in the aged care and health systems, many Moreland residents are being denied adequate community support. Council made special representations to the State Minister for Health and Aged Care about funding levels in 1996.

In 1997 Council will be proposing that Moreland be the focus of a unique, integrated Aged Care planning study. Council believes that planning at the local level is the best means of ensuring residents receive the care and support they need as their abilities and interests change. We will invite Commonwealth and State governments to support this proposal and to work co-operatively with local government in this area.

Council will place a new emphasis on identifying the impact of changes in health policy on local residents, and will ensure local views are gathered and passed on to providers and other spheres of government.

Planning Issues and the Development of the Municipal Strategic Statement

In December last year the State Government unveiled changes to the planning system that will reduce hundreds of planning land use zones to just 25 new zones. Each Council is required to develop a vision statement and policy framework (the Municipal Strategic Statement) by June 1997 that will underpin the new local planning scheme. Introducing the new zones across the municipality will potentially impact on every property owner and involve them in difficult decisions, especially where research indicates that a change in zoning would better meet future planning needs.

A number of critical planning strategies have already been completed or are close to completion that will assist Council with this task (eg. housing, urban character, transport, and so on). Of critical importance is Council's proposed review of heritage controls which is about to begin. This review will provide an opportunity to strengthen the existing protection of historic places and buildings, important buildings and significant vegetation.

The time frame for undertaking this task is ridiculous, and will not be achieved by a number of Local Governments. Moreland will do its best to ensure that there is widespread consultation about the detail of any proposed changes to zones and thorough debate about the rationale and the strategic planning imperatives driving any changes.

Pentridge

After more than a century as a Melbourne landmark, Pentridge Prison will close at the end of this year. This site presents Moreland with a singular opportunity to gain a major development that will provide a significant economic boost to the northern region of Melbourne. The future of the site, such a dominating presence on the Moreland landscape, must be carefully planned. The consequences of the decisions taken this year will be deeply felt by future generations. Council is committed to substantial public consultation regarding options for the future development of the site. The co-operative planning approach taken by the State Government with Moreland has been successful so far – a major priority for Council is to ensure that this relationship continues into the future.

A joint Conservation Management Plan was completed last year outlining recommendations for the protection of the built heritage of the site. Council will consider its response to these recommendations in mid-1997. Ensuring that this heritage is appropriately managed, curated and respected for access by visitors and tourists is a significant issue for Council. While there are significant heritage assets on the site, there is also very considerable scope for new development to occur. Pentridge

can be a landmark that will also provide a focus for Sydney Road as the spine of Moreland. Pentridge can be a major drawcard to attract new businesses and people to Moreland and the northern region. Any redevelopment must enhance surrounding areas and be a source of pride to the community. Council's objectives for the site include:

- attracting major businesses and/or educational facilities that will generate jobs, particularly in newly emerging industries such as energy conservation, information technology, communications and tourism;
- a model residential housing development that sets standards of excellence in design and energy conservation, and helps to meet the demand for affordable housing in Melbourne's northern suburbs; and
- making a positive contribution to meeting the employment and educational needs of the Moreland community.

Housing

Council made an impressive start to its housing agenda in 1996 and will continue the momentum in 1997. In particular, Council will:

- continue the shop-top housing program which encourages affordable housing, and the use of Council's Albert Street property as short-term emergency housing until the future of Council's asset program is resolved;
- continue to advocate for public investment in affordable housing and the continuation of partnership programs in the housing sector between spheres of government;
- encourage private sector and non-government sector development of top quality, energy efficient, affordable housing through design awards and other incentives;
- actively investigate the feasibility of establishing a Moreland Housing Trust that could fund demonstration and partnership projects; and
- continue Ageing In My Place programs which actively assist frail and vulnerable older residents to be cared for in their own home and neighbourhood.

Urban Villages

Additional resources will assist Council to implement the recommendations arising from the urban villages study conducted eighteen months ago. The area around Nicholson and Blyth Streets in East Brunswick will be the focus of community consultation and action to promote land use planning which creates an environmentally sustainable 'urban village'.

Conclusion

The Local Government of Moreland will continue to fiercely represent its community independent of all external political interests and will strive to ensure that the restructuring process will provide real and direct benefits.

The emphasis will continue to be upon talking and working closely with the community and on providing accountable government. Continuing initiatives in budget consultations will be given a strong emphasis.

Major initiatives this year will be undertaken in the arts, culture and leisure areas. Environment, especially energy programs will receive special attention and some major community debates around issues like the move towards a republic will excite us all.

I look forward to working with a community that is rich, diverse, active and, on the whole, proud of being part of the Local Government of Moreland. I will enjoy my period as leader of an excellent and focused team of Councillors and I have great faith in Moreland's responsive, creative and hard working administration.

