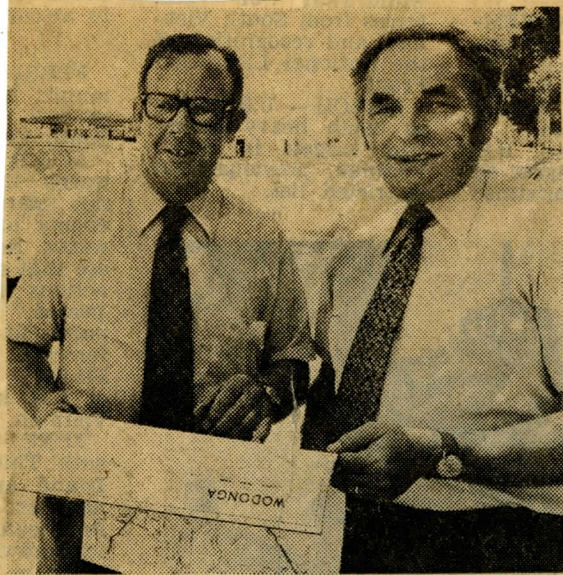


Murray towns wait for 'go' on a boom

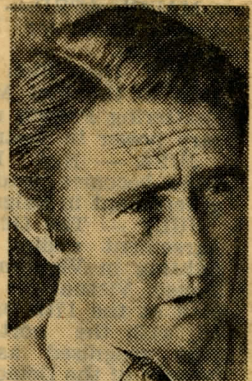


Wodonga's shire president, Cr Les Stone, left, with shire secretary, Mr Rutkowski.

From IAN HAMILTON,
Herald State Political Reporter

WODONGA. — The 43,000 people of the Murray River twin-centres, Albury and Wodonga, expect to hear big news tomorrow about their future.

They are still slightly amazed that their towns have been picked for Australia's first great inland city planning experiment.



Albury estate agent
Graham Marshall

The decision should come from the historic meeting at the Albury City Hall tomorrow of the leaders of three governments — the Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam; NSW Premier, Sir Robert Askin; and Victorian Premier, Mr Hamer.

The talk here is that conference will agree:

- To set up a single planning authority to decide the development pattern of the border area.

- That land prices will be controlled to frustrate the most blatant speculators.

- That the new-city plan should provide for self-contained satellite residential districts near the areas already developed.

Mr Hamer will press for cuts in phone and telex charges for industries set up away from their main markets — in particular industries in Wodonga and Albury.

Proposal

He will propose that the federal government use its tax powers to give out-of-city industries special concessions.

On the eve of the conference, I got opinions from some Wodonga and Albury residents — the people who will be affected most.

Mr Albert Green, 55, who runs a shoe repair and flower shop in the base of Wodonga's 110 ft. high water tower in High St. said: "The two towns definitely can work together."

"The \$64 question is if Victoria and New South Wales can."

"Whitlam will need to get the two states to agree on boundaries as the first step."

"I think the two places should be made into a federal territory like the ACT."

Albury's mayor, Ald. Tom Pearsall, 49, said: "Big development here is a foregone conclusion."

"Its speed depends on how much money the governments will pour in."

Ald. Pearsall said it was essential to freeze land prices to make sure land for home building would be available at "a reasonable price."

He said the price of home blocks in Albury now ranged from \$2500 to



Wodonga taxi - driver
Edmund O'Neill

\$4000, and in the "Toorak department" they were around \$9000.

Wodonga taxi driver Mr Edmund O'Neill, 54, said: "It's pretty hard to knock prosperity, particularly if it means better education for the young."

"But I would not like to see us become a big city — a medium-size city would suit me."

"A population of 50,000 would be better than 250,000. If it gets that big you don't even know the people next door."

Wodonga shire president, Cr Les Stone, 53, said: "The place is alive with excitement."

"Everyone is thinking 'What is going to happen to us this week' — not apprehensively but with hopeful expectation."

Quality

"Quality of life must be foremost in our planning."

"Otherwise we will just be duplicating the processes that have taken place in the Sydney and Melbourne metropolitan areas."

"They have overcrowding to the extent where the individual can lose his identity."

"Industry should be placed intelligently — not haphazardly as in Sydney and Melbourne."

Estate agent, Mr Graham Marshall, of Albury, said there were many inquiries for land in the district from outside speculators from Sydney and Melbourne, syndicates, private investors and developers.

"Some of these people are talking in terms of hundreds of thousands of dollars — and more," he said.