



Future MPs speak up

By **Meg Sobey**

AUSTRALIA'S future leaders were last week given an insight into life as a politician as part of Victorian Youth Parliament.

Students aged 16-25 sat in Parliament House, Spring Street, to raise issues important to young people.

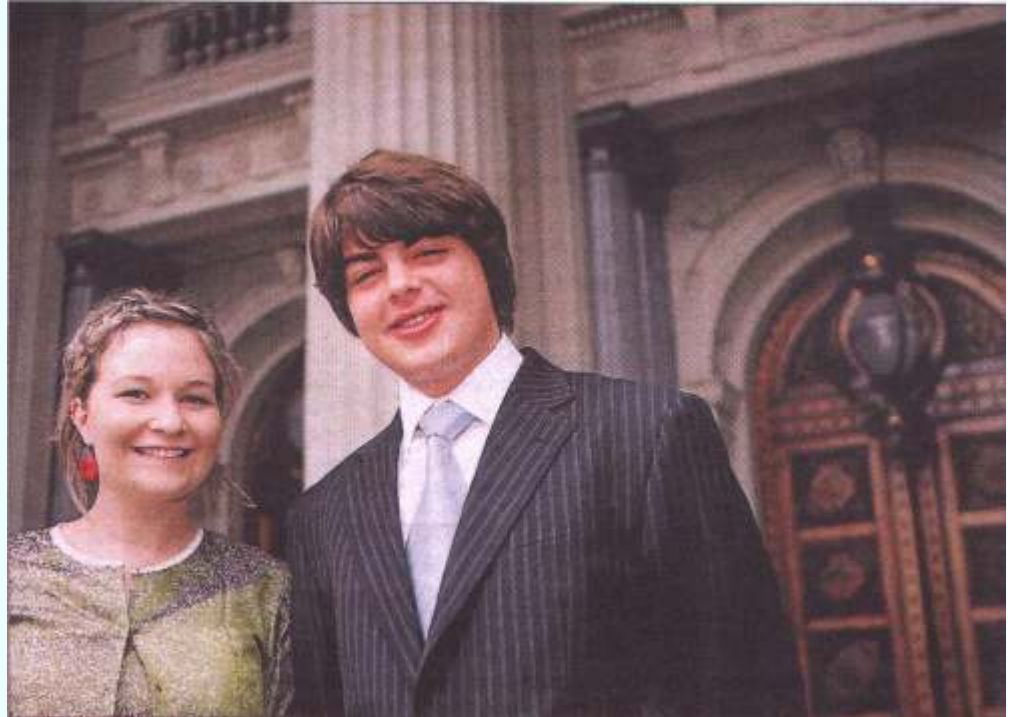
Twenty teams of six, including from Williamstown High School, Westbourne Grammar and Victoria University, each researched a topic with a mentor before presenting their bills in the Legislative Council where they were debated and amended in accordance with strict parliamentary procedures.

Luke Donnellan, parliamentary secretary to Premier John Brumby, said it was an opportunity for the young people to listen to others with different views.

"Youth Parliament is an excellent opportunity for young people to not only learn how Parliament works but also to think about issues from a range of different perspectives," Mr Donnellan said.

As part of the program, the State Government granted YMCA Victoria \$50,000 to help young people develop teamwork, public speaking and leadership skills.

Williamstown High School student Jessica Wiggan, 17, was excited to join the Youth Parlia-



Leading the way: Siobhan Shaw and Oliver Tripodi led the parliamentary proceedings last week to raise issues important to young people.

Picture: Michael Copp

ment. Her team put forward a proposal for advanced-care homes for young people with acquired disabilities.

"As a team, we are eager to motivate change, for the better, by any means possible," she said.

"As individuals, we're hoping to gain a better understanding of parliamentary

procedures," Jessica said.

Former Westbourne Grammar student Siobhan Shaw, 21, and Williamstown High School student Oliver Tripodi, 17, were elected to lead the proceedings.

"Youth Parliament gives young people a platform to be heard regardless of their gender, religion, sexuality, socio-economic status or

geographic location," Ms Shaw said.

All the bills passed by the Youth Parliament are given to Local Government Minister Richard Wynne for consideration within State Parliament.

More than 20 of the Youth Parliament's bills have been enacted into Victorian legislation.