



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER
PROTECTION
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

OPINION PIECE

SNAPSHOTS OF GEELONG

Visiting my grandparents in Queensland during my childhood required long and boring journeys made in the uncomfortably hot cars of the seventies.

The cricket on the radio helped as did various communal games.

But these were fundamentally trips that were defined by the enduring question: “how far to go?”

On the way home, having passed Melbourne, eyes became peeled and the intensity increased as this question would be answered by the first person in the car, looking out the left hand window, to see one critical landmark: the red and white Shell smokestack.

For me, it was then, and remains to this day, the definition of coming home.

My Geelong memories are of place and habit and community.

Like going to Kardinia Park with my Dad. I remember squeezing my way down to the fence at the City end, with my eyes at waist height, attempting not to unsettle those perched on the VB cans for a better view.

At quarter time I'd make my way back to Dad and discuss the game.

Often we would run into friends and the experience would be shared by kids and parents alike. It was a ritual that continued for years.

While nowadays standing at Kardinia Park is the exception rather than the rule, this year, with two of my own children, I've been able to renew the experience on the Gary Ablett Terrace.

As the kids headed to the fence I immediately rang Dad, now an octogenarian, to share the moment. It was a deep joy that transcended the game.

I remember the *Geelong Addy* and its place in our lives.

In 1976 I won my age swimming championships at school and the Addy came to take my photo along with three others.

That photo stayed tacked on my wall for ages until it eventually disintegrated.

When my eldest son's name first appeared in the Addy after winning a golf tournament the circle had turned.

All of these experiences have endured from one generation to the next.

The physical surrounds remain particular and emblematic: the Alcoa water tower standing as a beacon on Point Henry, the bold Ford sign welcoming visitors to our city, and the T & G clock with its busy bell ringers providing delight in the heart of town.

In an ever-changing world continually reshaped by the tyranny of time, these are constants that are a bedrock of life. They help define who I am, for wherever I go, they give me a visceral sense of what it is to be from Geelong.

A common theme among indigenous cultures around the world is a deep connection with the land. The hills, the rivers, the reminders of place, take on a spiritual role as the custodian of identity.

Our place is an urban environment. Geelong is largely made of bricks and mortar. And while it must change over time we need to cherish and protect the elements of it that give us connection in a modern 21st century society.

Soon Geelong will face another test. Next week the smelting of aluminium at Alcoa will cease. By the end of the year there will be no production of any kind at Point Henry. And in 2016 Ford will stop making cars.

In due course decisions will be made about the Alcoa water tower and the Ford sign. Whoever makes them needs to bear in mind that these landmarks live in the memories of thousands. They connect us to our sense of home. They are an intrinsic part of our shared cultural heritage. And whatever else happens they must stay.

TUESDAY, 22 JULY 2014