

**MELBOURNE PRESS CLUB
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GUEST SPEAKER: ROBERT DOYLE
Medallion Club, Telstra Dome**

MPC Vice President Peter Bartlett (PB)

I think this is a great honour for the Club to have Robert Doyle here. As you all know, he is parliamentary leader of the Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition in Victoria. That could well change this coming Saturday. Mr Doyle is the member for Malvern and my local member. He was Shadow Minister for Health from '99 till '02 and Parliamentary Secretary for Human Services from '96 to '99. He received a scholarship from Myrtleford ... so a true blue country boy.... to Geelong College and then has worked at Scotch, Lauriston and Geelong College.

As you know the lunch today is titled 'The Empty Chair'. We were hoping to see the Premier here today and an interesting debate between our two leaders and I think it's a pity that the Premier declined the invitation

I think despite anyone's political beliefs, everyone would agree that Mr Doyle has done a tremendous job in the few weeks that he has been leader. I think that he came in, in a low period for the Liberal Party. He's had a very short time to gain a profile and I think he would have hoped that the election wasn't called on the first day when we have a 4-year period. He has, I suppose, faced at least one nightmare issue during the campaign, which has made it very difficult and I would have thought frustrating, but I think that it is great to see someone who picks up a party like the Liberal Party and has run with it as hard as he has run with it and despite what happens on Saturday, without being party political, he has put 110% effort into the campaign. Could you please all welcome the Leader of the Opposition, Robert Doyle.

Robert Doyle

Thank you Peter, and ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be with you.

I do regret that it is not a debate. I said at the time I would be very happy during the course of the campaign to debate Steve Bracks anywhere and anytime. That offer remains. So if any of you have a forum in which you think that offer might be attractive, please make it because my answer is yes. All you need now is Steve Bracks to say yes as well. And I said at the time it was regrettable that we were not having the debate after we had the pre-election budget update, because it seemed to me that that was a benchmark from which we needed to proceed and to have it in the very first week, while valuable, is not necessarily the most instructive or informative

for our constituencies. I've been saying over the last few days something that I believe in a heart-felt way.

First of all, if you were to believe the published polls that are out there - and most of you belong to or read organisations that have published polls in the last weeks - if you're to believe them then I will be the only Liberal member left after Saturday. The former premier did actually say about me on one occasion "Robert, even you couldn't lose that seat". And I think that's probably true. If you believe the published polls however, there is going to be a landslide against the Liberal Party on Saturday.

And I've been saying to people that that's important to consider. That's important to consider. What will be the consequences of not really thinking about your vote and just saying we'll go with the incumbents because that's what people do when they wish to feel comfortable or they don't want to focus particularly on the issues of the day. And the consequences of that, I believe, will be very serious for Victoria. And that's not just us saying that. It's the Auditor General saying it : the Auditor General pointing out that we have weaknesses and vulnerabilities in our economy particularly because of employee entitlements or because of wage claims.

That budget update showed \$100 million put aside because the Labor Party is prepared to roll over in future on budget and wage increases. Well, we won't do that. And we've been warning people of the consequences of a vote for Labor will be a kind of anarchy in this state. And people say to me "well aren't you running a scare campaign"? And the answer is "no". I don't have to wait for the Cole Royal Commission to report. To read the transcripts of evidence and I will cover some of those issues as I speak to you.

The other thing that really concerns me, and I hope concerns you as well, in this election campaign - I get the sense that we are the only party taking this campaign seriously. As of today, later today I will release another policy, an important one, "infrastructure". That will make 52 policies that we have released during the course of the campaign. Now that is a coherent comprehensive and practical plan for the next four years. And that is what we were determined to do. I've said all the way through that I do not play personality politics, I do not play the man, I play the ball. I'm very happy to have a clash of ideologies, a clash of policies. I'm very happy to have those head-to-head debates, because I think that actually sharpens the issues for our voters and differentiates the parties. I have a real concern that Labor's strategy has really been to bland down this election campaign and then slide through it on the expectation that political history does not throw out governments after one term. And therefore to slide into a second term.

I can show you 52 policies and I know you've all read (them) assiduously, every word, and therefore know about that practical plan and I'm happy to answer questions on that later if you would like me to.

But I challenge you to think about this... do you think that Labor has rolled out just such a practical plan for the next four years? Have they spelt out what it is that they intend to do in the next term of government? I think last time when they got in because there was no expectation that they would win, there was a lack of scrutiny of their policies at that time and I've heard some of you actually say so publicly.

I don't want that to happen this time. I don't want us to be one year in after they've slid back because people didn't think about the consequences of their vote and we think to ourselves we did not apply the scrutiny that we should have to an incumbent government and now we've got them again and here are the problems that have flowed.

I've also tried not to be negative in this campaign. And I think our electorates and our constituents are changing underneath politicians. I don't think they like politicians slanging off at each other. I don't think they necessarily like what has been received wisdom in politics: that negative campaigning works. Certainly you have to hold people accountable and you have to be factual, but I don't know that those personal advertisements, and I don't mind that they are directed particularly at me, I don't know that they cut through much with average Victorians. And I think they expect you to be positive.

So I'm going to try to do both in talking to you today. I am going to try to outline and wrap up that practical plan and the parts that I'm very proud of, because I think there are some visionary things in there for the next four years and beyond for Victoria. But I'm also going to point out to you some of the areas where I think Labour needs to be held to account. And if you wish to take up either of those issues, I'd be very happy for you to do so.

There's no doubt that the central thrust of our campaign has been about what we call "working families" - the people who struggle a bit, but who hold down their jobs, who are proud of their homes and who really want a better Victoria in four years' time. One of the policies I'm most proud of is the abolition of Zone 3 fares. It's just unfair. And it will actually encourage people to get on public transport. I was delighted when the Transport ... well, the caretaker Transport Minister actually criticised that policy because it would be too successful. It would put more people on public transport. Well, yes ... that was actually its aim. But not just that.

People who are in Zone 3 now, as you know, get in their cars and drive just inside Zone 2 so that they can buy a Zone 2 fare. So it has a knock-on

effect, not just for those in Zone 3 but also in Zone 2. I'm very proud of that because it puts money directly back into the pockets of people who need it most and I did have the argument made to me. I know it was published this morning, but let me remind you....

One of the things was ... people said "well why don't they buy a yearly ticket, because you make huge savings" then. And the reality is ,of course, for many families, they simply do not have the up-front cash in order to buy that yearly ticket to get those savings. And sometimes the budget means they're buying weekly tickets or even daily tickets and this will help them.

I wanted to do something about Stamp Duty. I did leave it until after the Budget Update. Yes, I would have liked to have gone further. I would have liked to have gone much further. Because I think the amount of stamp duty that this State has been raking in has been totally ridiculous. And people say "well it's only a \$1000 Robert", but when I launch that policy I talked to a couple of some young couples and some young people who are in the market for their first house. And it's interesting. They do their sums down to the last dollar. So, yes, I wish it had been more than a thousand. But a thousand is of help to them and I was determined to do that and not just for young home owners but for people buying farms or people buying businesses.

Compare that to something which is I believe insidiously making its way into the stamp duty net. And it's something that you probably haven't heard much about. But the State Revenue Office and a couple of recent court cases and a recent ruling are trying to bring "goodwill" into the stamp duty net. Now that's something that's always been excluded in small business. The value of the properties certainly has been caught by stamp duty but goodwill has been excluded and you'll hear us talking about that more in the next couple of days too - the fact that the State Revenue Office and this Treasurer are seeking to roll goodwill into that stamp duty net and that would be an impost on small business that we would not put up with.

We said we would cap Council rates. Look, every year the Local Government Minister writes to every mayor and says "please keep rates to CPI". And every year they ignore that letter and we have had ... we have had some rises, particularly when I was down in the Surf Coast area, individuals who've had rate rises of 70% and 80% in a single year, an overall rate rise down there of 18%. Well, we think CPI plus 2% is reasonable. But we understand that we do have to offer some infrastructure help to Councils. And that's why the roads and bridges fund to attack the two infrastructure problems that most people in shires and country councils are concerned about.

I was up in Ripon on Sunday. I was at a grain handling terminal and it was interesting the roads around there, single track, and they were built probably for five-tonne Bedford trucks. Well, they now carry 45-tonne B double grain trucks. It's not safe and it's not good for the economy in business, and it's not good for the people who live in the area. So we need to help those local councils in order to upgrade their infrastructure. In Pyraneees for instance, even if they put their rates up by 1%, that raises them something like \$27,000. You know, think of the rate rises that they would need in order to make inroads into their infrastructure. So they need help from the State Government.

We've tried to talk about economic management during this campaign too. And I do get a little sick of trying to rebut every single day, John Brumby coming out with misapprehensions about exactly what we are spending.

But let me give you a couple that I'm concerned about. I'm concerned about some of the shonky advertising ... I'm sorry I'll go back to advertising later ... let me get onto that one! Some of the shonky practices in accounting. I mean those old hollow logs that we talked about under the Cain/Kirner days. Well they're back. And the pre-election budget update shows that. Let me give you a great one. And it's a project that I am passionate about. Down at Gunnamatta, we have an outflow into the ocean where we're still pouring sewage into the ocean. And there is a plan to just ... and isn't this brilliant ... spend \$60m and what we'll do is we'll build a bigger pipe! And we'll just put it a bit further out. I mean aren't we to the point where we're actually stop trying to put sewage into our oceans? But think about this, the government required from the metropolitan water authorities a dividend payable to the state of \$115m. So that just left those water authorities and went to the state ... to the state's bottom line, to prop up the budget. That extra 300 metres of pipe was going to cost \$60m. For goodness sake, if you put those two things together just the dividend the government has taken and that \$60m, you could upgrade the treatment works at Carrum and we could start thinking about using that water or indeed, putting clean water into the ocean in one of Victoria's most beautiful spots. But no, we didn't do that and so we are now left with this legacy of wondering what's going to happen at Gunnamatta. I would've thought those hollow logs were a thing of the past. But they're not. That sort of shonky accounting is back again.

Lots of you have heard me say, and I make no apology for it and I'll keep on saying it ... you know over the last three years you're all paying an extra \$1,500 in tax. Victoria's income has gone up by 20%. Labor's spending has gone up by 30% ... you can't keep on doing that. That's why you start with a budget of \$1.8 billion in surplus and you bring it down to \$273m at the end of the last financial year. Yes, it goes up again at the end of this financial year, but then has downgrades built into it in the out years. You

can't go on spending more than you earn. You can't go on caving in for wage demands, 9% in the public sector last year. That's just not in line with what our community, our economy, needs. You can't keep on having this over-reliance on stamp duty revenue and on speeding fines and on gaming revenue. You can't do it. It is no way to build a budget or an economy.

I often hear us being attacked for the state of health and hospitals and I was very proud of the work we did. Notwithstanding the Labor ad which shows me as some sort of bulldozer wrecker of the health system, I'm happy to stand on performance. There is absolutely no point saying we put an extra billion dollars into health if you've got nothing to show for it. It's no good pretending that you've got an extra 3300 nurses in the system, when we know that many of those nurses were part-time and have now gone full-time and are now counted as an entirely new nurse, or indeed down at the Royal Melbourne, where they are actually phantom. They had different group certificates, different tax file numbers, you know, so don't tell us about how much money you're putting in. Tell us about results.

Don't tell us you're treating an extra 30,000 people a year. That's what the health system does every year, that it's natural growth. On every key indicator, the health system is now worse than when we left it. Whether it's people waiting on trolleys, whether it's ambulance by pass, or whether it's people waiting longer than clinically ideal for an urgent operation. All of those indicators are worse on the objective figures. And waiting lists in particular is a real problem. And we've got a plan to fix that. We will use the Community Support Fund and from that Community Support Fund we will get doctors and nurses to those extra lists that we need. Whether that's Saturdays or Sundays...in like blitzes on areas like urology and orthopaedic surgery. I've talked to doctors and nurses. They tell me it has worked in the past. It will work again.

What you can't have though, is ... and can you imagine if it had been us ... the doctor down at Frankston who blew the whistle on the fact that they had been gagged and the waiting list down there wasn't 700, it was something like 2300 and blowing out. Well, John Thwaites didn't even come out to answer that claim. He sent out a spokesperson to say ... well as a matter of fact the figures aren't collated yet. That's not what that doctor was saying.

Can you imagine the reaction if it had been us accused of gagging doctors about the state of hospitals? I think it'd be a little different.

Education standards. I was a teacher before I was a member of parliament. If it weren't for Joan Kirner, I'd probably still be a teacher. And the thing that worried me then, was that our VCE was being dumbed down.

You know, one size fits all. All kids are the same. Well they're not. Some kids are smarter than others. Some kids work harder than others. But one thing you can do is help them all. We are now the only state that doesn't have Year 7 benchmarking. We don't test Year 7 students and then benchmark them against national standards. But isn't that a sensible thing to do? I know Labor have said they're going to do it, but for three years they resisted it. And it was one more barnacle they wanted to scrape off the ship of state before we got into an election campaign. I have no confidence they'll deliver that because they were not committed to it for three years. They opposed the introduction of testing at Year 3 and Year 5. And they still don't nationally benchmark those results as they are required to do in any of the papers they produce. So I'm very concerned about quality in education.

I get accused of ... you know ... they said to me ... but you want to bring in tech schools because we've set aside money to go back to setting up educational institutions for those kids who want a practical and vocational education. No-one or not everyone wants to do law at Melbourne University. And they say, but you're taking us back to tech schools and the answer to that is, yes we are, because for some students between Years 9 and 12, they want a secondary school milieu in which to learn. But, they want to do practical and vocational education and that should be provided for.

One of the issues that has also been given if I may say, a very fair and accurate run by the media is the issue of safety, security, confidence, certainty.

I didn't come to the figure of 1050 extra police by accident. Or by whim. It was by talking to police officers and the Association about it. I wanted active policing. More police on the streets, more police in shopping centres, police on public transport. How many would I need in order to do that? And we got the number right. That can be delivered. That is a net number that can be delivered and it will be delivered. And more than that, we will free up some of the officers who are presently in the stations by hiring recently retired police officers to do that front desk work which they can do so well. I was fascinated to see in one of our major dailies a serving officer from Wangaratta writing in to say he thought it was great idea and it would work. And we are determined that it will work too.

We've had the confusion over ... or with the Labor Party trying to accuse us of bringing in mandatory sentencing. We're doing no such thing of course, but we will require minimum mandatory sentences for serious crimes. I was fascinated that at exactly the same time the caretaker Attorney General was saying this was a discredited plan, Bob Carr was announcing exactly the same plan for New South Wales. And we will, believe it, will

bring sentencing back into line with community expectation. Because there has been a disjointedness between community expectation and what is happening in some of our courts.

I am very proud of our proposal to have "move on" laws, whether that's for demonstrations or picket lines. So that we do have the power to say to people "no, you simply can't congregate there and here are the reasons why, and now you will move on". I hate the fact that people can't go about their normal daily work without being interrupted by a picket line or a demonstration. And we need to give police the ability to move those people on. That will require new laws ... and we'll do it.

And a small thing, something that I personally detest is graffiti. You know I hate it down the train corridors, I hate it ... you know ... in our streets and on our buildings, and I can tell you for older people, it gives them a certain sense of threat. There are some areas where they feel their safety positively threatened. We need a program to get rid of it. I know it won't do it all at once. But at least our program says we've got to make a start. We've got to make a start on those train corridors. We've got to make a start in communities. Some Councils are doing it very well. My own Stonnington has made a start in doing it, and they would need our support to do it. To report it, to remove it, to police it. It might seem like a small thing. But to me, one of those issues that creates a sense of well-being in the community is that it looks good. It isn't threatening to walk through.

Country Victoria is an area that has been, I think, a real battleground for both parties over the last three years. I'm very proud of what we've announced, 55 shop fronts which we call Rural Link. You'll be able to do over 300 government business transactions at those particular shop fronts. So if you're in Hall's Gap and you want to renew your licence, you can do it at Rural Link, rather than driving to Horsham. You can get permits, you can make enquiries. And we've already had major banks saying they would be interested in talking to us about establishing agency banking services in those Rural Link offices as well. And that would bring back to those smaller towns a real heart, because many of them as we know are starting to hollow out as the job opportunities disappear and as the young people disappear from those towns. So I see that as a network which will help those smaller towns. We've said we'll have a Minister for Country Victoria and we'll put that minister for the first time in Victoria's history, not in Melbourne, but in country Victoria. And their job will really be to be a travelling roadshow between Rural Link to get the feedback from country Victoria and to be a real champion of country Victoria. I don't mean regional Victoria, I don't mean the Geelong, Ballarats, Bendigos, I mean country Victoria and those smaller towns that are so crucial to our economy and our society.

We've made announcements, I mentioned before, about bridges and roads. And I think that's critical to offer that infrastructure support. The roads one is a catch-up, \$60m is a one-off injection. Electricity and gas - also some help with those areas. Whether it's single earth return wire for dairy farmers or whether its reticulated natural gas for those towns that wish to connect. Or those industrial parks like up in Stawell.

And a final one we were talking about at the table today. I mean, I regret that it took the government so long to concede that there was a drought in Victoria. It was a terrible insult to country Victorians. They knew they were in drought. Some of them were going without drinking water and I think that that was something where we could have acted more decisively because it's not just about programs and resources and extra money, it's about the political leaders of the state putting up their hand to recognise where there are problems. So you can actually call it a drought, not dry seasonal conditions and you can actually do something about it rather than just being wishy washy for months until your hand is forced.

But the drought has left us with a different problem. And that is, and I travelled through Central Victoria yesterday and on Saturday as well, I have real fears about bushfires in the upcoming months in Victoria . And I think we need to do something about that right now. It's probably since Ash Wednesday....after Ash Wednesday, we renewed most of the tanker fleet for the CFA. But now that infrastructure is ageing and it desperately needs to be replaced. And I think we need to get on with, and we have announced \$46 million to do it, get on with upgrading the tanker fleet for the CFA. Because we need to be ready in order to fight those fires when they come. Now I know that can't all be done before February. And many of these things can't. I wish I could do them all yesterday but we need to make a start and that is an area where we do need to start.

Can I turn to one thing that, and look, I won't go on and on, the other one I'll mention is the concessions for self-funded retirees. You know, people who have really battled and worked hard all their lives, they are not wealthy, they have a Commonwealth senior health card so they are not people with great incomes. I want to extend to them the same range of concessions that pensioners get, whether that is for their car registrations or their municipal rates or with their power bills, and I think that's reasonable for the 68,000 Victorians that that would help, who are struggling a bit with those bills.

So what I have tried to lay out to you, and I know many of you have heard these things individually and collectively before, but we do have practical plans for taking us forward.

I haven't even talked about a passion of mine - the rebuilding of The Royal Melbourne, The Royal Children's, The Royal Women's Hospital. A once, not just a generation, a once-in-a-multiple generation opportunity to renew the fabric of those three great Royals in one medical precinct that would be world's best. World's best. And a research, have research facilities there whether its Murdoch or WEHI, the Walter and Eliza Hall, have those on site as well, to give us a kind of Mayo Clinic here in Melbourne, not just Australia's best - it would be a world best, and many of those things we have rolled out I am very proud of, because we have actually done the work. Opposition has been very hard. We've had to go back and do those policies from the ground up.

I look at Labor, on the other hand, and I can't think of a single policy, a single policy, which catches my imagination. One that actually says 'this is where I want to take Victoria for the next four years". The only one, the only thing, that they have put out there as a vote grabber for working families, and this is the only one I could find, is the \$1000 rebate, the training grant for parents who have left the workforce to raise a family but then are keen to return to work. That's the only one that I have seen out there. But let me tell you, that is either a black hole or it is a hoax. And let me tell you why. They have costed that at a total of \$11 million over four years. \$2.75 million each year.

But I want you to consider this. If you look at the ABS census data, the number of parents returning to work nationally with the youngest child between 2 and 15, and that includes lone parents and partnered parents, is 56,058. That's nationally. Victoria's proportion of that would be approximately 13,300. That's how many we have returning to work. That would cost the state \$13.3 million in one year. So the real cost of this, assuming population growth and birthrate increases, this has been under-costed by about \$40 million. This should cost something like \$53.2 million. Not \$11 million. And that's why I say it's a black hole, or possibly, it is a complete hoax. Because some of the questions that I haven't had answered are these: Is it means tested therefore? So is it only some people who get it? Can you have the whole \$1,000? Or is there a graduated scale? Is it available to only one parent in a couple or is it available to both, if during the course of childhood they return to work? Is it constrained to a per birth or per child? So what do you do in the case of multiple births? And finally, how many parents who are eligible for this will be made ineligible for Commonwealth Family Allowances? Because I don't think that's been factored in either. So, the one thing, the one vote-catcher that they have put out there for working families is either a hoax or a black hole.

Let me say to you finally, I'm sorry I have taken too long but that's what I do, I'm really sick of their excuses. I'm really sick of them. I am really sick

of the inactivity over three years. So if you need to grab a few inner city green votes, you tear up an RFA. You know, you tear up an agreement between the Commonwealth and the State. Why? Oh because we need green votes. There's been no action over the last three years because what have they been doing? They've been repairing the damage. Yeah right. Like that \$1.8 billion, that truckload of money we left you, plus that triple A credit rating that they boast about every now and then. I mean, what damage did we do to the economy? And from the economy, everything else flows. Without a prosperous and vibrant economy, forget about delivering extra police or extra nurses or extra teachers. Because if you're on your knees economically, you can't do any of that. So repairing the damage, well, just think about the economy in 1991 versus the economy in 1999.

Waiting lists are a problem. That's the Federal Government's fault. Crime rises up or crime rates are up - that's the previous government's fault. It's always an excuse. Never taking responsibility. I have said, and they have given me a bagging for it from time to time, yes we did make mistakes in the past. And I freely admit that and I am happy to do so because it's the truth. Ask yourselves this, when you ask Labor, what have you done badly or wrongly over the last three years? I have never heard them concede one thing. But I could make you a list. And top of it would be inaction. It is simply not conceivable that they believe that they have not made a mistake over three years, but I have never heard them concede that.

So that is why I am saying to Victorians, think carefully about the consequences of your vote on this Saturday. I don't think we can afford to have three more years of inaction. I don't think we can afford to reward three years of inaction by giving them three more years. And that's why I'm saying - consider carefully the consequences. Don't simply vote for the incumbent because you feel reasonably comfortable at the moment. I'm sick of those excuses. I think that is no way to govern. Neither are the 800 reviews - one for every working day in office. That is no way to offer active leadership for Victoria and that is my central criticism of the last three years. They are unable to make a tough decision. Well, leadership and government is about making those tough decisions. Not for your own party or yourselves, but so you can truly say after your term, Victoria is a better place than it was when I took it over. That would be my aim. I've got the practical plans to do it and the rest is up to the voters.

Thank you very much.

PB :

Mr Doyle has agreed to take some questions, so any questions?

Q: Robert, you've come under fire today in the Press about your latest political ads warning about job losses to the state... from business itself. What do you say to those businesses that have criticised those ads so strongly and do you stand by those ads?

A: I stand by the ads and behind the ads 100% and if you think we will stop running them then that is wrong. Because we will not. Because in fact, I understand the companies' points of view and that may be uncomfortable for them. It may be uncomfortable when they get a phone call from the Labor Party and have the heavy roller put over them once or twice. That may be uncomfortable too. But the fact remains that each of those companies have shed jobs and each of those companies are on the public record as having done so. So yes I stand behind them 100%.

Q: Inaudible, but challenges previous answer...

A: Well, it may not have been Nestle, but Nestle for instance is very interesting. Nestle, and it was Peter Kelly from Nestle who was quoted, they've actually locked out workers in one of their plants at the moment because they simply can't get on with them, and that's the news of November 26 2002. They locked out their 100-strong workforce in the north, and you know, they have their union problems at the moment and I understand that and they will need to work with the government. But I can assure you that we have spoken to a number of those companies, Nestle may not have been one of them, but others of them certainly have been contacted.

Inaudible comment from audience....

Well, you'll have to ask the companies that. But we've had it confirmed to us that that has been the case.

Q: So you're saying that the Labor party actually contacted the companies and asked them to complain to you directly?

A: I stand entirely by the state director's comments in the newspapers this morning because that is the truth.

Q: Mr Doyle, Peter Ryan.... as you've just heard from some of the media questions there, you're facing some pretty tough questions as a leader in your first campaign. I wanted to ask you, just what your assessment was of the quality and maturity of the media coverage during this campaign and what have you liked about being leader facing scrutiny and what haven't you liked?

A: Gee thanks for that Peter. First, let me say that all the journalists who are present here today have been extraordinarily fair and very professional in their coverage of the campaign to date and I thank them each personally. We could talk about some of the ones that are not here if you like. Look, there is an old saying about the politician complaining about the media is like a ship's captain complaining about the sea. I mean, there's not much point. I believe that journalists do their job fairly and professionally, it's as simple as that. And so I have absolutely no complaints on that score. I often think, however, if I may say, that a campaign should not be judged by the headlines or the news bulletins. There are 88 mini campaigns going on out there where what is important to those individual constituents is not affected by the headline or by the news bulletin. I mean it is a different type of campaign.

What have I enjoyed most? Look, the responsibility. You know you have a lot of people relying on you, and you either thrive on that or it can be burdensome. I can promise you I thrive on it. There have been no questions to me so far anyway, about matters of adversity during the campaign or setbacks that you might have. But even that teaches you something about yourself. You know, it's easy to be leader when everything is going along smoothly. I mean, anyone can do that. But I guess the real test comes when you do have a setback. There's nothing you can do about that setback and then it's a matter of how you deal with it. You learn a lot about yourself, you learn a lot about leadership and I hope that I was able in both those instances to do both myself and my party proud.

Q: Mr Doyle you said that negative campaigning no longer works in Victoria however, you have to be factual. Why then have most of your ads been negative and in some cases, so inaccurate they've had to have been withdrawn?

A: I don't hold with the fact that they are negative. I hold with the fact that they are factual. When you said some, what you mean is one, I take it. OK, lets get that straight and accurate for a start shall we? One. And the moment I found it was inaccurate, I went out and said 'It is inaccurate. I take responsibility, it will be changed'. It was.

Q: ...and other various companies in Victoria which you have accused of closing due to Labor's union mates?

A: Hang on, I just answered that before. That is on the public record for each of those companies. They have all been reported on the public record as shedding jobs. Nestle has, and I can show it to you on the release today, about locking out their own workers because of industrial

disputation in North Eastern Victoria, I mean, you know, these are factual matters.

Q: About a year ago, John Howard turned five marginal seats into five safe Liberal seats by promising to half build the Scoresby Freeway. Since then nothing has happened. I don't believe Liberals have been very forthcoming with what they intend to do with Scoresby if they were to win the election and where do you stand on it and how do you intend to fund it?

A: Thanks David. It is a critical project and our number one priority. I won't know until we are in Government, what the real story was then. The Federal Government put \$445 million on the table to build that freeway when the total cost billed was 890. It is now in excess of \$1.1 billion to build it. But it is critical. It is critical environmentally, it's critical socially, for all of those suburbs that are around that freeway, but in particular for business. If we don't build that, then businesses will stop investing out in the east of Melbourne and will move over to the west because of the comparative advantage the Western Ring Road offers. So if we really want development out in the east of Melbourne, we have got to build it.

I was actually up with the Prime Ministers two Saturdays ago, at the site of the Scoresby Freeway, recommitting to it and saying if elected we would commence immediately. We would uncouple the two projects because I believe they are completely different projects. The Eastern Freeway extension to which we are committed and the Scoresby, both critical, but separate projects. The Eastern one is a tunnel job, very sophisticated engineering job. The Scoresby is a road build. You can get on with that straight away. I see it as the number one priority. And can I tell you I just don't accept what the Labor government say on this. I mean, give me, do we actually believe a \$1.1 billion project if you put it off for two years is going to be cheaper to do? I just don't accept that. I don't understand why they have done it. It is fundable, yes the state would have to find extra funds to do it, and it is our number one priority as a road build the moment we are elected. Critically important.

Q: ...National Party policiesthat want to form a coalition with you. If you've got the chance on Saturday to win government with them, what do you say in response to their policies?

A: Well I am going to be equally unequivocal. We have rolled out a responsible fully costed and affordable program for all of Victoria. And that will be the program that we'll be implementing in the next term if we are in government.

Q: But it's looking likely that if you were going to form government, you would need the Nationals' support and Peter Ryan saying there's two flat right not negotiable, would you be prepared to implement them?

A: Well, no, as I've said. We are going to stick by the policies that we have rolled out there because they are the fully costed and affordable ones and they look at the priorities for the whole of the state and we must do that. Remember people always say that about coalition. Bolte won in his own right, Hamer won in his own right and the first two Kennett governments were in their own rights. I have candidates in every single seat. I said from day one as being leader, I wanted a candidate in every single seat, lower and upper house. We have that and I will be supporting every one of those candidates 100%.

Q: But if it came to the point that you had to form coalition with the Nationals, would you throw away the chance to form Government, given the sticking point will be these two policies?

A: Well, we'll talk to any group if that is necessary. We're no different from the Labor party in that way. We'll talk to the Independents should they still be in the Parliament. We'll talk to the Nationals, we'll talk to any group. But our policies are the official program of the Liberal party for the next four years and we'll be sticking to that.

Q: Inaudible question

A: They formed a coalition before, you may remember, the election, so it was a different scenario. My view is that ...have policies which are simply sectional and say that then takes priority over the others. David's question about the Scoresby - the Scoresby is not negotiable.

Q: But I'm just asking my question - are you saying that if you win in your own right you will not form a coalition with the National Party?

A: Well, as I say, we are happy to talk to them, but we would not be being dictated to and I don't think that's helpful.

Q: ...do you believe that given that the Labor Party is giving the National Party preferences, that some sort of secret deal is being done, and that in future you will see the National Party suddenly voting for Labor Party to put a few things through in the Upper House?

A: Brendan, you are a terrible conspiracy theorist. Look, there was a period of about 48 or maybe 72 hours where the Labor Party were going to

preference us above the National Party but apparently they had a road to Damascus conversion, and have now decided they will preference the National Party. There's not much we can do about that. I don't believe there was any sort of secret deal done. I just think it's the Labor Party deciding that's what they will do finally. You know, neither the Nationals nor we can have any say in that, and we are preferencing the Nationals second.

Q: on-the-spot fines for rowdy behaviour in Parliament, do you think this might leave some of your own MPs a bit out of pocket, if you were to form a coalition government with them?

A: Yeah, I heard Peter announced that one. Look I'm not sure whether on-the-spot fines are the way to go, but to take something seriously, I do regret some of the behaviour in Parliament. I mean, we all say it, but then not much happens. You sometimes look at the faces of a class of school children who are there and they think to themselves, if we behave like that in our classroom we know what the consequences would be, and yet they've just seen the Parliament of Victoria usually in Question Time in some kind of uproar. I think we do seriously need to look at the conduct of Parliament and the conduct, in particular, of Question Time. I think that you can still have a red hot clash of policies and philosophies, but I really regret the personal that creeps in, the invective that creeps in and I don't think that is helpful to anybody. I would very much like to see the behaviour in Parliament more reflecting the importance of the institution. I mean, it's no wonder that respect for institutions declines when the behaviour of that institution doesn't inspire respect. For the most part, those of you would know, it's not the newsworthy part, but for the most part, the Parliament does work harmoniously and indeed, 90% of the time in a way where it is constructive debate. We need to do something about the other 10% where it is not working. I'm not sure I would agree with on-the-spot fines. I think that the, I must say personally, and I say that when I'm talking to school groups, I think that it is a terrible thing to be thrown out of Parliament. Because you have then denied a voice in the Parliament of Victoria to the 35,000 constituents who sent you there. And I think that is a real responsibility that rests on your shoulders. So I don't think you need that, but I do agree with Peter 100% that we do need to improve the accountability and the responsibility of the Parliament to behave in a way that is appropriate to the institution.

Q: ...on reinstating technical schools, would you suggest then that these schools would in fact replace vocational education and training that exists in current secondary schools?

A: No. It's a very good question thank you. No, I don't see it as replacing that and in fact, for some schools, they might not want a separate technical

school - they're already doing that sort of vocational education. But they would like, within their own school, to beef that up more. So it's not necessarily building a new school, it may be helping them to do that even better. It's certainly not to replace TAFE or the adult and community sector either. It is for 9 to 12. In some instances, some communities may well want to set up a completely separate school - a 9 to 12 school that's technical. But in many cases I believe that we can work on the great work that's already being done.

Q: So these VET courses within secondary schools are often not only technical training but also traditional secondary studies won't be compromised?

A: Oh not at all. In fact I would see them as being enhanced.

PB: I think it's a bit like Question Time in Parliament when you see so many questions fired at such a short period at the Opposition Leader and I think he was able to withstand the onslaught from the media. I think Mr Doyle should be a touch nervous at the present time because we have a tradition in the Press Club that we give unusual gifts. We gave the Premier, Jeff Kennett, a shovel, after he shovelled sand at the members of the Press. We gave the Premier Mr Bracks, some sausages, and some BBQ tongs after he cancelled the police BBQ after the World Forum in Melbourne. So Mr Doyle, it's a tremendous gift we have given you, it is not sausages, and so to that degree I think you should be very, very pleased. But I very much like to thank Mark Knight of the Herald Sun, and Mr Doyle if you would like to accept this gift on behalf of the Press Club. And I think it shows to some degree the empty chair or if the chair wasn't empty, certainly someone who's a little short and looking over the lectern. And it should be tremendous on your office wall. And so could I just, on behalf of everyone, thank Mr Doyle for coming and addressing us today and, in a non political way, we all wish him well this Saturday.