

# It's no struggle for Wodonga

**WODONGA, 187 miles north-east of Melbourne, became Victoria's first rural city yesterday.**

About 5000 residents stood outside Wodonga's new civic centre to hear the Governor, **Sir Rohan Delacombe**, proclaim their city.

And late last night residents and councillors celebrated at a ball.

Wodonga's Mayor, **Cr Leslie Stone**, proudly displayed his new gold chain of office.

## **Melted down old chain**

"They melted down my old chain to make it: we don't waste anything," he said.

"Wodonga has a wonderful future, and I'm proud to be its last shire president and its first mayor."

**Cr Stone** said the council asked to be proclaimed a rural city six weeks ago.

"We sent the petition the day before the Federal Government announced its decentralisation plans for Albury and Wodonga," he said.

"We asked to be called a rural city as an indication to Australia that we will work to preserve the rural charm of the Wodonga area.

"We called a public

meeting to ask residents what they thought of the idea and they were wildly enthusiastic."

**Cr Stone** said Wodonga used to be called "struggle town" because of the difficulty it once had competing with Albury.

"Those days are gone now. We have a population of about 14,200 and a growth rate of 6 per cent a year," he said.

"Last night, the Rotary Club held a special 'death of struggle town' function to celebrate."

The Local Government Minister, **Mr Hunt**, and state and federal MPs also attended the celebration at Wodonga yesterday.