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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# **Parliamentary Delegation to the European Parliament and Institutions and bilateral visit to Israel**

**Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation**

August 2012  
Canberra

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## Foreword

From 20 April to 4 May 2012, an Australian Parliamentary delegation continued the important custom of undertaking a biennial visit to the European Parliament and institutions and also undertook a bilateral visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The delegation arrived in Europe at an important time in our ongoing relationship. The Lisbon Treaty has been in place for several years and the European Parliament is balancing the strengths it has gained with the Treaty alongside the strengths being gained through the European Union economic crisis. This placed alongside an increasing European focus on the Asia Pacific region means that importance of Australian Parliament's relationship with the European Parliament is going to continue to grow.

Parliamentary delegations are an important part of building inter-parliamentary relationships. The opportunity to meet with parliamentary counterparts in the European Parliament in Brussels and the Belgium and French Senates and continue the already well-established parliamentary dialogue led to a frank and good humoured dialogue that benefitted all participants. The opportunity to connect with the Belgium Parliament came at a particularly good time as the new federal Government had only recently formed after 541 days of negotiations.

The delegation was honoured to spend Anzac Day at various commemorations in Belgium. The dignity in which the Belgium officials conducted the commemorations, and their hospitality to the many Australians present, is a sign of the strength of the friendship between our two nations.

Delegates were keen to absorb as much information as possible and while in Paris had a number of excellent meetings with representatives from the OECD, UNESCO, the International Energy Agency and the Nuclear Energy Agency. Representatives from these agencies were generous with their time and the wealth of knowledge they shared with the delegation. The delegation was also pleased to

meet a number of Australians working in these organisations, and representing the wealth of talent Australia has to share with the world.

The delegation concluded its visit in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, spending an informative day in Bethlehem and Ramallah and meeting with a range of Israeli officials in Jerusalem. Delegates were moved by their visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum and the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the Second World War.

While meeting with the Speaker of the Knesset, I extended a formal invitation for a delegation from Israel to visit Australia. I hope that we will soon be able to return the excellent hospitality that this delegation was offered while in Israel.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Australian Ambassadors and Embassy staff serving in Belgium and the European Union, France and Israel. Australia's interests are well served by these missions.

Finally, I thank all member of the delegation for their excellent, and bipartisan, manner in which they participated in our program of work. Parliamentary delegations are an opportunity to showcase the Australian Parliament to the world and this delegation fulfilled that brief.

**Senator the Hon John Hogg  
President of the Senate  
Leader of the Delegation**





## **Members of the Delegation**

**Leader**            **Senator the Hon John Hogg**  
President of the Senate  
Senator for Queensland  
Australian Labor Party

**Deputy Leader**   **Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald**  
Senator for Queensland  
Liberal Party of Australia

**Members**

**Mr Russell Broadbent MP**  
Member for McMillan  
Liberal Party of Australia

**Senator Bridget McKenzie**  
Senator for Victoria  
The Nationals

**Ms Deb O'Neill MP**  
Member for Robertson  
Australian Labor Party

**Mr Graham Perrett MP**  
Member for Moreton  
Australian Labor Party

**Accompanying Officer**    **Ms Julia Clifford**  
Advisor to the President of the Senate

**Delegation Secretary**    **Ms Siobhán Leyne**  
Delegation Secretary  
Department of the House of Representatives

The Delegation was accompanied by Mrs Sue Hogg, Mrs Lesley MacDonald, Mrs Bronwyn Broadbent, Mr Paul Macinante and Ms Leanne Scoines.

## Introduction

- 1.1 This report gives an account of an Australian Parliamentary Delegation to European Parliaments and Institutions from 21 April to 29 April 2012 and bilateral visit to Israel from 29 April to 4 May 2012.
- 1.2 Chapter 2 discusses meetings and activities undertaken by the delegation in Belgium, including the discussions taking place at the 35<sup>th</sup> Australia-European Union Inter-parliamentary meeting and ANZAC Day commemorations.
- 1.3 Chapter 3 discusses the meetings at a range of European institutions that the delegation participated in while visiting France.
- 1.4 Chapter 4 discusses the meetings and activities that the delegation participated in while in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.
- 1.5 Appendix A contains the delegation program. Membership of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Australia and New Zealand is listed at Appendix B, and Appendix C contains text of the formal greeting offered to the delegation by the Speaker of the Knesset.

## Aims and objectives

- 1.6 The Delegation's aims for its visit were to:
  - build and strengthen ties with the parliaments of Belgium, the European Union and France;

- participate in the 35<sup>th</sup> Australia-European Union (EU) Inter-parliamentary meeting;
- participate in Anzac Day Commemorations in Belgium;
- undertake meetings at a number of European institutions regarding issues of key concern to Australia, as outlined below; and to
- build and strengthen parliamentary ties with Israel.

1.7 The delegation's key aim in visiting the European Parliament was to participate in the 35<sup>th</sup> Australia-European Union (EU) Inter-parliamentary meeting, a biannual meeting between the Australian Parliament and the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Australia and New Zealand. Key objectives of this meeting were to discuss mutual areas of interest in:

- cyber security;
- foreign affairs issues;
- the economic situation in the EU and Australia, including the Euro zone debt situation;
- agricultural reform, including water and food security; and
- energy supply, nuclear energy and research.

1.8 These issues were also explored through the meetings held with the various European institutions in Paris.

1.9 The delegation's objectives were met. The delegation was pleased to represent the Australian Parliament at the European Parliament and pleased to have the opportunity to strengthen the Australian Parliament's ties with Belgium, France and Israel.

1.10 The delegation was interesting and informative, providing delegates with the opportunity to gain an understanding of issues which have a significant impact on Australia and to exchange views with parliamentary colleagues from across Europe and Israel.

## **Acknowledgements**

1.11 Prior to departure, the delegation received oral and written briefings from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) officers and written

briefings from the Parliamentary Library. The delegation is grateful for the assistance provided by these officials.

- 1.12 The delegation also acknowledges the efforts of the many people who contributed to the smooth operations of the visits, particularly those DFAT officers in each location.
- 1.13 The delegation also appreciates the assistance provided prior to the visit by the Parliament's International and Community Relations Office, in particular Mr Geoff Barnett.
- 1.14 Finally, the delegation thanks the many individuals and organisations with whom it met for their generosity in sharing their time, views and knowledge.



## Belgium and the European Parliament

### Belgium

#### Background

- 2.1 Belgium is a member of the European Union (EU) with a population of approximately 10.9 million. Belgium is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature comprising the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives.
- 2.2 Elections held in June 2010 were inconclusive, leading to 541 days of negotiations to broker a six-party coalition agreement. The new federal Government was sworn in on 6 December 2011. The delegation's visit provided an excellent opportunity to engage with the new Parliament following the formation of the new Government.
- 2.3 Australia and Belgium share common values and interests and have strong bilateral relations. This relationship is strengthened by our shared history formed during World War I. The ongoing commemoration of the war and the upcoming Centenary of the Great War (2014-18) remain of significance to both countries.
- 2.4 Belgium is ranked (2010) as Australia's 15<sup>th</sup> largest investor overall (A\$14.7 billion) and remains strongly supportive of Australia's move to enhance our relationship with the EU through a treaty-level agreement.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Brief for Parliamentary Delegation Visit to Belgium, France and Israel*, April 2012, pp. 5 and 9-11.

## Brussels

### Briefings

- 2.5 To commence the delegation's work program, His Excellency (HE) Ambassador Brendan Nelson and staff provided the delegation with a comprehensive briefing on Australia's relationship with Belgium, NATO and the EU and the range of issues and actions taken recently by Australia that have captured the attention of the EU.
- 2.6 Mr Guy Milton, Head of Inter-Institutional Relations, European Council gave a comprehensive briefing of the role, operations and relationships between the European institutions (the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission), including the evolution of institutional relations since the Lisbon Treaty entered into force (2009).
- 2.7 Mr Milton highlighted the European Council's increasing influence following the Lisbon Treaty and the current economic crisis, noting that many Members of the European Parliament had expressed frustration that key decisions were being taken at the Council level rather than in the Parliament.

### Belgian Senate

#### President of the Senate

- 2.8 Senator Sabine de Bethune, President of the Belgian Senate, welcomed the delegation to the Belgian Senate where the delegation was pleased to have the opportunity to tour the Senate chamber and learn about the history of the parliament and parliamentary buildings.
- 2.9 President de Bethune hosted a lunch for the delegation. This was an opportunity for the delegation to hold discussions in an informal setting with a number of attending Senators and Members from the Chamber of Representatives. A range of issues of mutual interest were discussed including trade and investment, forthcoming ANZAC Day commemorations and the domestic political situation in both nations.
- 2.10 President de Bethune noted the strong historical links forged between Australia and Belgium during World War I. The planned Centenary commemorations were discussed with all present agreeing on the importance this event will have for both nations.





**The delegation at the Belgian Senate with Senator Sabine de Buthane, Senators and Ambassador Nelson**

*Source: Senate of Belgium photography service*

### **Foreign Affairs Committee**

- 2.11 The delegation met with Senator Karl Vanlowe, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Senator Armand De Decker, Vice-President of the Belgian Senate and Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee to discuss mutual foreign affairs issues of concern.
- 2.12 Senator Vanlowe acknowledged the important role that Australia plays in the Asia-Pacific region and the need for those nations like Belgium support Australia's efforts in the region to promote peaceful democracy. Members of the delegation shared views on Australia's relationship with China and Indonesia and noted the role that Australia could play in facilitating greater EU involvement in the Pacific.
- 2.13 The role that Belgium plays in former African colonies was discussed. Senator De Decker noted that there is still a measure of confidence in Belgium held by former African colonies because the Belgium-run institutions are still operating effectively. Issues with the November 2011

elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (including violence, accusations of vote fraud and accusations of unfair results) highlighted the need for ongoing strengthening of those institutions supporting democracy.

- 2.14 Of key interest to both the delegation and the Belgian Foreign Affairs Committee is the potential to build the parliamentary relationship between both nations utilising the internet to promote more real-time communication. The meeting agreed that there are a range of areas of mutual cooperation that could be facilitated between the Belgian and Australian Parliament Foreign Affairs Committees, including:
- assisting the Belgian Parliament in increasing its understanding of the Asia-Pacific region;
  - increasing the profile of the Australian Parliament within Belgium and the EU; and
  - knowledge sharing on parliamentary systems and information technology (IT) security.
- 2.15 There are serious concerns for both parliaments regarding the security of IT systems.
- 2.16 Mr Emmanuel Willems, Senior Advisor to the Belgian Senate, gave the delegation an overview of the Belgian Parliament's approach to managing information technology resources and security. He noted that, unlike in Australia, the Belgian Senate does not issue devices, nor support individual Members and Senators but rather acts as an internet service provider within which parties maintain their own networks.
- 2.17 Mr Willems noted that, although the Senate is not considered a major target, there is an increasing need for individual security awareness and the approach taken to service provision is to balance security with Members' and Senators' privacy.
- 2.18 Mr Willems further noted that the only way to completely secure a system is to take it off the network (security through obscurity) and this is cost prohibitive for most small organisations (parliaments included). The meeting noted that this, however, is diametrically opposed to the objective of many parliaments, Belgium and Australia included, of utilising new and innovative IT methodologies to promote democracy and openness.

## European Parliament

- 2.19 The European Parliament has 754 Members elected from the EU's 27 Member states. Together with the Council of the European Union and the European Commission it exercises the legislative function of the EU and represents the largest trans-national democratic electorate in the world.
- 2.20 As a bloc, the EU is one of Australia's largest foreign investment and trading partners and Australia shares deep social, cultural and historical ties with many EU states.
- 2.21 This year (2012) marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australia-EU relations. Since 2008, the Australia-EU relationship has been guided by a Partnership Framework. However, Lisbon Treaty changes have created a new institutional structure within the EU which have impacted on Australia and how it interacts with the EU. In October 2010, Prime Minister Gillard proposed that Australia and the EU negotiate a treaty-level Framework agreement to:
- provide a firm underpinning for the bilateral relationship into the future;
  - underline our shared values;
  - strengthen our cooperation on international issues; and
  - provide for periodic leaders meetings.
- 2.22 Negotiations are expected to conclude before the end of 2012.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.23 On the evening of 23 April 2012, Mr Ionnis Tsoukalas MEP (Greece), Vice-Chair of the Delegation for Relations with Australia and New Zealand, on behalf of Ms Mara Bizzotto MEP (Italy), Chair, hosted a welcome reception for the delegation. This was an excellent opportunity for delegates to meet with parliamentary colleagues in an informal setting and to discuss matters of mutual interest prior to formal meetings held the following day.

## President of the European Parliament

- 2.24 The delegation met with Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament and Mr Klaus Welle, Secretary General of the European Parliament on 24 April 2012.

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2 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Brief for Parliamentary Delegation Visit to Belgium, France and Israel*, April 2012, pp. 13 – 16.

- 2.25 President Shultz expressed concern that the Eurozone debt situation had caused the EU to become more inward looking and that, although the Euro currency is stable, the management is unstable and elections are proving to be a referendum on Europe.
- 2.26 The state of current Eurozone governments and elections were discussed at some length. At the time of the delegation, the French elections were attracting a lot of attention and the day prior to the meeting the Dutch cabinet resigned becoming the eighth government to fall over the Eurozone crisis.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.27 President Shultz noted that, although the economy is strong, the EU is destabilising itself through internal politics. However, he welcomed European leaders' closer involvement with the European Parliament, noting that Italian Prime Minister Monti and Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán had addressed the European Parliament this year. He expected that more leaders would address the Parliament in coming months.
- 2.28 President Shultz said that the inward-focus of recent years in European nations needs to be reversed and suggested EU should engage more closely with North Africa, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region.
- 2.29 The delegation notes President Shultz's strong knowledge of, and interest in, Australia and the Asia-Pacific region and his desire to visit during his term as President. The delegation noted that the Australian Parliament would welcome his visit.

### **Cyber security briefing**

- 2.30 A key interest of the delegation was to explore issues relating to cyber security, in particular the security of parliamentary networks. The delegation is grateful for the time given by Mr Christian Ehler MEP (Germany) and Mr Giles Chichester MEP (United Kingdom) and discussions held regarding this issue.
- 2.31 The meeting agreed that cyber attack is part of a political reality and that the use of technology inherently holds risk. It was noted that parliamentarians are at risk of cyber espionage at a state level either by direct attack or an onerous requirement to share information and restrict internet uses that also amounts to espionage.
- 2.32 Mr Chichester noted that there was a general ambivalence towards traditional software but an increasing interest in new telecommunication
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3 See, *Dutch Government falls in budget crisis*, 23 April 2012, <[www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17811509](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17811509)> accessed, 10 July 2012.

devices without an understanding about the lack of security associated with mobile devices. The rapidly changing IT landscape poses challenges for governments in protecting themselves and their communities.

- 2.33 The EU currently has an agency that works with EU Institutions and Member States – the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) – as a response to cyber security in the EU. ENISA was established as an expert body to address specific technical tasks in information security and to enhance the capability of the EU to prevent, address and respond to network and information security problems.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.34 MEPs noted that ENISA is due to cease next year and commented that the agency needed a wider focus on the community, rather than just being government and business focussed.
- 2.35 It was further noted that very few EU Member States have an organised approach and structure to deal with specific cyber threats to the community such as those to children.
- 2.36 The meeting agreed that legislators worldwide need to find an approach to cyber security that does not result in regulators becoming a barrier to the solution through over-regulation.
- 2.37 MEPs proposed that it is time for an international conference looking not at the extent of the problem, which is known, but to work towards finding solutions. In practical terms, the state/public sector cannot fund the solution because the private sector has the monopoly on the staff and resources. Without a multilateral approach there is will be no solution to any cyber security issues.
- 2.38 The meeting agreed that the Australian Parliament and the European Parliament would be interested in building a greater relationship on the issue of cyber security, both for the parliaments and the community.

### **35<sup>th</sup> Australia-EU Inter-Parliamentary meeting**

- 2.39 Since 1981 there have been regular parliamentary meetings between delegations representing the Australian Parliament and the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Australia and New Zealand (EU Delegation). These meetings are the focal point for the inter-parliamentary relationship between Australia and the European Parliament.

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4 European Network and Information Security Agency, <[www.ensia.europa.eu](http://www.ensia.europa.eu)> accessed 12 July 2012.

- 2.40 The 35<sup>th</sup> Australia-EU inter-parliamentary meeting took place on 24 April 2012, with a number of MEPS participating over the course of the meeting. The discussions were varied and robust and of interest to all participants. In previous years, meetings have taken place over two days and the delegation felt that the discussions at this meeting were somewhat hampered by time constraints and would prefer to see a return to the longer program format.
- 2.41 A list of all Delegation Members and Substitutes is at Appendix B. The delegation is also grateful for the participation of those MEPs not members of the EU delegation, namely:
- Dr Wolf Klinz MEP, Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (Germany)
  - Mr Jim Nicolson MEP, European Conservatives and Reformists Group (United Kingdom)
- 2.42 Mr George Pastamkos MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament, hosted a luncheon for the delegation which was attended by a wide range of MEPs. The delegation appreciated this opportunity to talk to parliamentary colleagues in an informal setting.

#### **First session of the 35<sup>th</sup> Australia-EU inter-parliamentary meeting**

- 2.43 Professor Ioannis Tsouklas MEP, Vice-Chair EU Delegation and President of the Senate, Senator the Hon John Hogg, delegation leader, opened the meeting and reiterated the importance of the ongoing relationship between the European Parliament and the Australian Parliament.
- 2.44 The meeting was structured in two sessions covering four topic areas identified as of interest by the delegation and the EU Delegation. Discussions were wide ranging with all participants gaining a better understanding of the issues as they affect Australia and the EU and its Member States.

#### ***Political situation in Australia and the EU***

- 2.45 To open the session, Mr Michael Martinez from the European External Action Service gave an overview of the progress of the Framework Agreement negotiations, as outlined above. He noted that the agreement includes trade matters with the intent to be business positive but will not be a free trade agreement. Noting earlier discussion, he also informed the meeting that there will be a specific article dealing with cyber crime.
- 2.46 Australia and the EU have been partnering on development activities, namely in the education sector in Indonesia and programs in the Solomon

Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu to support rural and economic development, improve infrastructure and strengthen civil society.<sup>5</sup>

- 2.47 Mr Martinez noted that the Framework Agreement negotiations had been assisted by the recent agreement between Australia and the EU for delegated aid cooperation under which each country will carry out aid on the others behalf in areas where they have a competitive advantage, namely the EU and Africa and Australia in the Pacific.
- 2.48 Delegate Ms Deb O'Neill MP gave an overview of the current political situation in Australia. EU Delegation members were interested in the nature of politics in Australia and the delegation was able to give a comprehensive explanation from a range of perspectives.
- 2.49 Mr Giles Chichester MEP gave the meeting an overview of domestic politics and its impact on the EU and discussions focussed on how the Eurozone crisis is causing some Member States to question their sovereignty and national identity.

#### ***Economic situation in the EU and Australia***

- 2.50 Dr Wolf Klinz MEP discussed the common currency and the difficulty in having a single monetary policy and yet keep the independence of individual Member States. Dr Klinz expressed the perspective that the Eurozone no longer necessarily has an economic crisis, but the significant impact of the global financial crisis has caused such a crisis of confidence, that it is resulting in a crisis of democracy.
- 2.51 Concerns about sovereignty and the single monetary policy were discussed at some length with MEPs holding a range of perspectives about the viability of some Member States to remain within the Eurozone without deeper integration of sovereignty.
- 2.52 Delegate Mr Graham Perrett MP gave an overview of the Australian banking system and reforms and the current impact of the 'patchwork economy'. Delegates emphasised the importance of Australia's current economic prosperity being linked to the economic reforms that had taken place over the previous forty years. MEPs were interested in the learning more about the reform process and particularly interested in the contributors to Australia's 'patchwork economy'.

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5 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Brief for Parliamentary Delegation Visit to Belgium, France and Israel*, April 2012, p. 16.

## **Second session of the 35<sup>th</sup> Australia-EU inter-parliamentary meeting**

### ***Agriculture, water and food security***

- 2.53 Mr Jim Nicholson MEP presented an overview of agricultural reforms in the EU. He noted that EU farmers are facing similar issues of milk pricing as are occurring in Australia, impacting on farm gate prices. He also noted that the dairy quota scheme (regulating how much milk individual farmers can produce) is ending soon so there are worries about flooding the market and compounding pricing concerns.
- 2.54 Delegate Senator Bridget McKenzie gave an overview of some of the water policy issues in Australia, in particularly the ongoing debate about the Murray-Darling Basin and its political impact. MEPs noted that European farmers do not have the same water management challenges as Australian farmers and so were interested in the extent of the current debate.
- 2.55 Australian delegates noted Australia's strong opposition to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) system of agricultural subsidies and programs that has been in force in the EU since 1962. MEPs noted there is still strong political support for the CAP in the EU, however there is a disparity in subsidies between new and older Member States which is leading to some contention.
- 2.56 Mr Chichester noted that Greek farmers were receiving €520 per hectare in support, whereas Latvia only receives €170 per hectare in support. Alongside this disparity in support, there is a disparity in policy application: Mr Chichester gave the example of the ban on cage eggs in the EU, despite which thirteen states continue to use cage eggs without sanction. It is within such contexts that the EU is attempting agricultural reform, including CAP reform, so it is expected that any reforms will take some time.

### ***Energy and research***

- 2.57 Delegate Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald gave the meeting an overview of the resources sector in Australia, noting that Australia holds 38 percent of the world's uranium resources and that the resources sector provides the bulk of Australia's wealth.
- 2.58 MEPs noted that the security of energy, food and water were the three many security concerns for Europe. The meeting discussed the strategic implications of transporting energy sources (i.e. gas) across borders.
- 2.59 A reliance on Russia for oil, gas and nuclear power has led to an increased phasing-out of non-renewable energy sources and a greater focus on



renewables. MEPs emphasised at length the need for a continued and high investment in innovation and research as the key to managing future energy needs.

### **Foreign affairs**

- 2.60 Unfortunately, due to the lengthy discussions taking place in the meeting the foreign affairs topic discussion did not take place at great length. In response to questions, delegate Russell Broadbent MP gave a brief overview of the current political situation in Fiji, noting that Australia does not consider itself the sheriff of the region and does not wish to compromise the sovereignty of Pacific nations.

### **Last post service, Menin Gate, Ypres**

- 2.61 On the evening of 24 April 2012 the delegation participated in the Last Post Service at the Menin Gate. This service has been held every evening since 1928 in commemoration of those allied soldiers who fought in the Ypres region during World War I. Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament and people of Australia during the service.

### **ANZAC Day Commemorations**

- 2.62 The delegation participated in Western Front ANZAC Day commemoration services. The delegation was honoured to participate in these services and respectfully thanks the people of Zonnebeke and Ypres for the honour paid to the memory of the Australian sacrifices made during World War I.
- 2.63 Members of the delegation were also pleased to meet the many Australians who had travelled to the services, including a number of school groups.

### **Dawn Service, Polygon Wood, Zonnebeke**

- 2.64 The Delegation attended the Dawn Service at the Buttes New British Cemetery at Polygon Wood in Zonnebeke. The Fifth Australian Division captured Polygon Wood on 26 September 1917, suffering heavy casualties

of 545 killed, 172 missing and 2,303 wounded, many of which have no known grave and are commemorated in the Menin Gate.<sup>6</sup>

- 2.65 Ms Deb O'Neill MP laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament and people of Australia during the service. Those attending also placed small commemorative wooden crosses on Australian graves during the service.
- 2.66 The 'crosses on Australian graves' project is being undertaken by the Sons of the British Empire in order to ensure that Australian school children have an understanding of the sacrifices of a previous generation of young Australians. Each cross carried the words 'Australia Remembers' and a name and personal message written by an Australian school child.<sup>7</sup>

### **Municipal War Memorial, Zonnebeke**

- 2.67 Following the Dawn Service, the delegation attended ceremonies at Zonnebeke School and had the opportunity to talk to the many Australians who had travelled to the region for ANZAC Day commemorations.
- 2.68 The delegation joined a procession to the Municipal War Memorial in Zonnebeke where Senator Bridget McKenzie laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament and people of Australia.

### **Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke**

- 2.69 The delegation then attended ceremonies at Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke. This cemetery is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world. In total, 11,953 headstones of men killed between 1914 and 1918 stand in this cemetery. Many of these men were killed in the 'Flanders Offensive of 1917. More Australian soldiers are buried at Tyne Cot than anywhere else in the world and of the 1,369 Australian graves at Tyne Cot, 791 are unidentified.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Australians on the Western Front 1914-1918, <[www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/zonnebeke/buttes-new-british-cemetery.html](http://www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/zonnebeke/buttes-new-british-cemetery.html)>, accessed 13 July 2012.

7 Sons of the British Empire, <<http://www.sonsofthebritishempire.com/australian-project.php>>, accessed 13 July 2012.

8 Australians on the Western Front 1914-1918, <[www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/tyne-cot/index](http://www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/tyne-cot/index)>, accessed 13 July 2012.



**The delegation in front of the Cross of Sacrifice, Tyne Cot Cemetery**

2.70 During the ceremony, Mr Graham Perrett MP laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament and people of Australia.

### **Ypres ceremonies**

2.71 The delegation then joined a procession through the town of Ypres to the Menin Gate where a last post ceremony was conducted by the Last Post Association. As part of the ceremony, the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon John Hogg laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament and people of Australia.

2.72 The procession then moved to the Belgian War Memorial where the Belgian National Anthem and the Flemish anthem 'Vlaamse Leeuw' were played by the New Zealand Veteran's Band. Mr Russell Broadbent MP, jointly with Senator Hogg and Senator MacDonald, laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament and people of Australia.

- 2.73 Mayor of Ypres, Luc Dehaene hosted a reception in the Youth Centre. Senator Hogg spoke, expressing appreciation on behalf of the Australian Parliament for the honour in which the people of Ypres remember the lives of Australians given in the region during World War I.

### **Acknowledgements**

- 2.74 The delegation is grateful for the support provided during with visit by HE Ambassador Brendan Nelson, Ms Susannah Hodson and other staff of the Australian Embassy in Brussels.
- 2.75 The delegation also expresses its sincere thanks to all of those who met with it during its visit as noted throughout this chapter.

## France

- 3.1 France is an influential member of the European Union (EU) with a population of 64 million people. The Australia-France bilateral relationship is positive and friendly, based on strong historical links at a consular and diplomatic level since 1842 and cooperation in the First and Second World Wars.
- 3.2 A Joint Statement of Strategic Partnership was signed by respective Foreign Ministers on 19 January 2012 and covers political, defence, security, economic, environmental and development cooperation. France continues to hold strong interests in the Pacific region and this is an important part of our bilateral focus.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.3 The delegation's visit coincided with the 2012 French Presidential election, held on 22 April and 6 May 2012. The close nature of election meant that the delegation was unable to meet with many parliamentarians, who were heavily involved in campaigning.
- 3.4 Nonetheless, the key focus of the delegation's visit to France was to engage with a number of the prominent European institutions located in Paris. This Chapter reports on those meetings.

## Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

- 3.5 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an organisation comprised of 34 member countries, including Australia,

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Brief for Parliamentary Delegation Visit to Belgium, France and Israel*, April 2012, pp. 58 – 60.

which provides research and analysis on the economic and social wellbeing of people worldwide.

- 3.6 The delegation met with OECD representatives from the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Directorate, the Economics Directorate and the Financial and Enterprise Affairs Directorate for briefings on the current state of employment and the financial markets in Europe and how Australia was placed in the rankings of OECD nations following the global financial crisis (GFC).
- 3.7 Ms Pirrita Sorsa, Head of Division, Country Studies 4 (Europe) gave the delegation a briefing on recent work undertaken on economic surveys of the European Union and the Eurozone area. She noted that:
- tensions in financial markets remain high, however there are some signs of slow growth;
  - account surpluses and deficits have been managed at an unsustainable level for many decades: the current average deficit is around 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP);
  - there is a need for some very basic reforms in some countries to deregulate the business environment, liberalise services and stimulate growth. In this regard, Australia is seen as a model for the deregulation processes this country has been through over the past four decades; and
  - whilst greater political priority needs to be placed on driving reforms, there is good understanding on how to move forward, the implementation is a practical obstacle to success.
- 3.8 Mr John Martin, Head of Directorate, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Division gave the delegation a briefing on the trends and policy challenges underpinning the jobs crisis in the EU. He noted that:
- OECD countries have seen a rapid rise in long-term unemployment and there are now serious risks of this unemployment becoming entrenched;
  - Australia has recovered well from the global financial crisis and although unemployment rates are high in some sectors (youth, older workers), Australia is performing better than the majority of OECD countries;
  - many countries are seeking support from workers in order to drive reform, for example, government supported schemes for employees to return leave to employers to improve output and wage cuts (in some cases 30 percent) married with increased productivity.

- 3.9 Ms Carolyn Ervin, Head of Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs gave the delegation a briefing on the OECD perspective of the European banking system. She noted that the OECD has said that European banks do not yet have the necessary capital to be leveraged at a sustainable level. This has upset the EU banking system, however, the OECD argues that the significantly higher leveraging in EU banks (for example, German banks are leveraged at 63 percent versus the US and UK at 25 percent) still poses significant risk to the system.
- 3.10 Ms Ervin noted that the EU is finally undertaking necessary reforms in labour laws, pension systems, competition and structural reform, but that this is moving too slowly. The 2013 deadline imposed by the Fiscal Stability Treaty for all Member States to have surplus budgets is too soon to be achieved given the pace of reform.

## **UNESCO World Heritage Centre**

- 3.11 The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Centre aims to identify, protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage around the world. The delegation specifically requested a meeting with the World Heritage Centre team that undertook a reactive monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef in March 2012. The delegation thanks Mr Kishore Rao, Director of the World Heritage Centre and members of his team for meeting with it.
- 3.12 The Great Barrier Reef was included on the World Heritage List in 1981 as a site with significant scientific, environmental and cultural value. The reactive monitoring mission was undertaken in March 2012 at the invitation of the Australian Government to assist in the strategic assessment of the reef as requested by the World Heritage Committee in June 2011.<sup>2</sup>
- 3.13 Mr Rao and team briefed the delegation on the monitoring mission's activities when in Australia. Unfortunately at the time of the delegation, the mission's report had not been finalised and the information that could be revealed was limited. However, Mr Rao noted the monitoring mission was extensive and heard a range of perspectives from government, industry, environmental and community groups.

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2 UNESCO, World Heritage Committee minutes, 29 June 201, WHC.11/35.COM/20. <[whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/35COM](http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/35COM)>, accessed 17 July 2012.

- 3.14 The delegation notes that the report was released in late June 2012 and made 14 recommendations for protecting the Reef to prevent it being listed as 'in danger'.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.15 Mr Rao noted that Australian expertise is well regarded internationally and being utilised to support the managers of other listed sites (for example Angkor Wat, Cambodia). It was also noted that Pacific Island states are actively working with UNESCO to identify sites as this is seen as a sustainable income source. Australia is assisting in a range of ways, including seed funding, to identify and list sites.

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3 Mission Report: Reactive Monitoring Missing to the Great Barrier Reef (Australia), 6-14 March 2012. < [whc.unesco.org/en/list/154/documents/](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/154/documents/)>, accessed 17 July 2012.





The delegation at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

## The French Senate

- 3.16 France is a Presidential Republic governed by the Constitution of 1958. France has a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate (upper house) and the National Assembly (lower house).
- 3.17 The delegation had the opportunity to undertake a tour of the Palais de Luxembourg (Senate building) prior to a luncheon hosted by Senator Marie-Annick Duchêne, Vice-President of the Australia-France Friendship Group.

- 3.18 The delegation thanks those Senators who made themselves available to attend the luncheon during a busy election period. It was an excellent opportunity to renew ties with parliamentary colleagues and a wide range of issues were discussed including how to maintain a strong parliamentary relationship between the two nations.

## **International Energy Agency**

- 3.19 The International Energy Agency (IEA) is an autonomous organisation that aims to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its 28 member countries. It provides research, statistics, analysis and recommendations on energy security, economic development and environmental awareness.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.20 The delegation met with Mr Ian Cronshaw, Australian Government Energy Advisor (Renewables), Mr Simon Müller, Energy Analyst, Renewable Energy Division, and Mr Dennis Volk, Senior Energy Analyst (Electricity, Energy Markets and Decarbonisation), Gas Coal and Power Markets Division.
- 3.21 The delegation was briefed on the energy market in Europe and the challenges with energy sources that are required to cross multiple borders. It was noted that gas is the dominant energy source in Europe and is the fuel of choice, being low-carbon, flexible and with short lead times.
- 3.22 Mr Müller noted that nuclear power is rapidly diminishing, and by 2020 Europe hopes to be predominately wind. Germany decommissioned eight nuclear power stations immediately post the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi disaster replaced by lignite (Brown coal), wind and solar photovoltaic (PV) energy sources.
- 3.23 Questions were raised by the delegation about the cost of renewable energy. It was explained that renewables are becoming cost competitive and cost is no longer a barrier to implementation.
- 3.24 Mr Müller also noted that wind is the leader in cost effective energy production and while PV is still expensive, each doubling of capacity leads to a 19 percent cost reduction. In leading markets, parity with retail prices has been reached. It was noted that the cost of renewables can be significantly assisted by regulation because this reduces the cost of finance.

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4 See <[www.iea.org/aboutus/whatwedo](http://www.iea.org/aboutus/whatwedo)>, accessed 16 July 2012.

- 3.25 The meeting discussed the different resources environments in Europe and Australia and the political decisions that have lead to some of the energy outcomes in Europe, in particular in Germany.

## **Nuclear Energy Agency**

- 3.26 The Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) is a specialised agency within the OECD that aims to assist member countries to maintain and develop the scientific, technological and legal bases required for a safe, environmentally friendly and economical use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.<sup>5</sup> The NEA's current membership consists of 30 countries representing 85 percent of the world's installed nuclear capacity.
- 3.27 The delegation met with Mr Ron Cameron, Head, Nuclear Development Division and his colleague Mr Ted Laso.
- 3.28 Mr Cameron noted that the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi disaster had highlighted the need for a coordinated and formal management decision-making process. Through this period, nations were making decisions in isolation of what other countries were doing and a formal process for decision making would have expedited processes and supported nations more effectively.
- 3.29 Mr Laso gave the delegation a briefing on the French approach to nuclear power. He noted that:
- France has 58 nuclear power plants with one under construction, all likely to have life extensions to 60 years. In 2011, these provided 77.7 percent of total electricity to the French market;
  - France has a strong regulatory body and supporting technical agency whose actions after Fukushima were considered exemplary and increase public confidence;
  - France has some of the cheapest electricity in Europe and come of the lowest carbon emissions. It also has the domestic capacity the full nuclear fuel cycle, with fuel enrichment and fuel reprocessing. It provides reprocessing for other countries, including Australia's previous research reactor.
- 3.30 Nuclear power currently produces 14 percent of global electricity, 21 percent in OECD countries. If this was substituted by coal, global carbon

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5 Nuclear Energy Agency, *Presentation to Australian Parliamentary Delegation*, April 2012.

emissions would rise by three gigatonne per year. The NEA argues that there is a compelling case for nuclear, being:

- security of supply;
- energy demand in developing countries;
- the contribution of carbon emissions to global climate change; and the
- affordability of nuclear energy production.<sup>6</sup>

3.31 The NEA argued that the expected tripling of electricity demand by 2050 alongside the need to reduce carbon emissions means that nuclear power will need to play an important part in any global response to climate change – it is cost effective and, unlike renewables, can be rapidly deployed on a large scale.

3.32 However, the NEA also noted that the public need to be meaningfully engaged in the debate about energy supply and nuclear capacity. The recent Fukushima Daiichi disaster has resulted in significant public mistrust and the green movement is contributing to a desire for renewable energy sources.

## **Acknowledgements**

3.33 The delegation is grateful for the support provided during the visit by HE Ambassador-Designate Ric Wells and staff of the Australian Embassy in France, and Ms Joanne Frederickson, Deputy Permanent Representative, Australian Delegation to the OECD.

3.34 The delegation also expresses its sincere thanks to all of those who met with it during its visit as noted throughout this chapter. The discussions held were varied and interesting and at times robust, however, were highly valuable for all members of the delegation.

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6 Nuclear Energy Agency, *Presentation to Australian Parliamentary Delegation*, April 2012

## **Israel and the Palestinian Territories**

- 4.1 The delegation undertook a bilateral visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories on 29 April to 3 May 2012.
- 4.2 Bilateral visits such as these are an important part of the Australia Parliament's international delegation program and important in building and strengthening parliamentary ties.
- 4.3 The delegation was grateful for the opportunity to meet with a number of senior Israeli and Palestinian parliamentarians and officials over the course of its visit. The delegation left the region with a much greater understanding of the issues confronting the region and the ongoing peace process.

### **Palestinian Territories**

- 4.4 The delegation spent Monday, 30 April 2012 undertaking visits in the Palestinian territories.

#### **Aida UNRWA Refugee Camp**

- 4.5 The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) operates 19 refugee camps in the West Bank, housing approximately a quarter of the 771,000 registered refugees in the area.
- 4.6 Aida camp was established in 1950 between the towns of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. It houses over 4,700 refugees registered and being located in an area of 0.71 square kilometres, it is severely overcrowded. The camp has a

key focus on education and runs a school for girls (boys attend school in Beit Jala).<sup>1</sup>

4.7 The delegation thanks Mr David Hutton, Deputy Director, West Bank, UNRWA and staff of Aida camp for the comprehensive briefing on the operations of the camp and the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the citizens of Palestine.

4.8 Mr Hutton noted that despite the focus on education, the unemployment rate in Aida camp is 43 percent. UNRWA does fund apprenticeships in the private sector, but employment is affected by the increased inaccessibility of the Israeli labour market.

4.9 Australia is the seventh largest donor to UNRWA with funding to increase in the forward years. However, Mr Hutton noted that the global trend in declining humanitarian funding has created a focus on microfinance to support small businesses.

## **Church of the Nativity**

4.10 The delegation was hosted for a visit to the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem by Dr Victor Batarseh, Mayor of Bethlehem and Church leaders. The delegation was moved by the tour of the church and key holy sites and a learning of the role the church has played in past and recent regional conflicts.

4.11 Dr Batarseh explained concerns of the Bethlehem Municipality about maintaining the Church site and the risk of infrastructure damage posed by the conflict with Israel.

4.12 The delegation notes that the Church of the Nativity was granted World Heritage status by UNESCO in July 2012, despite objections from the United States and Israel.<sup>2</sup>

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1 United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees, *West Bank Camp Profiles*, <unwra.org>, accessed 18 July 2012.

2 ABC News Online, 'Jesus' birthplace given world heritage status.' <abc.net.au/news/2012-06-30/church-of-the-nativity-given-world-heritage-status/4102078>, accessed 18 July 2012.



The delegation with Dr Victor Batarseh at the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

## Fatah International Commission

- 4.13 The delegation had a working lunch with Mr Abdullah Abdullah, Member of the Palestine Legislative Council and Deputy Commissioner General, Fatah International Commission.
- 4.14 Mr Abdullah welcomed the delegation's visit warmly. He provided a briefing on the state of parliamentary elections and the disagreement between Hamas and Fatah representatives. He also briefed the delegation on the difficulties that the Palestine Legislative Council has in meeting due to border restrictions between Gaza and Ramallah.
- 4.15 Mr Abdullah noted that in recent years laws have been passed by Presidential decree for parliament to ratify when it is able to meet, and discussed the concerns that Fatah holds about this occurring.
- 4.16 Discussions also focussed on the importance of free and fair elections in building democracy.

## **Palestine Monetary Authority**

- 4.17 Dr Jihad Alwazir, Governor, Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) met with the delegation and provided a thorough briefing on the economic focus, industry development and government fiscal sustainability.
- 4.18 As the central bank of Palestine, the PMA is overseeing the development of a monetary policy to achieve price stability, appropriately supervise the banking system and develop modern, efficient payment systems.
- 4.19 Dr Alwazir noted that the PMA, being a young organisation, is not hampered by legacy banking systems so is able to quickly implement best practice and works with other central banks internationally to identify and implement these practices. He noted that the PMA has a very good relationship with the Israeli Central Bank but there are political sensitivities in this relationship.
- 4.20 Dr Alwazir told the delegation that the PMA is regarded as an independent authority and as such has been at times the only institution to be able to operate between the West Bank and Gaza. He noted that the PMA is strictly independent from the Palestinian government and political parties as the only means to ensure any fiscal stability.
- 4.21 One of the key challenges faced by the PMA is the restrictions on development within Palestine. The PMA has recognised the need to diversify and be involved in all levels of the economy, regardless of size. As a result, the PMA has taken the unusual step of linking microfinance agencies with the banking system, resulting in the creation of 400 jobs.

## **Dr Ghassan Khatib**

- 4.22 Dr Ghassan Khatib is the Director of the Palestinian Government Media Centre and was the 2011 Palestine Presidential envoy to Australia seeking support for United Nations recognition of Palestinian statehood. Dr Khatib was the former Vice-President of Bir Zeit University and has extensive publications on Palestinian politics and the Middle East peace process.
- 4.23 Dr Khatib gave the delegation an extensive briefing on his perspective on what is needed for peace between Palestine and Israel, noting:
- both Israel and Palestine have legitimate concerns and international assistance is essential for resolving these concerns;



- Palestine wants to move forward with as much consensus as possible and believes that recognising Palestinian statehood will be an investment in peace;
- a key concern is the current expansion of Israeli settlements into Palestinian territory and the impact this is having on the Palestinian economy;
- Palestine has to recognise that it has an equal obligation to stop violence; and
- Palestine will lose legitimacy if it is unable to conduct elections and Fatah and Hamas are unable to reconcile.

4.24 Dr Ghassan noted that the failure of the peace process is causing radicalisation in both societies and this trend has to be reversed if any successful, lasting peace is to be achieved.

## Israel

4.25 To commence its formal program in Israel, the delegation visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. Yad Vashem is Israel's official memorial to the Jewish victims of the holocaust and is located on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem. The delegation was greatly moved by this visit.

4.26 The delegation was also guided on a tour of the Old City of Jerusalem and had an opportunity to learn more of the history and visit the holy sites located within the Old City.

## Ministry of Foreign Affairs

4.27 The delegation had to opportunity to discuss Israel's foreign affairs policies and relationships with Mr Amir Weissbrod, Director, Syria, Lebanon and Palestinian Affairs, Centre for Political Research, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

4.28 Mr Weissbrod outlined Israel's concern about the impact of the Arab Spring potentially destabilising the region. He reiterated that unstable neighbours raised concerns about unsustainable migration into Israel.

4.29 The meeting also discussed concerns raised about the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories. Mr Weissbrod acknowledged that the

settlements were not ideal and recognised the difficulties the settlements are causing and that the state has been taking action, but that the state had little control over some settlers.



The delegation laying a wreath at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum.

## The Knesset

- 4.30 The Knesset is the unicameral legislature of Israel, located in Jerusalem. It has 120 Members, elected indirectly. Voters vote for a political list and each party has its own method for deciding who appears on its list. The whole country is considered a single constituency.
- 4.31 General elections are held every four years, although the Knesset may decide to dissolve early. The most recent elections were held in 2009 with the Kadima Party winning 28 seats to the Likud Party's 27 seats. Likud was able to form government in coalition with several other parties.
- 4.32 The delegation was welcomed to the Knesset by the Speaker, Mr Reuven Rivlin MK. Following a formal greeting ceremony, including a wreath laying by President Hogg, the delegation met with the Speaker and several members of the Knesset Australia-Israel Friendship Group.
- 4.33 The meeting discussed Jewish statehood, the peace process and the changing political environment throughout the Middle East.

- 4.34 Speaker Rivlin also outlined the debate occurring between the Knesset and the High Court of Justice. Speaker Rivlin noted concerns that the High Court was interfering in the working of the Knesset and its right to make decisions and this was leading to debate that the High Court considered itself equal to the Knesset.
- 4.35 President Hogg extended a formal invitation from the Presiding Officers of the Australian Parliament for a Knesset delegation to visit Australia. President Hogg noted that even though Australia is a small nation, it has a role to play in promoting open, accountable and transparent democracy and parliamentary delegations are part of this role.
- 4.36 Speaker Rivlin welcomed the invitation and noted that he thought it would be enthusiastically received by the Members of the Knesset with an interest in Australia.
- 4.37 Follow the meeting, the delegation attended the Knesset Plenary Session where the Speaker extended a formal welcome. The text of this welcome is at Appendix C of this report.
- 4.38 On the evening of Tuesday, 1 May 2012, Ms Ronit Tirosh MK, Chairperson of the Australia-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group hosted a dinner for the delegation. The delegation appreciated this opportunity to hold discussions with parliamentary colleagues in an informal setting.



**Leader of the delegation, President Hogg with Mr Reuven Rivlin MK, Speaker of the Knesset and Ms Ronit Tirosh MK, Chairperson of the Australia-Israel Friendship Group**

### **Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee**

- 4.39 The delegation met with Mr Shaul Mofaz MK, Chairperson of the Foreign Defence and Trade Committee and Opposition Leader.
- 4.40 Mr Mofaz gave the delegation an overview of the current state of politics in Israel. He noted that summer 2011 was intensive with a number of social protests largely from young couples and the middle class about the cost of living, health support and inequity of taxation.
- 4.41 The Arab-Israeli conflict was discussed at some length. Mr Mofaz noted that, in his view, the gap is so large in negotiations that an interim agreement is necessary, specifically focussing on borders and security arrangements.
- 4.42 The Israeli approach to Syria, Jordan and Iran was also discussed at some length with Mr Mofaz clear in the view that Israel wants the United States to lead with force against Iran, which is seen as a threat not just against Israel, but all western nations.
- 4.43 Also discussed at some length was the Tal Law, a law that exempts ultra-Orthodox Jews and Israeli Arabs from national service. In February 2012 the Tal Law was declared unconstitutional on the basis of equality. Mr Mofaz noted that that this topic was been vigorously debated at the time of the delegation's visit. He argued that it was in Israeli DNA that everyone must serve either in the Israeli Defence Force or in community service and the increasing numbers of orthodox Jews not serving was becoming a serious point of conflict in the country.
- 4.44 Shortly after the delegation left Israel, on 8 May 2012, the Kadima Party formed an alliance with the ruling Likud Party, elevating Mr Mofaz to the position of Deputy Prime Minister, after a promise from Prime Minister Netanyahu to respect the high court ruling and amend the Tal Law.
- 4.45 However, on 18 July 2012, the Kadima Party voted to end the alliance after negotiations regarding the Tal Law stalled. It is now likely that early elections will be called.<sup>3</sup> Members of the delegation will watch events in Israel with interest.

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3 The Canberra Times, 'Early election on cards as Kadima Party quits Israel Alliance' <[canberratimes.com.au/world/early-election-on-cards-as-kadima-party-quits-israel-alliance-20120718-228z1.html](http://canberratimes.com.au/world/early-election-on-cards-as-kadima-party-quits-israel-alliance-20120718-228z1.html)>, accessed 18 July 2012.

## **Visit to Galilee**

- 4.46 On the final day of the program, the delegation had the opportunity to visit the Galilee region in the north of Israel which included a visit to Biblical sites throughout the region. The delegation appreciated this opportunity to visit and learn more about the history of the region.
- 4.47 As part of this day, the delegation visited the border with Lebanon and received a briefing from an Israeli Defence Force spokesperson about the challenges in securing multiple borders.

## **Acknowledgements**

- 4.48 The delegation is grateful for the support provided during with visit by HE Ambassador Andrea Faulkner, Ms Jenny Grant-Curnow, Australian Representative Office, Ramallah, Mr Chris Gergis and other staff of the Australian Embassy in Israel.
- 4.49 The delegation also thanks the Ambassador for hosting a reception in Tel Aviv on the evening of 2 May 2012 in honour of both this delegation and the Australian Financial Services and Superannuation delegation led by the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation.
- 4.50 The delegation also expresses its sincere thanks to all of those who met with it during its visit as noted throughout this chapter.

**Senator the Hon John Hogg  
Leader of the Delegation**





## **Appendix A – Delegation program**

### **Belgium**

#### **Brussels**

##### **Saturday, 23 April**

Departure from Australia and arrival in Brussels

##### **Sunday, 24 April 2012**

**Official Residence, Australian Ambassador to Belgium, Luxemburg, the European Union and NATO**

Reception hosted by HE Ambassador Brendan Nelson

##### **Monday, 23 April 2012**

###### **Australian Embassy**

Australian Embassy briefing with HE Ambassador Brendan Nelson

Briefing by Mr Guy Milton, Head of Unit (Inter-institutional relations), European Council on the role of the European Council

###### **Belgian Senate**

Lunch hosted by Senator Sabine de Bethune, President of the Belgian Senate

Meeting with Senator Karl Vanlouwe, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Belgian Senate and Senator Armand De Decker, Minister of State, Vice-

President of the Belgian Senate and Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Meeting with Mr Emmanuel Willems, Senior Advisor, Belgian Senate, responsible for the ICT infrastructure, networking, security and the internet

### **Crush Wine Bar**

Welcome reception hosted by Professor Ioannis Tsoukalas MEP, Vice Chair of the European Parliament Delegation for Australia and New Zealand

## **Tuesday, 24 April 2012**

### **European Parliament**

Meeting with Mr Martin Schulz MEP, President of the European Parliament

Meeting with Mr Christian Ehler MEP on cyber security

35<sup>th</sup> Australia-EU Inter-parliamentary meeting

Luncheon hosted by Mr Georgios Papastamkos MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament

Depart Brussels for Ypres

## **Ypres**

Attend Menin Gate Last Post Service

- wreath laid by Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald on behalf of the Australian Parliament

## **Wednesday, 25 April 2012**

## **Zonnebeck**

### **ANZAC Day Commemorations**

Dawn Service, Polygon Wood

- wreath laid by Ms Deb O'Neill MP on behalf of the Australian Parliament

Ceremonies at Zonnebeck School

Municipal War Memorial ceremony



- wreath laid by Senator Bridget McKenzie on behalf of the Australian Parliament

Tyne Cot Cemetery ceremony, Passchendaele

- wreath laid by Mr Graham Perrett MP on behalf of the Australian Parliament

## Ypres

Menin Gate procession and ceremony

- wreath laid by Senator the Hon John Hogg on behalf of the Australian Parliament

Procession to Belgian War Memorial

- wreath laid by Mr Russel Broadbent MP on behalf of the Australian Parliament

Mayoral Reception at the Ypres Youth Centre

Official luncheon hosted by the New Zealand d'Affaires, Mr Paul Ash

Depart Ypres for Paris

## France

### Paris

**Thursday, 26 April 2012**

**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**

Meeting with

- Mr John Martin, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs;
- Ms Piritta Sorsa, Country Studies 4 (Europe) Division; and
- Ms Carolyn Ervin, Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs

**Australian Embassy**

Luncheon hosted by HE Mr Ric Wells, Ambassador-designate to France.

Guests:

- Mr Thierry Vireau, Deputy Director, Asia and Oceania Division, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs; and
- Mr Frédéric Grare, Head, Asia Office, Strategic Affairs Branch, Ministry of Defence.

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**

Meeting with Mr Kishore Rao, Director, World Heritage Centre

**Friday, 27 April 2012**

**French Senate**

Tour of the Palais de Luxemburg (Senate Building)

Luncheon hosted by Senator Marie-Annick Duchêne, Vice-President, Australia-France Friendship Group

**International Energy Agency**

Meeting with:

- Mr Ian Cronshaw, Australian Government Energy Advisor (Renewables);
- Mr Simon Mueller, Energy Analyst, Renewable Energy Division; and
- Mr Dennis Volk, Senior Energy Analyst (Electricity, Energy Markets and Decarbonisation), Gas Coal and Power Markets Division.

**Nuclear Energy Agency**

Meeting with Mr Ron Cameron, Head, Nuclear Energy Division

**Sunday, 29 April 2012**

Depart for Israel

## **Israel and the Palestinian Territories**

**Monday, 30 April 2012**

### **Bethlehem**

Visit to Aida United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) refugee camp

Visit to the Church of the Nativity

### **Ramallah**

Working lunch with Dr Abdullah Abdullah, Deputy Commissioner General, Fatah International Commission

Meeting with Dr Jihan Al Wazir, Palestine Monetary Authority Governor

Meeting with Dr Ghassan Khatib, Head, Palestinian Authority Government Media Centre

**Tuesday, 1 May 2012**

### **Jerusalem**

Visit to Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum including wreath laying

Visit to Jerusalem Old City

Working lunch with Mr Amir Weissbrod, Director, Syria, Lebanon and Palestinian Affairs Centre for Political Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Formal greeting ceremony at the Knesset, including wreath laying

Meeting with Mr Reuven Rivlin MK, Speaker of the Knesset

Blessing at the Knesset Plenary Session

Meeting with Mr Shaul Mofaz MK, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee

Dinner hosted by Ms Ronit Tirosh MK, Chairperson of the Australia-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group

**Wednesday, 2 May 2012****Galilee**

Visit to Galilee region including Biblical sites

IDF spokesperson briefing on northern boundaries (Syria and Lebanon)

**Tel Aviv**

Reception hosted by HE Andrea Faulkner, Ambassador to Israel

**Thursday, 3 May 2012**

Departure from Israel, return to Australia



## **Appendix B – Membership of the European Parliament’s Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand**

### **Members**

Ms Mara Bizotto MEP, Chair, Europe of freedom and democracy Group, Italy

Mr Ionnis A. Tsoukalas MEP, Vice-Chair, Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats), Greece

Mr Reimer Böge MEP, Vice-Chair, Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats), Germany

Mr Richard Ashworth MEP, European Conservatives and Reformists Group, United Kingdom

Ms Regina Baston MEP, Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats), Portugal

Mr Salvatore Caronna MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Italy

Mr Michael Cramer MEP, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, Germany

Mr Louis Grech MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Malta

Mr George Lyon MEP, Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, United Kingdom

Ms Mairead McGuinness MEP, Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats), Ireland

Mr Alajos Mészáros MEP, Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats), Slovakia

Mr Maurice Ponga MEP, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), France

Mr Brian Simpson MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, United Kingdom

Mr Hannu Takkula MEP, Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Finland

Mr Frank Vanhecke MEP, Europe of freedom and democracy Group, Belgium

Mr Janusz Władysław Zemke MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Poland

### **Substitutes**

Mr Benst Bendtsen MEP, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Denmark

Mr Jean-Luc Bennahmias MEP, Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, France

Mr José Bové MEP, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, France

Mr Giles Chichester MEP, European Conservatives and Reformists Group, United Kingdom

Mr Robert Dušek MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Czech Republic

Mr Adam Gierk MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Poland

Ms François Grossetête MEP, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), France

Ms Marian Harkin MEP, Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Ireland

Ms Iliana Ivanova MEP, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Bulgaria

Mr Olle Ludvigsson MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Sweden

Mr Gabriel Mato Adrover MEP, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Spain

Mr Hans-Peter Mayer MEP, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Germany

Mr Emilio Menéndez del Valle MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Spain

Mr Emil Stoyanov MEP, Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats), Bulgaria

Mr Sampo Terho MEP, Europe of freedom and democracy Group, Finland







## **Appendix C – Greetings by the Speaker of the Knesset**

On 1 May 2012, the delegation met with the Speaker of the Knesset, attended a sitting of the Knesset and was formally welcomed by the Speaker. Below is the unofficial translation of the greeting.

Members of the Knesset,

I have the honour to welcome here at the Knesset a distinguished delegation of members of the Australian Parliament headed by the President of the Senate, Senator the honourable John Hogg.

Welcome, sir, to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, and to the Knesset, our parliament and the shrine of Israeli democracy.

Distinguished guests, dear friends,

Members of the Knesset,

The Governments of Australia and Israel are linked by common values and a strong friendship of many years standing.

Our shared destiny, going back many years, can be seen at various historical cross-roads, as well as through our modern democratic values – principally respect for the parliamentary system, the independence of the judicial system, and the fundamental rights of the citizen, of every citizen.

This friendship is the strong foundation on which rest Israel's relations with Australia.

In you, our guests from Australia, I see the current day representatives of that deep-rooted friendship.

Distinguished guests,

We greatly appreciate Australia's stand beside Israel, both in votes at the United Nations, and in your strong support for the imposition of sanctions against Iran.

Although, so far, it seems that these sanctions are not sufficient, we still draw encouragement from the support of the international community, including Australia, that recognizes the threat to the peace of the entire free world.

I would like to express my appreciation, Ladies and Gentlemen, for your consistent efforts to find the way to strengthen the warm ties between our countries, to stimulate the democratic dialogue and enhance our mutual cultural activity.

This visit by your delegation symbolizes the continuity and strengthening of the excellent relations between the Parliament in Canberra and the Knesset in Jerusalem.

I am confident that together our two parliaments will be able to promote and develop cooperation in a range of areas that will contribute to the further enhancement and flourishing of relations between our two countries.

We cherish your friendship with Israel and the Jewish People, and we thank you for making the long journey to visit us.

Welcome to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

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1 *Greetings by the Speaker of the Knesset to the President of the Australian Senate, Knesset Plenum, 1 May 2012, unofficial translation prepared before the Knesset Session.*