

## **From Rural Settlement to Modern City**

**The Hon Kevin Andrews MP**

**Member for Menzies**

**An address to the 50th anniversary dinner of the Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Society, Yarra Valley Country Club, April 22, 2017**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I am delighted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Society. Doncaster-Templestowe was the location of some of the earliest settlements in what is now greater Melbourne, although at the time a farming area a few hours by horse and buggy from the city.

I have a keen interest in Australian history. It was my favourite - and most successful - subject at school. At university, it had the opportunity of studying with Professor Geoffrey Blainey, who reshaped and popularised the telling of our national story.

I grew up near the small town of Rosedale in Gippsland, which was settled in the 1840s and 50s - at about the same time of the first European settlement of this area. In and near Rosedale are cairns recording two of the original explorers of Gippsland, Angus McMillan and the Polish 'count' Paul Edmund de Strzelecki. My father had a keen interest in local history, which I absorbed. So I am delighted to be with you tonight.

The original inhabitants of the region, the Wurundjeri people, also gave us the first English name, Bulleen, from the aboriginal 'Bolin' meaning billabong - a reference to the low-lying area along the Yarra River near the Veneto Club which was a resting place or settlement for the local clan. It was an area rich in food for the indigenous people.

The area was first surveyed by the Colonists in 1837, and the first land sold by the government in 1841. Settlement had first occurred across the Yarra River at Heidelberg.

The first settler of what became known as Templestowe, Major Charles Newman, a former Commanding Officer of the 51st Native Bengal Infantry in the Indian Army, squatted on land along the Yarra River near Mullum Mullum Creek, finally purchasing it in 1844 and building the first permanent dwelling, the homestead Pontville.

The region became a popular location for woodcutters which in part led to the clearing and subsequent development of extensive orchards from the 1860s and 70s. Pioneering families such as the Reads and Chivers, had commenced grazing and, later, orchards.

In the meantime, gold was discovered at Anderson's Creek in July 1851, attracting many prospectors to Warrandyte and later Templestowe. These finds yielded returns for a number of years, but discoveries elsewhere - including Ballarat, Bendigo and Walhalla - soon attracted large numbers of prospectors away from the area.

Amongst the early settlers were many German immigrants. They established orchards at Waldau, meaning 'a clearing in the forest'. Their numbers were so significant that the area became known as 'Germantown'. The first church to be built in the district was the Lutheran Church in 1858. Anglicans also used the church for worship until the construction of the Holy Trinity Church, which was opened in 1869.

Many of the main streets in the area carried German names. This was changed during the Great War, when, for example, Wilhelm and Bismarck Streets and German Lane were renamed King, Victoria and George Streets. The fact these original street names had been chosen by Lutherans who settled in Australia after

escaping Prussia's rising militarism from the 1860s was lost in the fervour of the times.

By the 1880s, the district had become a major supplier of fruit for Melbourne and sale overseas. By the 1920s, some 20,000 acres were under production. Giant cool stores were built in the area to house the harvest. The introduction of irrigation, utilising dams and pumps, and the development of new farming machinery, was instrumental in the success of the orchards.

Following the Second World War, and the determination to substantially grow the population of Australia, housing increasingly encroached upon the orchards. Initially, much of the area remained under production, but the combination of expansive irrigation schemes, especially in the north of the state, the further mechanisation of farming, and the demand for land for housing transferred the once rich agricultural district into the expanding suburbs we see today. Within the space of three decades, the fruit growing capital of Victoria had fallen prey to the voracious expansion of suburban Melbourne.

What had been a series of small villages - Templestowe, Doncaster and Warrandyte in particular - surrounded by farm land and extensive orchards merged into the expanding suburbia. The separate Shires of Doncaster and Templestowe became one, before their renaming as the City of Manningham.

The expansion of Doncaster-Templestowe over the past century has been reflected in its Parliamentary representation. Just 12 people, including myself, have represented the Doncaster-Templestowe area in the House of Representatives since 1901. As Melbourne expanded, the name and size of the electorate in which Doncaster-Templestowe has been located has changed considerably.

This area was originally situated in the sprawling rural seat of Mernda until a redistribution for the 1913 election abolished the seat and the area moved into the Kooyong electorate. Robert Harper, originally a representative of the Protectionist Party but who moved to the original Liberal Party in 1910, was the first member for this area. He was replaced by Sir Robert Best, the member for Kooyong, who also changed parties when he joined Billy Hughes' Nationalists in 1917 after the former Labor Prime Minister defected from Labor, taking many of his followers with him. Best, who had been a Victorian senator before becoming the Member for Kooyong, remained the representative for this area until 1922, when another redistribution saw Doncaster - Templestowe move into the vast south-Eastern rural electorate of Flinders.

The Member for Flinders was Stanley Melbourne Bruce, a World War I veteran, who was elected to the seat in 1918. He became Prime Minister in 1925, the only Prime Minister to represent this area, until losing the 1929 election - and his seat - to the Scullin Government. Bruce was re-elected in 1931 and served as a minister in the United Australia Party government of Joe Lyons, but resigned to become the High Commissioner to London two years later.

In between Bruce's two periods in Parliament, Doncaster-Templestowe was represented in the House by the first of only three Labor members, Edward Holloway, the other two being David McKenzie from 1972-75 and Peter Staples in 1983-84 when the area was in the Diamond Valley electorate.

James Fairbairn replaced Stanley Melbourne Bruce as the member for Flinders in 1933. He served briefly as Minister for Air and Minister for Civil Aviation in 1940 before being killed in an air crash at Canberra. Fairbairn Airport is named after him.

Between the first and second World Wars, the population of Melbourne doubled from about 700,000 to 1.5 million people. Much of that expansion was in the eastern suburbs, as previous farming land became housing for the growing population. The redistribution of seats in the late 1930s reflected this growth, with Doncaster-Templestowe being moved into the new seat of Deakin where it remained until 1968, and being represented by William Hutchinson from 1937 until 1949, at first as a member of the UAP and then as a Liberal; Francis Davis until 1966; and then Alan Jarman. In 1949, the size of the House was increased from 76 seats to 123, and in 1983 to 148.

In 1968, the rapid growth of the region was reflected in another redistribution. The population of Doncaster-Templestowe was just 6,814 in 1954. By 1961, it had grown to almost 20,000, an expansion that continued throughout the 1960s, as orchards and market gardens were redeveloped for housing.

Neil Brown became the first Member for Diamond Valley in 1969. He lost to David McKenzie in 1972, won it back again in 1975, before losing to Peter Staples in 1983. But the significant growth in the region led to another redistribution a year later and the creation of the electorates of Jaga Jaga north of the Yarra River and Menzies to the south, including Doncaster-Templestowe. Neil Brown was the first member for Menzies, which he held until resigning in 1991 when I was elected.

Doncaster-Templestowe has been represented by just 12 members of Parliament in 116 years. It has been in six different electorates, reflecting the demographic changes in north eastern Melbourne. Six of the representatives have served in the ministry, and four of us in Cabinet.

A visitor to Doncaster Templestowe today would be unaware of the rich and varied history of this area. May I commend you on a half century of gathering and recording this history, of which I

have only touched upon tonight - and encourage your efforts to continue the work in the coming years.

If, as I believe, a society is a compact across generations, knowing our past is an important component of understanding the present and meeting the challenges of the future.

### **Select Bibliography**

Collyer, Eric (2013) *Doncaster - A Short History* [Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Society, Doncaster]

Green Irvine (1985) *The Orchards of Doncaster and Templestowe* [Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Society, Doncaster]

Poulter, Hazel (2015) Revised edition, Jim Poulter ed, *Templestowe - A Folk History* [Red Hen, Templestowe]

Pretzel, Barbara and Fiona Walters (2001) *Manningham - From Country to City* [Arcadia, Kew]