Last week I spent some time going around Western Victoria with the Premier, Mr. Hamer, and his Liberal candidates, for seats in the Lower House and in the Upper House. I believe that there is one thing in particular that impressed people that Mr. Hamer met, and that was his determination to see that decentralisation really worked. We now have a Premier who is dedicated to stop the overwhelming growth of Melbourne and to achieve a balanced development right across the State.

As you know, his Government has introduced a number of policies designed to achieve this very end. We are seeing the results of it: we are seeing now the new factories being established at Portland to produce pet food at an establishment cost of about $3,000,000. These factories will give added impetus to employment in Portland and this is good for Western Victoria.

Whatever governments might do, a great deal of thought will always rest upon those communities, and I am quite certain that there are many local communities such as Hamilton and other centres of Western Victoria that are doing more on their own behalf, than ever before. They also know they are getting more support from the State than ever before. It is disappointing, therefore, for me to learn some time ago in writing from the Commonwealth Minister for Urban and Regional Development that the Commonwealth has no specific plan to reinforce the Victorian Government's 10 Point Plan for Decentralisation, because if the Commonwealth had come in and reinforced what the State is doing with Commonwealth resources, I believe we would have achieved an even better result.

The Government is dedicated to the Albury-Wodonga project and it appears to me that the greater part of Commonwealth funds will be going to that particular operation and that they will not be trying to achieve a dispersed decentralisation broadly across Australia and it is the latter objective which I believe is more worthwhile.

I was disappointed to get an answer from Mr. Lionel Bowen, the Postmaster-General, on our country telephones a short while ago. I had asked him if he would continue with the previous Government's policy of gradually taking over at a full departmental responsibility, private lines for people who live in country areas. This has been a significant task of many farmers and many people living in country communities and we introduced the policy some years ago of progressively taking over these responsibilities as departmental matters.
But Mr. Bowen has pointed out that he believes that there are a very large number of people waiting for telephone services in the more closely settled and the developing centres. By that he means, in Sydney and Melbourne, and he continues "It would be unreasonable", he feels, "to ignore the needs of those people by devoting essential resources to cater for the needs of a lesser number of high class and generally low revenue services in rural areas".

I am afraid that those words carry a foreboding for people who want better telephone services in the country. I know in recent years that there have been very substantial improvements, but there is still much to be done, and I would hope that when this matter is examined in the Budget context that the rural communities and the expansion of rural telephone services will still get a degree of support from Commonwealth revenues.

There is one other matter that I'd like to mention and it is of enormous importance to Australia. It concerns V.I.P. flights and quarantine. It is becoming more common for Australian Prime Ministers, or even for Australian Ministers, to travel overseas on a V.I.P. flight, but when those people return in a V.I.P. aircraft, it is of the utmost importance that their aircraft go through the normal health and quarantine procedures that any commercial flight must. There is an example when this did not occur. The Prime Minister's V.I.P. flight returned from Mauritius only a few days ago, and there was a report in the "Daily Telegraph" in Sydney which indicated that some flowers from Mauritius were in the luggage. From the nature of the report it appeared that they had not been inspected properly by quarantine and Health Officers. I know that Mauritius is a high-disease risk area for Australia: foot and mouth is prevalent; if there is any dirt brought in in pot plants or flowers, i.e. pot plants with flowers growing, they could carry foot and mouth. So, these are very serious matters with the potential of great economic harm and damage to Australia.

I have just now had a letter from the Minister for Health who is responsible for quarantine, which indicates plainly that there was an oversight, and that the flowers in question were not declared to either Customs or Health Officers when the plane arrived in Canberra from overseas, and I hope that the Health and Customs Officers will take this lesson to heart and watch closely any future V.I.P. flights in order to make sure that the normal provisions are maintained and enforced just as rigidly on V.I.P's as on the average citizen.

From what I hear, no harm has come from this particular incident. However, there is a lesson in it which we need to take to heart for the future. It is my understanding that when they finally did hear of these particular flowers the Customs Officers inspected them closely and had satisfied themselves that there was no risk to Australia, or to Australian industries as a result of their importation. This type of event must not be allowed to happen again.