AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS:
The Swinburne University Chair of Victorian Parliamentary Democracy.

Judy Maddigan, Speaker of the Victorian Parliament made the following announcement. I have included it in our journal first to congratulate all involved in what I am sure our Association sees as an exciting, encouraging and essential development.

Second, I sincerely hope that the creation of this chair will encourage other parliaments, universities and governments to cooperate to create other such chairs committed to supporting research and teaching in the fields of parliamentary democracy generally, or related fields such as representative democracy, and e-democracy the importance of which is also signalled in this edition in the reported speech made by Professor Stephen Coleman, Cisco Professor of e-Democracy at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford.

Well done Victoria!

Maybe it is not too late for the NSW and SA Parliaments to celebrate their up-coming sesquicentenaries of responsible government by similar involvement in the creation of some form of on-going research Institute or teaching and research chair dedicated to parliament democracy.

Your editor

Swinburne University Chair of Victorian Parliamentary Democracy

In late 2003 Swinburne University approached the Victorian Parliament with a proposal to establish a Chair in Victorian Parliamentary Democracy, based at the University's Institute of Social Research.

The Parliament did not have the funding to fully fund the Chair at the time so support was sought from the State Government

The Government responded positively and agreed to financially fund the Chair for an initial 5 year period. Under the proposal Swinburne was to fund 50% of the funding. Of the other funding the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Victorian Communities and the Department of Premier and Cabinet were to pay 30% each and the Parliament, 10%. The Parliament was to have responsibility for the project through the Office of the Speaker.

One of the reasons for the establishment of the Chair was the lack of academic research relating to State Parliaments, particularly the Victorian Parliament. To ensure that the project was not seen to be in any way 'political' the Government passed full responsibility to the Parliament.

The key responsibility areas for the Chair are:-

1. **Academic leadership:** Build and lead a non-partisan teaching and research team with expertise in Victorian Parliamentary democracy.

2. **Collaboration with Parliament**: Report to, advise, and consult with a broadly-based Parliamentary committee overseeing the work program of the Chair. Consult with the staff of the parliament as appropriate and undertake tasks that will strengthen Victorian's understanding of parliamentary democracy in Victoria

3. **Research**: Conduct and public high quality research into issues relevant to the parliament of Victoria and democracy generally, including international and interstate comparative work where appropriate.

4. **Educational programmes**: Develop teaching and information services related to the needs of the Victorian parliament, in consultation with the Education Officer of the parliament and other relevant staff.

5. **Community programs**: develop and lead public programs, including talks, conferences and seminars relevant to Victorian parliamentary democracy, in consultation with the Education Officer of the Victorian parliament and other relevant staff.

6. **Partnerships**: Develop collaborative research and educational partnerships with relevant public sector agencies, educational institutions, community groups and industry bodies.

A Reference Group was established which comprises the Speaker (Mrs Judy Maddigan); the Clerk of the Parliament; (Mr Ray Purdey) a Government representative (Ms Ann Barker), an Opposition representative (Mr Phil Honeywood), a Nationals representative (Mr Bill Baxter). Swinburne University is represented by Professor Ian Young, the Vice-Chancellor, and Julian Thomas.

The Reference Group will meet normally at the beginning of the year to develop the work plan for the year, and at the end of the year to review progress.

On 12th May, Prof. Brian Costar was appointed as the first Chair. He has over 30 years experience in academic worlds.

The initial work plan includes

1. A paper on the constitutional reforms of the Legislative Council. (This has already been published entitled *Reformed bicameralism: The Victorian Legislative Council in the Twenty-First century.*

2. Committee of the Victorian Parliament : Present and Future (currently underway)

3. Workloads of Members of the Victorian Parliament

4. Voting patterns

The role of the Chair is still in the developmental stage, but other possible activities include an annual lecture, the first of which will occur as part of the Parliament's 150th celebrations, as well as involvement in other Parliamentary activities such as Open Day.

The creation of the Chair has been well received, and the Parliament of Victoria is pleased to be involved in a project which will further inform the public of the parliamentary system in this State.   ▲