The need to develop and maintain roads as described in the previous chapter led to the establishment of early local government bodies such as road boards, which evolved into the two local councils. This marked an important step in the historic development of the study area. The Cities of Prahran and Malvern developed quite distinct identities, which were centred on their Town Halls.

Stonnington also has strong links to politics at both a state and federal level. The study area has the distinction of being the only municipality that has provided two official residences for Governors of Victoria, firstly during the era of colonial administration, and later immediately after Federation. Since the time of responsible government in Victoria the study area has been home to an extraordinary number of prominent politicians at both state and federal levels, mostly on the conservative side of politics.

During both World Wars, and after, many of the large buildings in the study area were suitable for war-time use and were taken over for the war effort. The area’s people and factories also contributed to the war efforts.

This chapter incorporates the following themes:

Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV)
Government administration of resources for Aboriginal people.

Australian Heritage Criteria (AHC)
Governing; Developing institutions of self-government and democracy; Administering Australia; Defending Australia; Establishing regional and local identity.
HISTORY

5.1 Government administration of resources for Aboriginal people

As we have seen in chapter 3.1, following the closure of Langhorne’s Mission the buildings were taken over by the Aboriginal Protectorate as a headquarters from which to administer one of the most important Aboriginal policy initiatives in the early history of Port Phillip. The Aboriginal Protectorate is one of the most significant chapters in the history of Australian Government policy. Throughout the 1830s concerns had been voiced in both Australia and Britain over the violent manner in which settlement was proceeding in the colonies. There was clearly a need to manage the conflict arising from the European occupation of traditional lands (Presland, 1985:96). In 1835, a new government was elected in Britain which resulted in the appointment of members of the Humanitarian Reform Movement to the Colonial Office. On advice from Tasmania’s Governor Arthur, a House of Commons Select Committee on Native Peoples was established. The committee made a number of recommendations, among which was the establishment of an Aboriginal Protectorate. The system was to be trialled in the Port Phillip District.

The Aboriginal Protectorate comprised a Chief Protector (George Augustus Robinson) and four Assistant Protectors. The Protectors were required to live and travel with the Aboriginal people in their district, record accurate census data and learn their language and customs. The ultimate aim was to persuade them to settle down on reserved areas of land. Once settled, the people were to be educated and taught Christianity and agriculture. The Protectors were also responsible for the distribution of rations and supplies (Foxcroft, 1941:58).
William Thomas was the Assistant Protector for the Melbourne-Westernport region. Despite the fact that the Assistant Protectors were required to travel throughout their region, Thomas spent the first couple of years assisting Robinson managing the camps on the south bank of the Yarra where Aboriginal people continued to congregate. Robinson's tendency to constantly recall Thomas from his field duties back to Melbourne to assist with the camps caused considerable tensions between the two men. Thomas was horrified by the conditions he encountered in the Yarra camps. The camps had become a point of congregation for a number of Aboriginal tribes who were suffering the many effects of rapid and comprehensive dispossession. Many of the people were seriously ill and violence was rife. Alcoholism and sexual violence were becoming a major problem and Thomas found that he received little assistance from the authorities to manage this situation. The Government in fact essentially shifted blame and responsibility for the condition of the Yarra camps to Thomas by requiring the Protectorate to break up the camps and persuade their residents to return to their traditional lands. Attempts to do so were a failure (Historical Records of Victoria Vol 2B: 518).

Government authorities were very keen to move Aboriginal people away from the camps on the Yarra as a matter of priority. Robinson wrote to La Trobe:

*I am decidedly opposed to aboriginal natives visiting towns, or indeed any settlement where a large body of whites are congregated… The expelling of the natives from the environs of the township, and depriving them of the use of firearms, involves, unless carefully entered upon, a question of no ordinary import, a question affecting the future peace and wellbeing of white inhabitants of this rising province* (GA Robinson to CJ La Trobe, 28 October 1839, reprinted in the Historical Records of Victoria Vol 2B: 600).

Robinson himself successfully speculated in property in the area and purchased a number of lots in what is now the study area, including places along Chapel Street. It has been suggested that Robinson employed Aboriginal people to help him build his properties. A list of words compiled by Clark and Heydon (2002) contains a number of Aboriginal place names associated with or close to Robinson's properties. These include Kubering, Narmbeet, Mowung and Terneet.

5.2 Governing Australia

The Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, Charles Joseph La Trobe, provided his own modest house in Jolimont, which he sold on his return to England in 1854. Since separation from New South Wales and the discovery of gold in 1851 the insignificant Port Phillip district had become the thriving colony of Victoria, and a house befitting the Lieutenant Governor of such a Colony was sought. As it happened, a suitable house was available in the study area. A wealthy merchant, James Jackson, had built a mansion, *Toorak House*, on 148 acres in 1850, but had died at sea on a voyage to England in 1851 and never lived in his new house. Subsequently Jackson's family let the house to a tenant for two years, and then leased it to the Victorian Government. *Toorak House* was the official residence for five successive Governors, until 1875, when the new Government House was built in The Domain. Before Lieutenant-Governor (later Governor) Sir Charles Hotham took up residence in 1854, Gardiners Creek Road (now Toorak Road) was made – the only properly formed road in the study area for some time. *Toorak House*, believed to be the study area's oldest surviving mansion, is now owned by the Swedish Church (Malone, 2004:3–5; A Place in History, No.26).
Arrival of Governor Sir George Sydenham Clarke, KCMG FRS, at Malvern Town Hall on 10 December 1901 to take up residence at Stonington.

[SLHC Reg. No. 1175]
At the time of Federation in 1901, Melbourne was selected as Australia’s seat of government. Consequently the Governor General took up residence in Government House in The Domain, and another suitable mansion was sought for the Victorian Governor. Again, a house with the prestige and grandeur appropriate for the Governor was found in Malvern. Stonington, a large boom mansion in Glenferrie Road, had been built for John Wagner, a partner in Cobb and Co Coaches, in 1890. After Wagner’s death in 1901, the mansion was taken over as the residence of seven successive Governors of Victoria, prior to the transfer of the Commonwealth Government to Canberra. The property was purchased by the Victorian Government in 1928, and has since been used, mainly, for educational purposes. The spelling of the property’s name was changed to Stonnington but reverted to Stonington when Stonnington was adopted as the name of the new municipality formed following the Kennett Government’s municipal restructure in 1994 (A Place in History, No.34). The original spelling – Stonnington – for the house has been used throughout this study.

5.3 Creating a centre of Australia’s political life

As Strahan has commented, ‘Malvern’s political eminence has become part of the nation’s annals’ (1989:190). As Toorak, Armadale and Malvern developed into desirable and prestigious suburbs they naturally attracted successful people with ambition, leadership qualities and an interest in public life who formed strong networks within the study area. Clearly, the presence of the Governor in Toorak House attracted politicians to live in the area in the mid nineteenth century as did Stonington in the twentieth. As we shall see, many prominent members of Parliament, both state and federal (but mostly on the conservative side of politics), including several Victorian Premiers and Prime Ministers of Australia have had close associations with the study area.

5.3.1 Politicians and their places of residence

State Government

At least six Premiers have been residents of the study area, before, during or after their term of office. One of the first was (Sir) James Alexander McPherson MLA, Premier 1869–70, who built Umina in Toorak in 1875. The house was later owned by Norman Bayles MLA, who was a famous tennis player. Umina is now the headquarters of the Country Women’s Association (Malone, 2004:13; Victorian Year Book, 1973:1150).

George Briscoe Kerferd, who was Premier for a year in 1874–75, and later Attorney General, became a judge of the Supreme Court in the mid 1880s. He built the large mansion Everton near the corner of Malvern Road and High Street. The house was later called Ranfurly and became part of Korowa Girls’ School before it was demolished (Victorian Year Book 1973:1150; Cannon, 1972:387; Raworth and Foster, 1997:8–9).

Graham Berry stands out as a rare radical parliamentary representative of the study area who attained high office in government. Before he entered Parliament, Berry was a grocer, whose shop was on the corner of Palermo and Chapel streets. Berry was Premier of Victoria for three terms between 1875 and 1881. He is perhaps best remembered for his action on ‘Black Wednesday’ 1878, when he sacked 200 conservative civil servants, ostensibly as a cost-cutting measure, but also as a purge of conservative elements from his administration (Cooper, 1924:45; Malone, 2000:51; Victorian Year Book, 1973:1151; de Serville, 1991:114).
Landboomer Sir James Munro was Premier from 1890 until his financial ruin in 1892. As we have seen in Chapter 3, his Armadale House is now part of the King David School. Sir William Irvine, a Chief Justice and then Premier from 1902 to 1904, lived at Glamorgan (demolished) in his later years. Glamorgan School now occupies the site (Malone, 2002:21).

The most recent and probably longest serving of the study area’s politician residents is Lindsay Thompson, who has lived most of his life in Glen Iris, and has been involved in the local community. Thompson taught at Spring Road School, Malvern and Melbourne High School before entering politics. He represented local people in both houses of State Parliament for 28 years from 1955, during which time he was Minister for Education in the Bolte and Hamer Liberal Governments, and Premier of Victoria in 1981–1982 (recorded interview 13 July 2000, MECWA).

Federal Government

At the federal level the forebears of Prime Ministers Malcolm Fraser and Stanley Melbourne Bruce resided in the study area. Bruce’s father built Wombalano (demolished) in Toorak (Foster, 1999:50–52). Sir Simon Fraser, Malcolm’s grandfather and a Member of Parliament himself, built the Toorak mansion Norla (demolished) in 1889 (Malone, 2004:48–49).

Henry Bourne Higgins, a radical politician and judge, lived at his residence Doona (demolished), in Glenferrie Road near the corner of Stonnington Place from 1884 until his death in 1929. Higgins was a father of Federation, a Member of the first Commonwealth Parliament, a High Court Judge and President of the Arbitration Court. He is perhaps best known for his 1907 ‘Harvester Judgment’, which was the first attempt to set a minimum wage based on the needs of a worker and his family. The Higgins electorate is named after him (A Place in History, No.35).

Australia’s longest serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, lived in Haverbrack Avenue, Malvern, after his retirement. The house was purchased as a permanent home for Menzies and his wife, Dame Pattie, by a group of wealthy businessmen. Dame Pattie moved to Kooyong after her husband’s death in 1978 (Langmore, 1992:197–98). The Sir Robert Menzies Reserve in Toorak Road, Malvern, is the study area’s memorial to Menzies.

The federal politician who had the strongest association with the study area was Harold Holt, who in 1939 was elected as a conservative representative for the seat of Fawkner, which then covered much of the study area. When the new seat of Higgins was formed in 1949, it covered much of the old Fawkner electorate and took in the eastern side of the study area. Holt was Member for Higgins in Canberra until his death in 1967. For most of his political career, Holt was a cabinet minister and Treasurer in successive Menzies Governments. He took over from Menzies as Prime Minister in 1966. Holt and his wife, Zara, bought the house at 112 St George’s Road, Toorak, and this was their main home until they moved to the Lodge in Canberra. Holt disappeared from a Portsea beach in December 1967 and was presumed drowned (Carroll, 2004:202–05; Langmore, 1992:207). Ironically, his monument in the study area is the Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre in High Street, Glen Iris.
5.3.2 Forming political associations

Malvern Town Hall, situated in the heart of the ‘blue ribbon’ Liberal seat of Higgins, has seen many a political meeting, mostly – but not entirely – of the conservative kind. Harold Holt launched his electoral campaigns in the Town Hall in the 1940s, (Strahan, 1989:203–04) as did Lindsay Thompson a decade later:

[Malvern Town Hall] always had a certain fascination for me and I had my first election meeting, during the by-election campaign in Higinbotham in January 1955, at the Malvern Town Hall. The other speakers were the late Harold Holt and the late Sir Henry Bolte. It was a memorable evening listening to them (recorded interview 13 July 2000, MECWA).

Strahan notes that Malvern Town Hall was the venue for a demonstration in favour of women’s suffrage in 1900. A year earlier ‘a number of ladies’ attended a Town Hall meeting about Federation. Much later, the Malvern Town Hall was also the venue for public meetings to discuss the proposed South Eastern Freeway link (Strahan, 1989:197–98, 201 and 259).
5.4 Developing local government authorities

As we have seen in the previous chapters, as roads were developed, so there was a need to maintain and improve them. This led to the creation of Roads Boards in the 1850s, which were the forebears of what would later become the Cities of Prahran and Malvern. The Road Act 1853 established the Central Road Board with the authority to build main roads, and gave local communities the power to elect district road boards which would be responsible for the provision of local roads. The creation of road districts, with their elected road boards allowed land holders and householders a role in the development of their districts. This was the earliest form of local government and evolved into local councils, which eventually became the City of Prahran and the City of Malvern. Over time, the Prahran and Malvern municipalities developed quite distinct identities, which were centred on their Town halls.

The formal declaration of local government authorities began to define the character of each area, which in turn led to the sense that new settlers belonged to a community of similar interests. As a result the first civic and community institutions began to form, which shall be discussed further in chapters 9 and 10.

In the Victorian municipal restructure of 1994 the Cities of Prahran and Malvern were amalgamated to form the City of Stonnington.

5.4.1 The municipality of Prahran

For the residents of the low-lying parts of Prahran the most pressing need was drainage. In April 1854 a meeting was convened in the district’s first church, the Independent Chapel (demolished) in Chapel Street to discuss the matter. The meeting resulted in the formation of the Prahran Road District, proclaimed on 17 May 1854. The boundaries of the Road District were set at Punt Road, the Yarra River, the Main Dandenong Road and the ‘road running from the Main Dandenong Road east of Mrs Chomley’s to the River Yarra’, later known as Kooyong Road. There did not seem to be any interest in forming a Prahran Road Board to administer the District, and in the following year on 24 April 1855, the same area was proclaimed the Municipal District of Prahran under the new Municipalities Act. Prahran was thus among the first local government authorities created in Melbourne.

Not all residents of the District were in favour of the new municipality, however. People living on higher ground did not want to see their money spent on drainage for the people of the lower areas, and the formation of a Municipal Council was stalled while the opposing groups argued. Eventually the first Prahran Council was elected in February 1856, with merchant F.J. Sargood, of Dandenong Road, as Chairman (Cooper, 1924:55–84).

Early council meetings were held in the Mechanics’ Institute, built in Chapel Street in 1856 (later moved to High Street) before the Town Hall, Council Chamber and offices, designed by Crouch and Wilson, were opened in 1861 (Cooper, 1924:112–13). Reflecting the municipality’s elevation to the status of a City in 1879, the building was extended and renovated in the 1880s, taking over the site of the Court House on the corner of Greville Street. A larger city hall was built behind the original building and the tower was replaced with the present taller more ornate tower. The new hall was rebuilt after it was damaged by fire in 1916. In the 1920s the idea of building a new civic centre on another site was considered and abandoned, so the Town Hall remained in its location at the hub of Prahran (Malone, 1983:10–11).

The Town Hall was the centre of administration for the Prahran municipality, and also a centre of social, cultural and political life for the municipality’s residents. Over the years it has been the venue for many balls, concerts, school speech nights and fundraising functions. In earlier times many forms of official assistance were channeled to communities through local councils, so that local Town Halls served as welfare centres, where people came for relief from disasters – floods in the case of Prahran – unemployment relief, immunisations, and to apply for the age pension. The Prahran Town Hall was also the centre of political activity, and protest meetings (Malone, 1983:12–13). The building thus provided a focal point for the local community, as well as expressing civic and parochial pride.
5.4.2 The municipality of Malvern

On the Malvern side of the study area, municipal development took a slightly different path. Shortly after the Gardiner Road District was proclaimed on 7 October 1856, the Gardiner Road Board was elected at a meeting at the Wattle Tree Hotel. Stock and station agent Gideon Rutherford was the Board’s first Chairman. Cooper notes that Malvern is one of the few cities in Victoria to pass through all the municipal grades (Cooper 1935:21–24, 26). The Shire of Gardiner was proclaimed on 26 May 1871, and the name was changed to Shire of Malvern in February 1878. Malvern was proclaimed a Borough in February 1901 and a Town in April 1901. The City of Malvern was declared on 30 May 1911 (Victorian Municipal Directory).

It seems that the Gardiner Road Board held its early meetings in a schoolroom at St George’s Anglican Church in Glenferrie Road. Later Road Board and Shire Council meetings were held in the Court House, which was built around 1858. In 1878 a site was reserved for a Shire Hall, Court House and Public Library on the corner of Glenferrie Road and High Street. It was decided that the Shire Hall building would incorporate a new Court House – the old one having to be moved to make way for the new building – and the Crown Law Department contributed towards its cost.

It was not uncommon for several functions to be combined in nineteenth century municipal halls, even though they represented different levels of government. The arrangement between municipal and colonial governments to share costs resulted in large and impressive civic centres that proclaimed the status of the town or shire. The Malvern Shire Hall was indeed an impressive building, reflecting the prosperity of the boom years of the late nineteenth century and Malvern’s growth during that time. Designed by Wilson and Beswick, it incorporated the Shire Hall, Court House, Municipal Library and the necessary offices for council and court officials. The new building was opened in July 1886. In 1890 the Hall was extended to the north and the second tower added (Cooper, 1935:148–52; McIntosh and O’Neill, 1991:35–37). A new main hall was built and further additions made in 1926. Like the Prahran Town Hall, Malvern Town Hall has been the venue for a variety of social and fund raising-events, and political meetings as well as the community’s municipal and civic centre.

5.4.3 City of Stonnington

The City of Stonnington was formed in 1994 as part of the then State Government’s program of municipal restructure. It comprises the whole of the former two cities, with the exception of a small portion of Prahran between Queens Way and Wellington Street, which was excised and became part of the City of Port Phillip. Since amalgamation the new council has been conscious of the need to avoid dividing the city along the old Kooyong Road boundary. This desire has been reflected in the ward boundaries, which have been re-drawn three times; each time it has included wards that extend across the former municipal boundary.

Maps showing the ward boundaries of the City of Stonnington and for the City of Malvern and City of Prahran are included in Appendix 3.
Municipality
Prahran Town Hall c.1861 showing the old court house at the corner of Greville Street. (SLHC Reg. No. 7367)

Electric tram decorated to celebrate the proclamation of the City of Malvern in 1911.
PROV, Tramways Collection, neg H386 © State of Victoria. Reproduced with the permission of the Keeper of Public Records, Public Record Office Victoria, Australia. (SLHC Reg. No. 5068)
5.5 Defending Australia

During both World Wars the two Town Halls in the study area made their contributions to the war efforts. The Prahran Town Hall was a recruiting centre during World War I. At the commencement of World War II the Malvern Council boasted that it was the first suburban council to establish a recruiting depot in a Town Hall (Malone, 1983:12; Strahan, 1989:172). In both wars the Town Halls were venues for fundraising activities of organisations that were geared up to support the war effort, including Red Cross and the Prahran Patriotic Society.

In World War II a number of the study area’s mansions were put to use for the war effort. Woorigoleen (demolished, was located 530 Toorak Road) built for pastoralist William Cumming, was used for accommodation for members of the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (Malone, 2005:33–34). Stonington was used as a Red Cross convalescent hospital. Heathfield (formerly Wombalano, demolished, only entrance gates remain) the home of newspaper proprietor Sir Keith Murdoch and Lady Elisabeth Murdoch, was used as the headquarters of Lt. Gen. George H. Brett, US Air Force in command of American troops in Australia (A Place in History, No.33). Meanwhile, part of the site of the old ‘Black Bridge’, which once carried the Outer Circle Line across Gardiners Creek, was used for anti-aircraft gun emplacements.

After the war Greenwich House (Irving Road, Toorak), which had seen as many name changes as owners, became a hostel for female staff of the Royal Australian Navy. It now houses the Chinese Consulate (Malone, 2004:34–35).

Some of the area’s factories switched to the production of weapons and uniforms during the World War II. In Malvern, Martin and King produced aircraft parts. An army tank factory was established at Holmesglen (now part of Holmesglen College of TAFE), towards the end of the war – too late to make any contribution.

Another building used for the war effort was Melbourne High School. The Heritage Victoria citation for this property notes that:

The size and prestige of the building, as well as its key central location, led to its occupation by military authorities for four years from 1942, during which time the students were relocated to buildings in Malvern and Camberwell (VHR H1636, File No. 603146).
Ivii Everton (Ranfurlie) home of George Kerferd, c.1887. [SLHC Reg. No. 1279]
HERITAGE

The theme of Governing and Administering Australia is illustrated by a variety of heritage places that have important heritage values. These values are sometimes expressed in tangible ways, such as surviving physical fabric (buildings, structures, trees, landscapes etc.), but are also apparent in the associations and meanings embodied by the place for different communities. The strong associations of the study area with this theme once again reflects the wealth and influence of many of the people who chose to settle here, and is directly linked to the decision to use Toorak House as the residence for the Governor. This chapter provides a summary of the values associated with these places and provides a representative list of places. For further examples, reference should be made to the heritage studies and reports listed in the bibliography.

Governing Australia

The study area is notable within the metropolitan area for its strong associations with the governing and administration of Victoria since the mid-nineteenth century. This association is particularly demonstrated by the two former Governor’s residences (Toorak House and Stonington) as well as the many residences associated with politicians, judges and other public servants. Places associated with this theme include the former Governors’ residences Toorak House (21 St Georges Road, Toorak) and Stonington (336 Glenferrie Road, Malvern).

A place of political pre-eminence

The places associated with the theme of Governing and Administering Australia have historic and social significance as evidence of the importance of the study area in the development of Victoria and Australia’s political life. The study area is notable in a metropolitan and even a national context for the number of politicians and eminent public servants who have chosen to live here. It illustrates how the strong connection between wealth and privilege and political influence led to the study area becoming the home of many of Australia’s most powerful and influential politicians. Places associated with this theme include houses such as Umina (3 Lansell Road, Toorak) and Armadale (117 Kooyong Road, Armadale). Other places with political associations include Sir Robert Menzies Reserve, Toorak Road, Malvern, and Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre, High Street, Glen Iris.

Developing local government authorities

The study area demonstrates the development of local government administration in the nineteenth century in Victoria, which in turn illustrates the growth of Melbourne. The rapid growth of the municipalities and their ‘coming of age’ during the late nineteenth century in particular is illustrated by the stages of development of the municipal offices, with the grandeur of the buildings from the 1880s expressing the prosperity and civic pride at that time. Places associated with this theme include the former Wattle Tree Hotel (later Glendearg, 196 Wattletree Road), Malvern Town Hall complex, and Prahran Town Hall complex.

Defending Australia

Places within the study area were associated with Australia’s response to overseas conflict. Although little physical evidence exists to demonstrate these associations, the places associated with this theme are of interest because they illustrate the many different and varied ways that buildings and people were employed to support the war effort. Places associated with this theme include Woorigoleen (demolished), Melbourne High School and Greenwich House (now the Chinese Consulate, 75-77 Irving Road, Toorak).

U1 Update 1 Additional words added

U1 Update 1 Edit/Inserted additional words