

## Steve Bracks: The quiet achiever

*David Hayward\**

Assessments of premiers are easier with the passing of time, for their contribution to history is clearer not when it is in the making, but well after it has been made. Broader sets of reference points become available, the heat of contemporary political battle has gone so that calmer heads are able to make more reasoned judgments, and the stock of data on which evaluations are made possible has been fattened. Arguably, it becomes easier to separate the premiers from the government over which they preside. It is in this context that this assessment of Steve Bracks' premiership should be understood. At the time of writing he is Victoria's incumbent premier, and barring a remarkable and wholly unexpected set of developments is likely to enjoy at least one further electoral victory during this year of celebrations to mark the State's sesquicentenary of responsible government.

Undoubtedly Bracks will be remembered as a Labor premier who has made an important mark. A third term is likely to see him become Victoria's longest-serving Labor premier, who in a second term landslide delivered to the ALP its first ever commanding majority in both houses of Parliament. He will also be remembered for using this opportunity to deliver to the Labor faithful a goal the party had harboured for most of its history: democratisation of the Legislative Council. But beyond this, what else can be said? An earlier assessment<sup>1</sup> concluded that, while Bracks had been a successful premier, he had not necessarily presided over a government that had been recognisably Labor. By embracing conservative financial settings and in the process giving treasury great influence, Bracks simultaneously denied his government the opportunity

to deliver the broader set of social reforms expected of a leader of a centre left political party, despite controlling both houses of Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

Using more recent information from Bracks' second term, this chapter reviews this assessment and explores whether he has presided over a government that has been more reformist than is widely recognised. It argues that there is much that he has done that is quintessentially Labor. This in turn begs the question of why he has been so apparently reticent in publicly trumpeting those Labor credentials. This is a question returned to several times during this chapter.

The seventh Labor premier of Victoria, Stephen "Steve" Phillip Bracks, was born in the provincial city of Ballarat on 15 October 1954. Both sets of his grandparents had emigrated to Sydney and Ballarat from the Lebanese town of Zahle in the Bekka Valley in the 1890s. The paternal grandfather's name was Brax but the family assimilated quickly into their adopted society by anglicising the surname and exchanging their Byzantine-rite Melchite Catholicism for the Roman variety. Bracks is only the fourth Labor premier or prime minister to come from a non-Anglo-Celtic heritage, and is the first Catholic premier of Victoria since Ned Hogan (1929–1932), yet Bracks has consciously avoided politicising either his ethnicity or his religion. When pressed as to why he has not advertised his multicultural past in a State where to do so might have been politically beneficial, he replied: "I didn't want to sound phoney because it's so far back ... I don't really like people who promote their ethnicity or circumstances as a way of saying that they have some advantage over someone else. They've either got the ability or they haven't".<sup>3</sup> He did, however, assume the multicultural affairs portfolio on becoming premier in 1999 and in 2006 warned against the dangers of "a new sectarianism" being unleashed in Australia amid some crude criticisms of multiculturalism and Muslim separatism by federal Liberal ministers.<sup>4</sup>

In 1946, Bracks' father, Stan, married Marion Davis, whose family owned a women's clothing boutique. They moved to Ballarat where Stan and his brother Roy opened Bracks' Brothers grocery shop which in the 1960s became the city's first self-service store. The future premier's family was financially comfortable and he recalls having "an extremely happy" childhood.<sup>5</sup> Educated at the Christian Brothers' St Patrick's College which he described as "a tough school",<sup>6</sup> he developed a love of sport and especially long-distance swimming in which he still participates. His former principal, Br Ron Stewart, recalled: "In terms of a student, he was 100 per cent co-operative ... he had a clear mind and was well-behaved. I would not give him top marks in terms of being prominent, though".<sup>7</sup> Given his family's involvement in small business, it was not surprising that Bracks completed a Diploma of Business Studies (Accounting) and a Graduate Diploma of Education (Economics) at what is now Ballarat University. One of his lecturers recalled that "I wouldn't call him brilliant, but he got good results by hard work".<sup>8</sup>

Rather than pursue a career in business, he became a secondary school commerce teacher in 1976 and while at Maryborough Secondary School he met Terry Horsfall, who came from a Liberal voting family. They married in 1984 and have three children. His career before entering Parliament in 1994 was diverse: after teaching he was an employment and recreation officer in Ballarat from 1981–1985; director of the Ballarat Education Centre 1985–1989; manager of Victoria’s Employment Programs, 1989–1993; and the executive director of the Victorian Printing Industry Training Board, 1993–1994. He also served as an adviser to Labor Premiers John Cain and Joan Kirner and federal ALP parliamentary secretary for transport and communications, Neil O’Keefe.

Bracks recalls being politicised by the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government in 1975 and helped carry a coffin down the main street of Ballarat to symbolise “the death of democracy”. Yet the future premier’s political baptism had commenced in his early teens courtesy of his father – a devout Catholic and Laborite who transferred his loyalties to the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) following the 1955 split. Each evening father and teenage son would vigorously debate the political issues of the day. Bracks has declared “a great affection for his father”, who returned to the Labor fold in the 1980s (handing out how to vote cards for his ALP candidate son),<sup>9</sup> and attributes his “sense of social justice to his religious upbringing” and his father’s open and generous Catholicism.<sup>10</sup> Steve Bracks is a practising liberal Catholic but does not seek to impose his religion’s moral stance on issues such as abortion on public policy. Stan Bracks died in 1987. The premier remains close to his mother, Marion, who continues to reside in Ballarat.

Bracks joined the ALP in 1975 and was campaign manager for the federal seat of Ballarat in 1980, 1983, 1984 and 1987. More significantly for his longer-term career, Bracks contested three State elections in the 1980s, and while he was unsuccessful electorally he managed to attract the positive attention of Labor power brokers. For his part, Bracks later described the campaigns as personally beneficial because they gave him access to Cabinet ministers and the Melbourne ALP machine, as well as improving his public speaking and media skills.<sup>11</sup> They also reflected one of his important political attributes – perseverance.

By the time Bracks joined Premier Cain’s staff as an adviser in 1990, the government had begun to implode under the pressure of a number of spectacular financial collapses and economic recession. Bracks’ close-at-hand observation of the terminal months of what had earlier been lauded as a model State Labor government was searing and encouraged in him a cautious political style and fiscal conservatism. When he became Labor leader in 1999 he was asked about Cain’s influence on him. He replied that, while he admired Cain’s social policy achievements, he was “also acutely aware that when the [1990–1991] recession hit the government didn’t

respond properly or adequately to tighten the belt on expenditure".<sup>12</sup> It was a mistake Bracks was determined not to repeat as premier.

When Joan Kirner retired from Parliament in 1994 following her defeat as premier at the October 1992 election, first Jim Kennan and then John Brumby took over as Labor leader. Bracks, who had moved from Ballarat to Melbourne in 1999, decided to contest the nomination for Kirner's vacant seat. To win the party endorsement he had to overcome a number of obstacles: the seat of Williamstown was a Socialist Left fiefdom; and the locals were keen for Kirner's replacement to be a woman. Bracks had recently transferred from the small and increasingly marginalised Independents faction (of which he had been president) to Labor Unity (the "Right"). While Bracks denied any factional pressure was applied, controversy attended the decision of the Socialist Left's pre-selection candidate to withdraw for "personal reasons".<sup>13</sup> Williamstown was one of the few safe Labor seats remaining in 1994 (Joan Kirner had won 64 per cent of the two-party preferred vote in 1992) and the decision of the Liberal Party not to run a candidate assured Bracks of victory, which he did with 60 per cent of the final vote.

Opposition leader John Brumby welcomed Bracks' election, describing him as "a man of great ability".<sup>14</sup> His inaugural parliamentary speech was a revealing one for several reasons. First, it contained little in the way of political philosophy or history, and avoided any mention of the abstract principles underpinning social democracy as a political ideology, focusing instead on practical matters such as unemployment and issues of importance to his electorate, including the future of Williamstown Hospital and train line. Core Labor concepts like social justice were largely missing, and no attempt was made to highlight the broader structural reforms he would like to see put in place during his time in Parliament. Second, and importantly, it expounded on two themes integral to his later persona as opposition leader and premier: he promised to be an inclusive politician and "to represent all people in the electorate".<sup>15</sup>

Bracks did not have to wait long for his place in shadow Cabinet, being offered the heavy portfolio responsibilities of employment, industrial relations and tourism in December 1994. In addition he was made the assisting shadow minister to Brumby in the treasury portfolio. This was a trying time for the Labor opposition. It continued to languish in the opinion polls and Brumby struggled to gain traction against a rampant, if accident-prone Premier Jeff Kennett. The 1996 election maintained the coalition dominance in both houses of Parliament. While the ALP secured a 2.8 per cent two-party preferred swing for a net gain of two seats, its biggest swings occurred in the government's safe seats. Despite the disappointing electoral performance (Labor had set itself a target of six additional lower house seats), Brumby was re-elected unopposed as opposition leader.

His position, however, became increasingly untenable, despite a surprise ALP victory at the Mitcham by-election in late 1997 and a lacklustre performance by Premier Kennett throughout much of 1998. Soon all the well-known signs of a deteriorating opposition leadership were on public display: low approval ratings in the opinion polls; constant leaks and speculation about challenges from within the party; and even public criticism by Labor front and backbenchers. Matters came to a head on the eve of a major policy statement by Brumby in February 1999 when left-wing frontbencher, Carlo Carli, strongly criticised his leadership (in Italian) on SBS Radio.<sup>16</sup> Brumby himself instigated a meeting on 17 February 1999 with factional leaders Greg Sword and Marsha Thomson who convinced him that his leadership was terminal. After a short delay, Brumby announced his resignation as leader. Intense factional lobbying over the weekend of 20–21 February saw Bracks emerge as the unanimous choice as leader, partly because the Socialist Left conceded that it had no credible candidate.<sup>17</sup>

Ironically, Bracks had also benefited from his continued fast-tracking by Brumby. Bracks' appointment as shadow treasurer and shadow minister for finance following the 1996 election had strengthened his economic credentials, while his other portfolio of industrial relations had enabled him to build links with the wider labour movement. The factions' anointment of Bracks was endorsed by a caucus meeting on 22 February at which there was palpable relief that the leadership issue had been resolved with one journalist describing the atmosphere as akin to "a cricket club's trophy night".<sup>18</sup>

It was not an auspicious point in the electoral cycle to assume the leadership of the Victorian ALP. Initially Bracks' elevation had little impact on Labor's performance in the opinion polls<sup>19</sup> and one commentator argued that in overlooking the best candidate in John Thwaites (Brumby's deputy and aligned with the tiny Independents faction) the party had given Kennett another assured election victory.<sup>20</sup> Yet by the middle of the year his approval rating reached 54 per cent, in contrast to Brumby's poor performances in 1997 and 1998; though Bracks' leadership never had to contend with de-stabilising dissent from within the party that consistently beleaguered Brumby. This discipline was partly because it was widely anticipated that Kennett would call an early election. When he did so for 18 September 1999, the initial opinion polls suggested the ALP would lose seats. Once in the campaign, Bracks' genial, steady style proved a refreshing counterpoint to the increasingly bombastic approach of the incumbent. The work Brumby, Bracks and others had done in building Labor's stocks in non-metropolitan Victoria also proved critical. Nevertheless, the result still came as a shock, when an unprecedented revolt against Kennett in regional and rural Victoria producing a hung Parliament with the Coalition securing 43 seats to Labor's 41 with three rural Independents holding the balance of power.

Further drama was injected into the political equation since the death of a candidate on polling day necessitated a supplementary election in the former Liberal seat of Frankston East which was scheduled for 14 October.<sup>21</sup>

The three Independents (Susan Davies, Russell Savage and newly-elected Craig Ingram) drafted a "Charter of Good Governance"<sup>22</sup> and declared their support for whichever party would promise to legislate its contents. In the month-long negotiations which followed, Bracks, who had been opposition leader for only six months, displayed considerable political skill and maturity in out-manoeuvring the previously dominant Kennett. He had the advantage, denied to Kennett, that almost all of the contents of the Charter was settled Labor policy. When the major parties formally responded to the Independents Bracks supported the Charter "in its entirety",<sup>23</sup> whereas Kennett rejected calls to change the voting system in the upper house to one of proportional representation. Bracks then acted with uncharacteristic boldness in sending a Memorandum of Understanding to the Independents which sought their formal support for a Labor government. The ALP won the Frankston East supplementary election easily and at a press conference on Monday 16 October the three Independents announced their support for a minority Labor government – the first minority administration in Victoria for 50 years.

Winning the peace is always more difficult than winning the war and after the Labor euphoria had abated the magnitude of the task facing Bracks was all too apparent. The party did not have a majority in either house of Parliament and its Cabinet was so inexperienced that six of its members were sworn in as ministers before they were sworn in as members of Parliament. The party, not expecting victory, had developed only a rudimentary "transition to government strategy" and after the election quietly engaged former Cain government ministers and civil servants to tutor the new ministers in how to carry out their duties. So unprepared were they that Bracks recounted the story that in the first month of government as he left his office a journalist called out, "Premier, and I just kept walking. He kept yelling out Premier – until he started yelling out Bracksey, and I turned around".<sup>24</sup>

From the time he became premier, Bracks marked out a governing style that harked back to the themes elaborated in his maiden speech while also having parallels with the approaches to leadership of his contemporary State Labor premiers.<sup>25</sup> The Bracks' modus operandi has also been notable for its inversion of many of the traits of the Kennett premiership that immediately preceded it. Whereas Kennett was brash and uncompromising, Bracks has gone out of his way to listen and be inclusive, and has been prepared to apologise when it is appropriate to do so. He "listens, then acts". Whereas Kennett was keen to maintain a frenetic rate of change irrespective of the opposition, Bracks has generally been cautious and unwilling to change institutional arrangements until

he is convinced that a consensus has been built in support of reform. Whereas Kennett rarely changed his mind, Bracks has been prepared to do so if the objectors' voices become loud enough to herald political risk. Whereas Kennett was everywhere, Bracks has been content to let his ministers run their portfolios with relatively little intervention from his office. Bracks has also brought to the job an appealing down-to-earth and unassuming style. One element of his "ordinariness" is that he is not a natural or fluent speech-maker and has the habit of occasionally mixing up his words, or getting names wrong, a tendency the *Melbourne Age* has labelled "Bracksisms".<sup>26</sup>

Malleable and consultative as the Bracks model of leadership has been, he has nevertheless exhibited strategic political savvy and, where necessary, a tough streak. An early indication of the latter came when his resolve was put to the test in January 2000 by an industrial dispute between the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) and the privatised Yallourn Energy Company which led to severe power restrictions in Melbourne and other parts of Victoria. Bracks was overseas and the media and business became critical of the allegedly hands-off approach to the dispute by Acting Premier Thwaites and the minister for industrial relations. They were constrained, of course, by the fact that the State government no longer owned the power generating company and by Jeff Kennett's earlier dismantling of the Victorian Industrial Relations Commission. Bracks returned to Victoria in early February and immediately took charge of the dispute and by firm action dispelled the belief that he was a "nice guy" but weak. He insisted that the parties attend conciliation meetings chaired by former Cain government industrial relations minister, Neil Pope, and threatened to invoke the emergency powers legislation to end the dispute. While this action was criticised by some trade unions, the parties quickly settled their differences over an enterprise agreement and the power restrictions were lifted.<sup>27</sup> It was an important early statement by a Labor premier in a State in which ALP governments had been regularly stood over by key trade unions. Ironically, this was an area where the Kennett revolution had smoothed Bracks' path – sweeping privatisations having weakened Victoria's public sector unions.

During his premiership, Bracks has also gradually exerted his authority over the notoriously fractious Victorian Labor Party. His government came to power at a time when internal party relations were ominously volatile on the back of several convulsive factional (or perhaps more accurately feudal) power realignments since 1996.<sup>28</sup> Minority government acted as something of a disciplining agent on the party throughout most of Bracks' first term, but that restraint was temporarily abandoned in mid-2002 as a result of bitter inter-union and personality disputes within the factions. In March 2002 a number of left-wing unions, unhappy with the cautious approach of the government, threatened to

disaffiliate from the ALP and ETU secretary, Dean Mighell, resigned from the party and joined the Greens.<sup>29</sup> Of greater concern was a simmering dispute among key unions within the Labor Unity faction. At its source was frustration by the National Union of Workers (NUW) and its federal secretary, Greg Sword, that the faction was dominated by the Australian Workers Union (AWU) and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Union (SDA) to the detriment of the NUW. In early June Sword announced that the NUW had left Labor Unity and had made an accommodation with the left.<sup>30</sup>

Sword then turned on his erstwhile allies in the right and targeted ALP State secretary, David Feeney. Feeney was a combative Labor Unity powerbroker allied with the AWU and SDA and with connections to the New South Wales Labor right. He had earlier been forced to resign from opposition leader John Brumby's staff over branch-stacking allegations and in 1999 settled a defamation case arising from an election in the Health Services Union of Australia.<sup>31</sup> On the credit side, Feeney had been the ALP's campaign director at the 1999 State election which ousted Kennett. Bracks was out of the country while this dispute escalated and on his return issued an ill-advised public statement of support for Feeney whose position by then was terminal. The factional leaders ignored the premier who was required to negotiate a face-saving compromise whereby Feeney was removed as secretary, but was retained as the party's election campaign manager and later appointed to Bracks' personal staff.<sup>32</sup>

The potential damage caused by this public humiliation of the premier by his own faction was fortunately subsumed by the 2002 election campaign. More importantly, Bracks' landslide victory in that election greatly enhanced his authority within the party. The effect of this was evident in the contrasting manner he handled another factional imbroglio in early 2006 over candidate pre-selections. Following several months of debilitating tensions between the warring camps and inconclusive attempts at deal-making, Bracks publicly intervened with an ultimatum that all his ministers were to be re-endorsed and that two hand-picked "star" candidates be found seats. When the factions did not meet the deadline for agreeing to his demands, in a piece of brinkmanship the premier wrote to the ALP National Executive requesting that it impose the plan on the factions. Subsequently, the factions bowed to his will although some of the gloss of this settlement was dulled by the protective quarantining of the pre-selection of one of the most notorious factional players within the parliamentary party.<sup>33</sup>

Bracks has undoubtedly benefited from the weakened position of the party's left faction, which for the most part has remained quiet and compliant throughout his two terms. Periodic tension has mounted around the extent to which the government has favoured business interests, but these protests have failed to gain much traction. Of

particular concern has been the government's new approach to the provision of infrastructure, called Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), which Labor borrowed from the Blair Labour government in the United Kingdom.<sup>34</sup> PPPs involve the private sector helping to fund and deliver infrastructure in areas and ways previously not considered, leading to many internal critics – both here and in the United Kingdom – arguing that PPPs were simply privatisation by stealth.

Bracks established a formal review of the policy following the 2003 Victorian Labor Party Conference (the Fitzgerald Review<sup>35</sup>). The review was broadly supportive of the policy, but criticised the way it had been applied in Victoria. It focused on two core issues. First, it criticised the choice of “discount rate” (or interest rate) used to convert payments that might have to be made over a 30 or more year period into today's dollar values. The “discount rate” was set unnecessarily high for some bigger projects, leading to the conclusion that projects should proceed when in fact the case in favour of them was not very strong. Second, it argued that the policy in Victoria required questionable cost loadings of up to 20 per cent for the assumed inefficiencies of government provision compared to the private market, leading to poorly based decisions to use the private sector over traditional public sector delivery mechanisms. These two shortcomings effectively meant that projects that were not economically feasible would proceed, and they would proceed to the benefit of the private financiers at the public's expense.

The second issue to generate the ire of the left was a discussion paper released by the premier in August 2005. Entitled “A Third Wave of National Reform: A New National Reform Initiative”, the paper was notable for representing the first significant attempt by Bracks to move onto the national stage by proposing a series of reforms designed to promote continued economic growth. It advocated a new wave of financial deregulation and increased infrastructure provision, improvements to education and health systems, and initiatives designed to increase workforce participation through, for example, tax cuts. The paper attracted a detailed critique by the left, which publicly aired its concerns through the *Age* in the latter part of 2005.<sup>36</sup>

Bracks' response to the left's protests was revealing on both occasions and showed a deft hand in defusing opposition. All of the Fitzgerald Review's recommendations were accepted by his government, except for the single most important ones relating to the cost loading for the public sector and the “discount rate”, which was left at the high level that Fitzgerald argued led to a bias in favour of private interests over the public purse. To those on the left who were unhappy with this outcome, Bracks could say that his many concessions showed that he had listened to what had been said, while business interests could be reassured that their interests would not be put at risk from internal party reviews. Subsequently the government continued to investigate a more ambitious

program of public-private partnerships, extending into core areas such as the construction and maintenance of new schools, interestingly with the consent of the education union. In the case of the "Third Wave" paper, Bracks responded to the critics by saying that this was another case of the left opposing Labor's successful modernisation agenda centred around the idea that competition can profoundly improve policy outcomes, and that while the critics were entitled to their point of view, his government was always keen to embrace ideas that made Victoria a better place to be. The chorus of disapproval gradually petered out.<sup>37</sup>

Bracks' place in Victorian Labor history – indeed the State's constitutional history – was assured by his government's sweeping changes to the Legislative Council in 2003. He had succeeded where so many other would-be reformers of the Council had failed over the 150 years since responsible government. In the 20th century it was the Labor Party that had been the principal opponent of Victoria's existing bicameral arrangements. Indeed, until the 1980s, the ALP had remained wedded to a policy of abolishing the Council – a policy it was powerless to effect since, before the 2002 election, it had never enjoyed a majority in the upper house apart from a fleeting four-week period during mid-1985. The Cain jnr Labor government had succeeded in enacting some limited changes to the relations between the two legislative chambers in 1984, but three separate attempts to change the Council's voting system to proportional representation by Premiers Cain and Kirner had all foundered.<sup>38</sup>

As premier, Bracks wasted little time in joining his Labor predecessor's battle to tame the Council, his commitment to constitutional reform also in keeping with the promises made to the Independents in return for them supporting a minority ALP government. Yet the simple arithmetic of the numbers in the upper house meant that Labor's first-term reform measures were doomed. Indeed, the first and third of three reform packages (initiated in November 1999 and September 2002) did not even get through the lower house because of reservations among some, or all of, the Independents, while the second package (initiated May-June 2000) was defeated by the Liberal-National-controlled upper house.<sup>39</sup>

All, though, was not in vain. In between these setbacks, Bracks had established the Constitution Commission Victoria in March 2001 empowering it to make such recommendations as would enable the Legislative Council to operate as a genuine "House of Review". The commission was chaired by recently retired Supreme Court judge, George Hampel, assisted by former Liberal federal and State parliamentarians, Ian MacPhee and Alan Hunt – the latter had been president of the Legislative Council in the 1980s. The appointment of the impartial Hampel and the former Liberal members of Parliament was clearly intended to lend legitimacy to Labor's reform efforts, though it did not deter the opposition from attacking the commission as "a blatant political con".<sup>40</sup>

As it turned out, the commission's work was to be of more than tactical value. Its June 2002 report<sup>41</sup> provided a legislative blueprint for the Labor government when the barriers to upper house reform were swept away by its November electoral triumph which delivered the ALP unprecedented majorities in both chambers (62 of 88 in the Assembly and 25 of 44 in the Council). The key components of the resulting Constitution (Parliamentary Reform) Bill 2003 were: the replacement of the single-member, preferential voting system in the Council by a senate-style proportional representation system; the removal of the power of the upper house to reject supply Bills; and the introduction of deadlock resolution provisions which constrained, but did not entirely eliminate, the capacity of the Council to impede a government's legislative agenda.<sup>42</sup> The Bill passed the Legislative Council on 27 March 2003 and was proclaimed on 8 April. Given that numerous premiers of diverse political persuasion dating back as far as Graham Berry had fallen short in their attempts to democratise the upper house, Bracks was justified in describing the legislation as his "most satisfying achievement".<sup>43</sup> Nor was he exaggerating when he hailed it as the "the most comprehensive reform of Victoria's parliamentary system since it was established in 1856".<sup>44</sup> Still, the changes were not without irony; as one author has noted:

[H]aving waited a century for a majority in the Council, by introducing proportional representation upon finally claiming that prize in 2002, Labor, has, in all probability, diminished its chances of exercising future control over the upper house.<sup>45</sup>

Nor did the government earn much credit for this exercise in political altruism from a Victorian media that treated the reforms largely with indifference, diverted as they were by the looming outbreak of war in Iraq.

The media had not been so reticent in responding to the premier's surprise announcement on 7 August 2000 that the governor of Victoria since 1997, Sir James Gobbo, was not to continue beyond the end of the year. Newspaper editorialists and some Liberal politicians denounced the decision as partisan, but Bracks silenced this criticism by announcing the popular former Olympic athlete and environmental scientist, John Landy,<sup>46</sup> as the new governor.

Democratic reform has not been Bracks only area of policy achievement. During his time in office, Bracks has presided over broadly based economic growth, enabling real incomes to rise and unemployment to tumble across the State.<sup>47</sup> The growth has in part been fuelled by a booming housing market, which has seen house prices more than double. This strong economic performance has in turn been one of two main factors that have helped Labor under Bracks to develop a strong reputation as an economic and financial manager, a considerable achievement given the crisis atmosphere that enveloped Labor during its last few years in office during the early 1990s.

The other main contributor to the restoration of Labor's economic credentials has been its broader financial management. The genesis of this achievement is to be found in Labor's early years in opposition, when it apologised for its poor financial management in the dying days of office, and quickly embraced the conservative financial principles developed by the Kennett government, drawing readily on the advice of neo-liberal economic think tanks.<sup>48</sup> It had done so in the belief that tactically Labor needed to distance itself as strongly as possible from the Cain-Kirner administration. The strategy seemed to be to emulate the Kennett government as much as possible on financial policy in order to ensure Labor could highlight the significant differences between it and the coalition government on issues of democratic rights and social policy. Labor had gone to the 1999 election with a very modest set of election promises, involving financial commitments barely more than \$200m per year, earning it praise for the prudent way it intended to govern.<sup>49</sup>

In office, Labor remained true to the conservative principles developed when in opposition. This is demonstrated most clearly by the similarity between its budget framework and that of Kennett's.<sup>50</sup> Foremost is Labor's commitment to an operating surplus of at least \$100m per financial year and a pledge to keep taxes at or below the all-Australian State average, leaving the government little choice but to budget for large surpluses in case the economy unexpectedly slumps, and preventing the spending ministers from developing expensive reform proposals.

These financial settings have been maintained despite evidence showing that Victoria's debt is already very low by world standards.<sup>51</sup> And while they have certainly helped restore Labor's economic credentials, they have also been the source of considerable tension within Labor's traditional constituency. The goal of running surpluses and retiring debt has antagonised some supporters keen to see services rapidly returned to their pre-Kennett levels, and it has been a challenge for Bracks to manage these tensions effectively. He has been helped by the willingness of those with a grievance to keep their concerns largely within the party, reflecting a sense of gratitude to him for having defeated Kennett. Periodically, though, the tensions have bubbled over into very public squabbles. The 2001 budget provoked a prolonged and bitter dispute with the Australian Education Union (AEU), with the union's State secretary, Mary Bluett, describing it as "the cruellest in a decade".<sup>52</sup> The 2003-2004 budget also provoked protests from the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS), with "productivity savings" expected from the non-government community sector triggering an acrimonious dispute throughout the winter of 2003. A projected cut of \$30 million from the education budget also provoked a short-lived period of industrial tension between the government and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU).

What role has the premier played in the development of these financial settings, and what role has he played in managing the tensions? Bracks was Labor's shadow treasurer for almost three years, and took these financial policies to the 1999 election. He was also treasurer for the first six months of Labor's first term. Hence it would be reasonable to assume that the government's economic strategy is of his making. This, however, would be an overstatement. The thrust of the financial policy settings were put in place by John Brumby during the mid-1990s,<sup>53</sup> and it is Brumby who has been treasurer since Bracks relinquished that role in mid-2000. Bracks has generally given Brumby a free hand on financial matters, leaving it to him not only to control the financial policy framework, but also to implement the budget. It is Brumby, not Bracks, who has been unpopular with sections of the social welfare sector, and, whether by accident or design, this has meant Labor's conservative financial policies have done Bracks' leadership little harm amongst the ALP's traditional constituency.

While financial conservatism sits uneasily with Labor's support base, it has earned the party high marks from business, a development Bracks has proudly welcomed. As mentioned earlier, Bracks' pedigree is not one that is highly ideological or antagonistic to business. Yet, Bracks also needed to be mindful that many in his party and within the trade union movement held decidedly more hostile views towards Melbourne's financial establishment and associated neo-liberal think tanks which, they believed, had received preferential treatment from Premier Kennett and which were natural allies of the Liberal Party.

In much the same way that he has allowed Brumby to bear the complaints of the social sector, Bracks has also been content to allow his treasurer to work closely and openly with business. It is noticeable that, while Labor's budgets have enjoyed a mixed reception from the VCOSS, the CPSU, the AEU, the Victorian Nurses' Federation, and the Victorian Trades Hall Council, such is not the case with business. Each of Labor's budgets has been warmly received by peak business groups such as the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) and the Australian Industry Group. Business enthusiasm toward Labor reached a crescendo in 2004, with the release of an unexpected Economic Statement a fortnight prior to the budget. Writing in the *Age*, Darren Gray explained the significance of the statement: "Business got its way. The Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which had long championed land tax cuts, got virtually everything it asked for".<sup>54</sup> The statement delivered on a wish-list of business expectations, drawing the following vote of thanks from VECCI:

The Economic Statement represents a major policy victory for VECCI and the Victorian business community. Since the 2002 Victorian election, VECCI has campaigned for a series of measures designed to lower business costs

and deliver economic growth ... Virtually all of these measures were met in the Economic Statement.<sup>55</sup>

It is in the nature of politics that leadership triumphs are counter-balanced by setbacks. To date Bracks has encountered relatively few public embarrassments, especially for a premier who in his first term headed a minority government and had to contend with a hostile upper house. There have, however, been at least two occasions when Bracks' carefully managed reputation for sincerity and openness with the electorate have come under serious pressure. The first, involving an attempted appointment to a senior government post, he handled with uncharacteristic clumsiness and marked a low point of his first term. In October 2001 it was announced that Jim Reeves, then chief of staff to the Labor lord mayor of Brisbane, was the successful applicant for the handsomely remunerated position of managing director of the Urban and Regional Land Corporation (URLC). In Parliament the following month the opposition alleged that Reeves was not the preferred candidate of the URLC board and had got the job because he was a "mate" of the premier and that there had been inappropriate ministerial interference in the selection process.<sup>56</sup> In response Bracks described Reeves ambiguously as a "past friend", later forced to clarify this as meaning "that I have known him for a long time".<sup>57</sup> In fact, it was on the public record that Bracks and Reeves had been continuous friends and political allies since sharing a house during their student days in Ballarat in the 1970s and that their families had holidayed together as recently as early 2001.<sup>58</sup>

The opposition parties demanded a judicial inquiry into the appointment and, when the government refused to do so, established a Legislative Council select committee to investigate the matter. The crisis was defused somewhat when Reeves announced he had decided not to accept the offer of appointment. The Legislative Council committee reported in October 2002 by way of a majority report which was highly critical of Bracks and other ministers and a minority report which was equally critical of the opposition majority on the committee.<sup>59</sup> By now 12 months old the story was overtaken when Bracks announced in early November that Victoria would go to the polls later that month.

A still more testing problem for Bracks, and one that could have been a major liability for Labor in the electorally critical territory of Melbourne's outer eastern and southern suburbs, arose in the months after the government was returned to office at the November 2002 poll. One of the premier's key pledges during the election campaign was that the proposed Scoresby Freeway would remain toll free, a commitment he restated on several occasions. In April 2003, however, the premier announced that his government would be unable to fulfil this promise. Unforeseen stress on the State budget was offered as the reason for the backflip, particularly the unexpected expenses required to bail out the

troubled privatised public transport system at a cost of more than \$1 billion over five years in increased subsidies:

We had to accept the reality of dramatically changed (budget) circumstances. The extent and scale of the extra pressures on the budget was not known at the time of the ... last election ... The single biggest impact on the bottom line of the budget is the failure of the privatised public transport system. Last December National Express handed back the keys after losing hundreds of millions of dollars because of the flawed privatised model ... An extra \$1b over the next five years alone is needed to keep Victoria's public transport system afloat. We had a choice of between stubbornly sticking with our position on tolls – or recognising the reality of the impact of the pressures on the budget. We had a choice between funding the freeway without a toll – or keeping our commitments on health and education, protecting the environment, and keeping the budget in surplus.<sup>60</sup>

The decision to impose tolls and break the election commitment provided an immediate fillip to the opposition, which had struggled to find a credible and strong critique of the government. Opposition leader Robert Doyle immediately committed the Liberal Party to reversing Bracks' decision and took a strong public line criticising Bracks for breaking his election commitment. The opposition pointed out that the government had erred in arguing that economic necessity required it to break its promise. It need only fund the tolls at a cost of several hundred million dollars per year, not finance the construction of the project at a cost of billions of dollars.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, in the event that the government did not impose tolls, the State would be eligible to receive \$550 million of federal funds earmarked for the "freeway", thereby lowering the financing costs and therefore the tolls that would be required to repay the private capital. Payment of the tolls would not start until 2007 when the freeway is due for completion, giving the government plenty of time to plan to find a way to pay for the tolls from the budget. The opposition was able to point to vastly improved operating surpluses to question the government's case that the budget was delicately poised, with the actual budget surplus for 2004–2005 coming in at almost \$1 billion instead of the \$244 million that had been budgeted for the previous year.<sup>62</sup>

Polling during 2004 suggested that Doyle's position was popular and Bracks' decision to impose the toll was costing his government support. By December 2004, the opposition edged ahead in the polls on a two-party preferred basis for the first time since 1999. Yet Doyle's position did not enjoy the full support of his party, with many concerned that the promise would not be financially sustainable, and others worried about the negative message it gave about the role of the private sector in infrastructure provision. Some claimed the bounce in the polls reflected the success of the Liberals at the 2004 federal election rather than Doyle's own efforts. In any case, Doyle also failed to win the support of the National Party, which opposed the plan on the grounds that the proposed spend would be of no benefit to country voters.<sup>63</sup> In a surprise

announcement in March 2005, Doyle himself announced a major backflip, promising now only to halve the tolls, not remove them completely. The opposition's standing in the polls subsequently slumped, and Doyle's authority was dealt a major blow leading to continuing speculation about his leadership, and ultimately his resignation as opposition leader in May 2006. Bracks effectively won the debate without having to say much at all, and ended up with his authority enhanced rather than weakened despite the potentially devastating effect of his about-face.

Bracks' commitment to financial responsibility has generated other tensions. The paradox of the Bracks government is that, while it has successfully restored Labor's economic credentials, it has simultaneously faced accusations of being a government paralysed by its economic conservatism – a government scared of its own shadow. In its first term, the government had an alibi for its financial caution, not only was it trying to distance itself from the Cain–Kirner legacy, but as a minority administration it had no option but to tread warily. However, following its 2002 re-election these constraints largely disappeared and criticisms of the government's lack of daring have continued to bedevil the premier. This line of criticism has been developed by academics,<sup>64</sup> as well as the populist and quality segments of the mainstream press.<sup>65</sup> But there are two issues here that need to be separated. One is the issue of style and the way Bracks markets his government's achievements, and the other is about substance and whether in practice his government has delivered something different to the cautious image it likes to generate. On the former, Bracks has gone out of his way to demonstrate to business the government's conservative credentials and its preparedness to establish a business-friendly environment.

It is no coincidence that Bracks cited as one of his major achievements on his government's fifth anniversary that Labor had successfully thrown off the "guilty party" epitaph that Jeff Kennett had successfully wedded to the Cain–Kirner governments.<sup>66</sup> With that ghost exorcised, Bracks (prodded by leading ministers such as Deputy Premier John Thwaites, and Attorney-General Rob Hulls) has begun to embrace a broader social reform agenda, most noticeably in the form of a social policy package, *A Fairer Victoria*, and a report by a Human Rights Consultation Committee on a Bill of Rights for Victoria, both released in 2005. The former acknowledges the significance of entrenched inequalities and disadvantage in the Victorian community and the need for the State to actively use its resources – particularly those in education, health and community services – to address these systematically. The package, which has a distinct "third way" flavour, champions local community empowerment and devolved decision-making in resource allocation.<sup>67</sup> Established to examine how human rights could be best protected in Victoria, the diversely constituted Human Rights Consultation Committee

provided the government with 35 recommendations and a draft human rights charter when it reported in November 2005. One month later, Hulls announced that the government would enshrine a charter, largely consistent with the committee's recommendations, in an Act of Parliament. The resulting *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* made Victoria only the second jurisdiction in Australia (the Australian Capital Territory passed a Human Rights Act in 2004) to enact a human rights statute.<sup>68</sup> Typically cautious in its ambit, this legislation was nonetheless an important statement by the Bracks government at a time of criticism that its initial interest in democratic rights (the restoration of the independence of the auditor-general having been one of the proudest boasts of the premier's first term) had waned. Signs of an increasingly cavalier approach to Parliament and blemishes in its record on freedom of information requests as documented by the Victorian Ombudsman were portrayed as evidence of a government trying to dodge accountability.<sup>69</sup>

It is the cumulative pattern of investment since 1999 that tells the main story of Bracks' social policy achievements. Table 1 shows employment levels in the general government sector (broadly similar to the number of public servants), and compares these with employment trends in other States. The table shows that general government sector employment has increased by 51,300 or 24 per cent since Bracks came to office compared to 73,400 or 10 per cent for all other States and Territories excluding Victoria. This increase in public service employment has more than compensated for the 12 per cent fall that took place during the Kennett era.

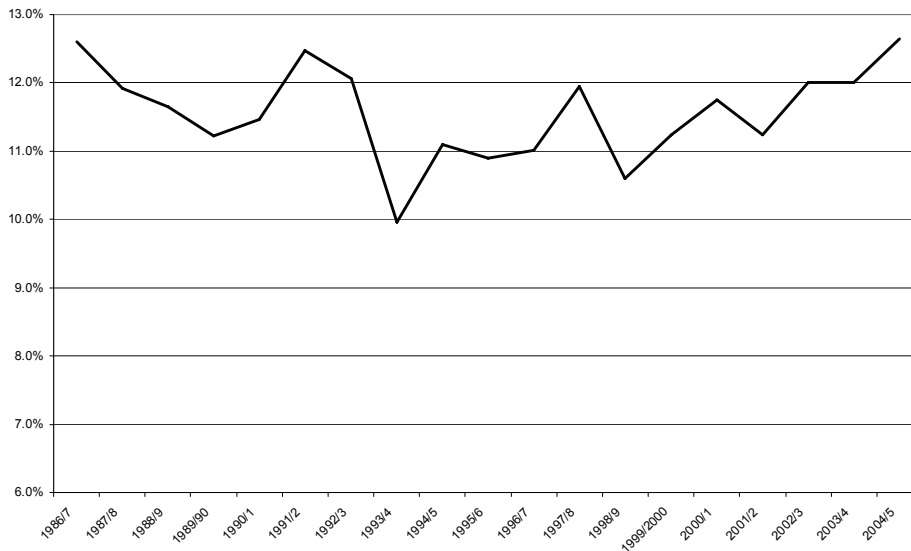
**Table 27.1: Change in general government sector employment (000s) – August 1992 to May 2005**

|                              | August 92–November 99 |      | November 99–May 05 |     |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------|--------------------|-----|
|                              | No (000s)             | %    | No (000s)          | %   |
| New South Wales              | 28.7                  | 10%  | 21.6               | 7%  |
| Queensland                   | 26                    | 15%  | 15.3               | 8%  |
| South Australia              | -6.4                  | -7%  | 15                 | 18% |
| Tasmania                     | -2                    | -6%  | 1.7                | 6%  |
| Victoria                     | -28.4                 | -12% | 51.3               | 24% |
| Western Australia            | 13.2                  | 13%  | 14.1               | 13% |
| Australian Capital Territory | 0.7                   | 4%   | 1.7                | 10% |
| Northern Territory           | 0.7                   | 5%   | 4.1                | 26% |
| Total                        | 32.5                  | 3%   | 124.7              | 13% |
| Australia less Victoria      | 60.9                  | 8%   | 73.4               | 10% |

Sources: Unpublished ABS data from ABS Cat No 6248.0.55.01 (for employment); ABS Cat No 3101.

While Bracks has been criticised in the past for his reluctance to spend – including by the author of this chapter<sup>70</sup> – the most recent data suggest a different conclusion is now warranted. Under Bracks, underlying public spending net of interest payments has returned to levels that prevailed during the Cain–Kirner era. Social spending – including spending on health, education and community services – has increased in real per capita terms by 28 per cent between 1999 and 2006. In the electorally sensitive area of health, it has increased in real terms by \$1.8 billion or over one-third.

**Figure 27.1: General government sector operating payments as a percentage of Gross State Product, 1986/7–2004/5**



*Source: Budget papers, various years. Note: Payments are net of one-off payments associated with superannuation, redundancies, etc: ABS Cat No 5502.0 (for GSP).*

How it is that Bracks has managed to do all this without generating complaints from business and other conservative interests? Part of the answer is that Labor’s very public face of financial conservatism has ensured it enjoys broad business support. At the same time, the government has also boosted capital works spending to almost double the level that prevailed during the Kennett years, which in turn has been of considerable benefit to the private construction industry. The government’s PPP policy has also been popular in business circles, particularly the financial interests that have found a new market to develop, and the new private owners and operators of profitable infrastructure that previously were government owned.

Also important has been the booming economy, which has given Bracks room to gradually loosen the spending screws to fund a range of new social initiatives. The strong rates of economic growth have enabled the government to frame relatively modest budgets and then draw on a welcome stream of unbudgeted revenues – particularly from the property market – during the course of the financial year to fund new spending initiatives while simultaneously delivering a better than budgeted surplus. Actual expenses have consistently been more than \$500 million higher than was originally budgeted, mainly because revenues have consistently exceeded expectations by an even greater amount.

An earlier assessment of his premiership concluded that while Bracks will be remembered for his achievements:

[A]t this point in time [2004] his efforts seem to pale by comparison with the achievements of the major Premiers who preceded him.<sup>71</sup>

This assessment is in need of revision. Bracks set out to restore democratic checks and balances and, notwithstanding some blemishes, he has achieved this well before the end of his second term. The democratic renovation of the upper house stands out as a particularly impressive and lasting reform precisely because his government stands to lose its control on the upper house because of it. Also in 2006 Victoria was the first Australian State to legislate for a Charter of Rights, following closely on the heels of the Labor government in the Australian Capital Territory. He also set out to keep business on side, ridding Labor of the image that it is unable to manage the books and has achieved this goal. Bracks has also been pursuing a broader social policy vision, one that harks back to the bold directions embarked on by John Cain jnr. He has done all this at a time when neo-liberal values dominate Australian politics and he has done it without the fanfare or self-promotion that was evident under Premier Kennett. But then, that has never been his way. Asked to describe himself Bracks replied “balanced, even-handed, inclusive”. Asked what he’d like to be remembered for, he replied: “For leading a financially conservative and socially progressive government, one which builds the whole of Victoria, not just part of it”.<sup>72</sup> As premier, he is Labor’s quiet achiever.

### *Endnotes*

- \* This chapter benefited from an interview with Premier Bracks on 9 May 2006.
- 1 B Costar and D Hayward, “Steve Bracks: Victoria’s ‘nice guy’ who won against the odds” in J Wanna and P Williams (eds), *Yes, premier: Labor Leadership in Australia’s States and Territories*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005 (hereafter Costar and Hayward, “Steve Bracks” and Wanna and Williams, *Yes, premier*).
  - 2 See also D Hayward and P Ewer, “Introduction”, in D Hayward and P Ewer (eds), *Visions for Victoria*, Vulgar Press, Melbourne, 2003 (hereafter Hayward and Ewer, *Visions*).
  - 3 *Sunday Age*, 9 May 1999.

STEVE BRACKS: THE QUIET ACHIEVER

- 4 S Bracks, "Honour those who fought for Australian democracy", *Age*, 2 March 2006.
- 5 *Australian*, 23 October 1999.
- 6 *Sunday Age*, 9 May 1999.
- 7 *Herald Sun*, 23 October 1999.
- 8 *Ibid*, 29 May 1999.
- 9 *Age*, 2 March 2004.
- 10 *Herald Sun*, 23 October 1999.
- 11 *Ibid*, 6 August 1994.
- 12 *Age*, 23 February 1999.
- 13 *Herald Sun*, 6 August 1994.
- 14 *Age*, 15 August 1994.
- 15 *Ibid*.
- 16 *Herald Sun*, 26 February 1999.
- 17 *Age*, 20 February 1999; *Herald Sun*, 21 February 1999.
- 18 *Herald Sun*, 23 February 1999.
- 19 Morgan Poll, No 3183, 14 April 1999.
- 20 *Bulletin*, 30 March 1999.
- 21 D Woodward and B Costar, "The Victorian Election of 18 September 1999: Another Case of Electoral Volatility?", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 35, no 1, 2000, pp 125-33.
- 22 B Costar and J Curtin, *Rebels with a Cause: Independents in Australian Politics*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2004, pp 37-43 (hereafter Costar and Curtin, *Rebels*).
- 23 *Ibid*, p 41.
- 24 *Herald Sun*, 23 October 1999.
- 25 Brian Head, John Wanna and Paul Williams identify eight features to this "new approach to State-level leadership". See B Head, J Wanna and P Williams, "Leaders and the Leadership Challenge" in Wanna and Williams, *Yes, premier*, especially pp 261-3.
- 26 See, for example, the *Age*, 3 May 2005; and P Austin, "Steve Bracks: A man of his word or our premier 'rent-a-fluff'", *Age*, 12 May 2005.
- 27 *Australian*, 9 February 2000.
- 28 See G Hudson, "Victoria: factional battles, realignments and renewal" in J Warhurst and A Parkin (eds), *The Machine: Labor confronts the future*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2000, pp 119-21.
- 29 *Herald Sun*, 19 March 2002.
- 30 *Age*, 4 June 2002.
- 31 *Australian*, 7 August 2000.
- 32 *Australian*; *Herald Sun*, 17 June 2002.
- 33 *Age*, 27, 28 January, 5 February and 13 May 2006. Also see P Austin, "Bracks tightens his grip", *Age*, 17 March 2006.
- 34 C Shiel, "Privatisation, politics and public-private partnerships", in Hayward and Ewer, *Visions*, pp 67-86.
- 35 P Fitzgerald, *Review of Partnerships Victoria Provided Infrastructure*, Report to the Treasurer, January 2004.
- 36 See, for example, P Austin, "Bracks' bold move infuriates Left", *Age*, 27 January 2001; P Austin, "The Bracks Third Wave draws a bucketing from Left field", *Age*, 4 November 2005.
- 37 *Age*, 3 November 2005.

- 38 See P Strangio, "Labor and reform of the Victorian Legislative Council, 1950–2003", *Labour History*, no 86, May 2004, especially pp 41–6 (hereafter Strangio, "Labor and reform of the Victorian Legislative Council").
- 39 Ibid, pp 46–7.
- 40 *Australian*, 20 March 2001.
- 41 Constitution Reform Victoria, *A House for our Future: A Report*, Constitution Commission Victoria, Melbourne, 2002.
- 42 For full details of the reforms see B Costar and G Gardiner, "From Breaking Governments to a Brake on Government: A New Bicalameralism in Victoria?", *Australasian Parliamentary Review*, vol 19, no 1, 2003, pp 33–45.
- 43 *Herald Sun*, 17 January 2003.
- 44 Victoria, Legislative Assembly, *Debates*, vol 457, 27 February 2003, pp 160–3.
- 45 Strangio, "Labor and reform of the Victorian Legislative Council", pp 48–9.
- 46 See Costar and Hayward, "Steve Bracks", pp 105–6 for more detail.
- 47 Between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005 the Victorian economy grew by 45 per cent compared to 40 per cent for New South Wales and 47 per cent for Australia as a whole: ABS Cat No 5220.0. The number of jobs in Victoria increased by 15 per cent or 323,000 between October 1999 and December 2005: ABS Cat No 6202.0.
- 48 D Hayward, "How Mr Kennett won and how Labor helped him do it", *Australian Rationalist*, Winter 1996 (hereafter Hayward, "How Mr Kennett Won"); D Hayward, "How Kennett Lost. And how the Coalition let him do it", *Dissent*, vol 1, no 1, 1999.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 See for details, D Hayward and J Quiggin, "A financial vision" in Hayward and Ewer, *Visions*, pp 29–50 (hereafter Hayward and Quiggin, "A financial vision").
- 51 In 2004, the net general government sector debt in Victoria stood at 3 per cent of the State's economy, compared to over 25 per cent for some of the largest provinces in Canada, and 48 per cent for all OECD governments: Victorian Government, Budget Statements, Budget Paper No 2, 2004–2005; OECD, *Public Finance Statistics*, <[www.oecd.org/topicstatsportal/0,2647,en\\_2825\\_495698\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/topicstatsportal/0,2647,en_2825_495698_1_1_1_1,00.html)> (accessed 18 April 2006); Government of Ontario, Budget Papers 2006, <[www.ontariobudget.ca/english/aapp1.html#sec5](http://www.ontariobudget.ca/english/aapp1.html#sec5)> (accessed 18 April 2006).
- 52 Quoted in "Political Chronicles: Victoria Jan–June 2002", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 38, no 3, 2002, p 534.
- 53 Hayward, "How Mr Kennett Won".
- 54 *Age*, 21 April 2004.
- 55 Richard Holyman letter to VECCI members, 21 April 2004, <[www.vecci.org.au/](http://www.vecci.org.au/)> (accessed 26 May 2004).
- 56 Victoria, Legislative Assembly, *Debates*, vol 453, 22 November 2001, p 1906f.
- 57 Ibid, 28 November 2001, p 2060.
- 58 *Herald Sun*, 29 May 1999; 15 March 2000; ABC Radio AM program, 29 November 2001.
- 59 Victoria, Legislative Council, *Debates*, vol 456, 10 October 2002, p 191f.
- 60 S Bracks, "Why we had to break our promise on freeway tolls", *Age*, 15 April 2003.
- 61 R Clarke, "Desperate Brumby peddles flawed Scoresby advice", Media Release, 3 November 2004.
- 62 Victorian Government, *Annual Financial Statement, 2003/4*, Victorian Government Printer, p 7.
- 63 *Herald Sun*, 25 February, 2005.

STEVE BRACKS: THE QUIET ACHIEVER

- 64 See the collection of readings in Hayward and Ewer, *Visions*.
- 65 See, for example, H McPhee, "The question is, will Bracks do something with his majority", *Age*, 13 December 2002; S Carney, "What is Bracks here for?", *Age*, 22 November 2003; D Broadbent, "Time to shake the do-little tag", *Sunday Age*, 19 September 2004; J Dowling, "Mighty majority a mighty great waste of time", *Sunday Age*, 19 March 2006.
- 66 *Herald Sun*, 16 September 2004.
- 67 Victorian Government, *A Fairer Victoria. Creating Opportunity and Addressing Disadvantage*, Victorian Government Printer, 2005. A summary of the government's earlier social policy agenda can be found in D Adams and J Wiseman, "Navigating the Future: A Case Study of Growing Victoria Together", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol 62, no 2, June 2003, pp 11-13.
- 68 G Gardiner, V Tumini and B Costar, *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Bill 2006*, Current Issues, brief no 2, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliamentary Library Research Service, May 2006.
- 69 See P Austin, "The undemocratic premier" *Age*, 21 April 2006; "'Deception, secrecy' obstructing FoI law", *Age*, 2 June 2006. Also see "Review of the Freedom of Information Act", Report of Ombudsman Victoria, June 2006, Victorian Government Printer.
- 70 Hayward and Quiggin, "A financial vision", pp 29-50.
- 71 Costar and Hayward, "Steve Bracks", p 110.
- 72 *Herald Sun*, 20 September 1999.