



## THE HON DAVID KOCH MLC

Member for Western Province  
Opposition Spokesman for Racing

46 Brown Street, Hamilton

Ph: 03 55723377

Fax: 03 55724945

Email: david.koch@parliament.vic.gov.au



### *Western Province Half Yearly Newsletter No. 5 - June 2005*

Dear Liberal Party Members

The Bracks Labor Government continues to deliver genuinely bad government. With abundant revenue from ever increasing State taxes and charges and huge windfalls from the GST and land tax, it is failing to meet the growing demands in health, education, public housing and community safety or the needs of senior citizens and other vulnerable Victorians.

The Government has increased revenue by 58% over the last five years, from \$19 billion to \$30 billion, and is taking in record revenue but continues to procrastinate in delivering major projects.

Disillusioned voters are now more aware of the deception and broken promises of a Government that cares more for the bottom line than its constituency. At the next State election in November 2006, the Liberals are ready to offer an alternative.

#### **2005/06 State Budget**

This Budget short changes country Victorians. Funding for regional development is 36.7 % down on the previous year, regional infrastructure is 53.2% down, tourism marketing falls 7.6% and sustainable catchment management is cut by 6%. These cuts show a Government not interested in regional growth with no new funding for rail standardisation, bridge reconstruction, regional hospital redevelopment and little for urgently needed public housing.

The budget provides no assistance for drought ravaged communities, no allocation for school maintenance, no relief for pensioners' car registration or the capping of the multi purpose taxi program, no extra provisions for small rural shires to address failing infrastructure, less support to struggling library services and no relief from on-going cost shifting where local government is being forced to increase rates to make ends meet.

Security in country Victoria is under continual threat due to the failure in recruiting extra police, resulting in former 24 hour police stations in rural areas being cut back to 16 hours or less. While this budget provides for a further 34 new stations to be built across the State, there is concern about the lack of capacity for this Government to staff them.

In my shadow responsibility of the racing portfolio, the Government has been anything but generous or fair. The doubling of licensing fees on electronic gaming machines from \$1503 to \$3033 per machine will raise a further \$45 million of which Tabcorp will contribute \$20.61 million alone. Due to the joint venture arrangements, which underwrite the racing industry across all three codes, this will see \$5.1 million removed from turnover/stakes distribution.

This is not a good budget for rural Victorians or the racing industry, irrespective of how it is packaged. Regional Victorians are not going to benefit from the Government's revenue windfalls, or be rewarded for their efforts as earlier promised by the Brack's Government prior to both the 1999 and 2002 elections. The Government's contempt for country Victorians will be undoubtedly rewarded in November 2006.

#### **Issues affecting Western Victoria**

The State Government has failed to pay half its share of reconstructing boundary fences adjoining Crown Land destroyed by fires at Telangatuk, north of Balmoral, last January. While the Government claims that its fencing assistance package goes beyond the requirements of the Fencing Act, the needs of landholders whose properties adjoin Crown Land are simply being ignored and regrettably, the Government is not prepared to review its position.

In January, the Australian Red Cross Blood Collection Services announced changes to its country mobile blood collection service and the volunteer work force. These changes include the closure of blood collection centres at Ararat, Camperdown, Maryborough, Nhill, Portland, Stawell and Terang, and the discharge of highly trained and loyal volunteers at these and other centres.

This announcement was made in the full knowledge that on a per capita basis blood donations by regional Victorians are greater than those in the metropolitan area. The new Donormobile, replacing the mobile collection centres, will not visit places more than 350 kilometres from the Southbank Red Cross Centre, automatically excluding Nhill and Portland.

Other issues raised in Parliament during the Autumn Session included the failure of the Government to continue funding the very successful YouthBiz program at Hamilton, developed so young people could access health and community services suited to their needs; the worsening environmental condition of Lake Bolac, which continues to go unabated due to government ignorance and inaction; the continuation of the successful Beaut Blokes Weekend, which commenced at Harrow and helps young men become less socially isolated, this may cease unless the program is adopted by a private organisation or a government agency.

Significant racing events in the region during the first six months of this year included the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apsley Cup, and the recognition of the Warrnambool Racing Club's three day May carnival as a major annual event by finally being granted 'Hallmark' status. This highly successful and well managed event is of national significance and worthy of the status it has now gained on the State racing and tourism calendar.

**Harness racing unrest**

Harness Racing Victoria has told seven harness racing clubs that they can no longer conduct race meetings at their tracks. The affected tracks are at Boort, Gunbower, Hamilton, Ouyen, St Arnaud, Wangaratta and Wedderburn. These viable clubs play an important role in rural communities by supporting local economies, while underpinning other active sporting bodies.



Photo courtesy John Hopkinson

Harness Racing Victoria openly expresses that its *Vision, Value, Victoria* document is bottom line driven and acknowledges that no allowance had been made for the human factor, the effects on finely balanced rural economies or community obligation.

Long term friendships and industry associations are at breaking point as clubs are pitted against each other. Concern has also been expressed as to where the axe may fall next time. This may mean further mergers of

clubs such as that proposed for Ararat and Stawell. Many question, where will meetings be found to float the proposed new mega-track at Melton. There is little doubt industry dialogue would assist in resolving challenges currently faced by harness racing.

**Recently introduced legislation**

During the autumn session, I spoke on the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Bill that will provide water efficiency labelling and set water efficiency standards across a broad range of water products. This important legislation will help all of us make a contribution to saving water.

Other legislation that I had the opportunity to speak on included the Geothermal Energy Resources Bill, designed to regulate exploration and extraction of geothermal energy in Victoria over an extended period as a viable and alternative source of generating power in Victoria, the Children and Young Persons (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, dealing with technical matters arising from the introduction of the Children and Young Persons (Age Jurisdiction) Bill 2004, which added support to young people finding themselves before the Children's Court, the Gambling Regulation (Public Lottery Licenses) Bill and the Racing and Gaming (Police Powers) Bill.

**Western Region Electorate Council**

The inaugural Western Region Electorate Council meeting was held on 6 March 2005. The Electorate Council is comprised of Liberal Party branch delegates from the Ballarat East, Ballarat West, Bellarine, Geelong, Lara, Lowan, Melton, Polwarth, Ripon, South Barwon and South-West Coast Legislative Assembly districts.

Congratulations to the new office bearers, Chairman Mrs Norma Wells of Ararat, Vice Chairs Mr John Gault of Maryborough and Mrs Gill Browne of Ballarat, Secretary Mr Simon Price and Treasurer Mr Michael Alexander, both of Geelong.

*David Koch*

<b>Spring 2005 Council Sitting Dates</b>			
	Tues	Wed	Thur
August	9	10	11
	16	17	18
September	6	7	8
	13	14	15
October	4	5	6
	18	19	20
	25	26	27
November	15	16	17
	22	23	24