

## EPILOGUE

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Victoria is part of a nation founded as a result of British exploration and expansion in the late eighteenth century. The Colony owed its permanent existence to the enterprise of settlers seeking new lands to develop in the 1830s rather than to the provision of a penal colony, although its Aboriginal inhabitants were subjugated in this advance of European civilisation. The discovery of gold attracted large numbers of migrants, many of whom later sought land to farm. After Separation from New South Wales in 1851, with the independent establishment in Victoria of the British institutions—Crown, Parliament, Judiciary, and Executive—and with an energetic population, it experienced a rapid growth towards prosperity based on manufacturing as well as agriculture by the 1880s, only to be followed by a severe economic depression in the following decade. People born in Australia began to outnumber those of British origin and a distinct national character began to emerge.

The fifty years from 1884 to 1934 saw some strengthening of this national tendency throughout Australia. From Federation in 1901, the spread of transport and communication networks across a vast land was one unifying factor but, sadly, it was the shared suffering on the beaches of Gallipoli and in the fields of France and Flanders that showed that there was no real difference between the people because of State boundaries. Rather than population, however, the size of the country and its physical and climatic variations were governing factors in the task of administering widely separated communities. In many ways the States remained individual in their political, social and economic experience, although the hardships of the 1930s Depression were felt across the whole land. Victoria was still enduring unemployment, with low marriage and birth rates and much misery, when it celebrated its Centenary.

Since 1934—the period with which this book deals at length—the generation of Victorians who had lived through the Depression was called upon to make further sacrifices in the Second World War from 1939 to 1945. The war quickly dispelled unemployment and women were encouraged to join the labour force. Victoria became a supply base, giving its manufacturing sector additional stimulus, which ensured that on the resumption of peace it could turn to production of a wider range of commodities. By the 1950s the growth in population, resulting largely from immigration, provided demand for housing, transport, roads, community facilities, and goods and services. For two decades there were good seasons free from droughts, with full employment, and general prosperity. Since the mid-1970s, however, inflationary forces appeared, together with unemployment.

This sesquicentenary year of 1984 completes the third fifty year period since the establishment of the Henty settlement at Portland. The period saw the achievement of relative material affluence and a higher standard of living, brought about in part by improvements in health and welfare and greater educational opportunities. The rapid advance of technology, especially the computer, has had a significant impact on work. The change from a populace of almost completely British extraction to a more cosmopolitan demographic structure has done much to vary community life. Consideration of the environment and concern for the less privileged indicate growing social maturity. It is hoped that the material contained in this book will provide a valuable background for the study of the interaction of such factors which contributed to the moulding of Victoria's recent past, as well as a useful guide to analysing future changes in Victorian society.