



PARLIAMENT
OF AUSTRALIA



Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

16-21 July 2023

NOVEMBER 2023

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Members of the Delegation

Leader of the Delegation

- Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Member for Oxley, Queensland
Australian Labor Party

Deputy Leader of the Delegation

- Mr Ross Vasta MP
Member for Bonner, Queensland
Liberal National Party of Queensland

Delegates

- Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP
Member for Higgins, Victoria
Australian Labor Party
- Ms Zoe Daniel MP
Member for Goldstein, Victoria
Independent
- Ms Tania Lawrence MP
Member for Hasluck, Western Australia
Australian Labor Party

Officials

- Mr Riley Williamson
Speaker's Adviser
- Ms Susan Cardell
Delegation Secretary

Introduction

In July 2023 the bipartisan parliamentary delegation, led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Milton Dick MP, visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The aim of the parliamentary delegation visit was to strengthen bilateral relations between parliamentarians and gain a better understanding of the issues faced by the parliament and the people of the region. A supporting and interlocking set of objectives was to:

- gain greater insight into the current domestic political, economic and social issues faced by Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories including innovation, the environment and renewable energy, democracy, technology, security and human rights
- understand further the domestic political and parliamentary issues in Israel, including the planned judicial reforms, the work of the Knesset and its committees, and the make-up of the current government and its policies
- discuss topics of mutual interest with counterparts in relation to Australia's policies on several domestic, bilateral, and multilateral issues
- increase Australia's ties between Australian parliamentarians and people with businesses, organisations, and community groups in the region

The delegation felt very welcome during the visit, and was warmly received by parliamentarians and government officials, business representatives and local communities. It was clear that Australia is held in high regard in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and the delegation appreciated the opportunity to build on the strong bilateral relationships.

This report outlines the places visited, matters discussed and aspects of the bilateral relationship with Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories. The official program of activities is included as an appendix to this report.

Israel

In Israel, the delegation's meetings with a wide range of contacts illustrated the multi-faceted nature of the Australia-Israel relationship which rests on deep historical ties, and a mutual commitment to boosting trade, business and investment between our countries.

This was the first time an Australian Speaker had led such a high-level delegation to Israel. The delegation was keen to develop parliament to parliament relationships and to gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground in relation to the systems and authority of government and the parliament.

The Knesset

On 17 July 2023, the Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives was honoured to be accompanied by the Speaker of the Knesset, Mr Amir Ohana, to receive a full official welcome ceremony to the Knesset, to lay a wreath at the Gal-Ed memorial for soldiers who fell in Israel's wars, and to sign the guest book on behalf of the Australian Parliament.

Delegation members met with colleagues in the Knesset in Jerusalem to exchange views on issues of common interest to Israel and Australia.



Speaker Dick and Speaker Ohana during the Knesset welcome ceremony

The delegation was thankful particularly to the Speaker Ohana for his time and hospitality during the visit. Delegation members and Speaker Ohana had multiple discussions on a range of parliamentary matters such as the role of the Speaker, the structure of the Knesset and Israel's electoral cycle. The delegation took the opportunity to discuss with the Speaker Ohana the Israeli judicial system and the government's planned judicial reforms which had prompted widespread protests in the country.

The delegation received a tour of the Knesset chamber, including a briefing on the electronic voting system, and received a briefing on the artwork in Chagall State Hall which was designed and decorated by the Jewish artist Marc Chagall.

The delegation had productive discussions with a diverse group of members of the Knesset, including the Co-Chairs of the Israel-Australian Parliamentary Friendship Group, Ms Sharren Mirian Haskel and Mr Ohad Tai, and was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with MK Yuli Edelstein, Chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee and MK Danny Danon, IPU Representative and former UN Ambassador.

The delegation appreciated the open and frank conversations with the Speaker, parliamentarians, and parliamentary officials at the Knesset during the visit. Mutual areas of interest discussed included parliamentary procedure and practice, strong democracies and peaceful protests, government policy priorities, gender equity, national and regional security, the economy, education and schools, climate change, innovation and the research and development sector.

Yad Vashem

The delegation visited Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, and received a guided tour of exhibitions, museums, monuments and memorial sites which pays tribute to the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust, the survivors and their families. Delegation members appreciated the opportunity to view the impressive Center, its displays, stories and the education hub.

The delegation attended a memorial ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance and Mr Speaker was honoured to rekindle the Eternal Flame and lay a wreath. The delegation visited the Book of Names which memorialises 4,800,000 Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust.



Mr Speaker laying a wreath at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center

Discussions with local journalists and academics in Jerusalem

In the evening in Jerusalem, the delegation members welcomed the opportunity to discuss a variety of current political., social and economic matters with eminent journalists and academics. All participants offered their personal and professional perspectives to the discussions which on topics including social structures and views of politics, parliament and democracy; trade, imports and markets; the budget and the tax system; trends in education; and crime and homicide rates. The discussions offered a valuable insight into issues of contention on the ground.

Beersheba Commonwealth War Cemetery

On 18 July 2023, the delegation travelled to Beersheba, and was accompanied by Speaker Ohana at the Beersheba Commonwealth War Cemetery.

Beersheba is the city that was captured by the British-led Australian Light Horse in the Battle of Beersheba during the First World War on 31 October 1917.

Mr Speaker laid a wreath on behalf of the Australian Parliament at the Commonwealth War Cemetery where the delegation remembered the 31 light horsemen killed and 36 wounded soldiers in the charge and capture of the strategic town of Beersheba.



Mr Speaker and delegates at the Beersheba Commonwealth War Cemetery

Delegation members witnessed first-hand a large, loud and peaceful protest in Beersheba in relation to the Israeli government’s proposed judicial reforms.

Israel National Cyber Directorate

The Israel National Cyber Directorate is the national security and technological agency responsible for defending Israel’s national cyberspace and for establishing and advancing Israel’s cyber power. Beersheba is the centre of Israel’s high-tech and developing technology industry and the delegation received briefings and tours of the Israel National Cyber Directorate’s facilities, including the Computer Emergency Response Team and the National Cyber-Kinetic Lab.

At the newly opened National Cyber-Kinetic Lab, the delegation was shown facilities where the testing of technological and physical impacts of cyberattacks occurs, enabling the evaluation of methods to remediate against potential cyberattacks. The Lab’s clients are expected to be institutions operating critical infrastructure in Israel and the plan was to open the Lab for collaboration with the private sector and international partners. Working with universities, the Lab provides facilities to research, development, and training in the sector. Delegation

members had the opportunity to observe kinetic modules which were testing against cyberattack scenarios in a building carpark.

The Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) responds to cyber incidents and offers technical expertise and assistance to the civilian cyber sphere. The CERT operates 24/7 and receives hundreds of reports and information about cyberattacks or threats daily. The CERT includes several operating teams including cyber-technology experts conducting research to detect and mitigate threats; incident response experts to assist with incident handling and harmful cyber activities; and operational collaborators working with CERTs worldwide as well as local and global cyber industry to promote information sharing and advice on cyber resilience. The delegation observed the CERT's National Incident Management Center in action where analysts were receiving calls to its hotline and providing tools and guidance to civilians on appropriate responses to cyber incidents.

Institute for National Security Studies

On 19 July 2023, the delegation visited Tel Aviv and met with senior directors and researchers at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). The INSS is a mix of academics, strategists and practitioners from government, the military, and the diplomatic corps, who conduct research in the multiplicity of fields that comprise security issues. Delegation members appreciated having insightful discussions with senior directors on security matters, such as: economic issues in the Middle East; the Israel-Palestinian conflict and a potential two-state solution; current Israeli society and politics; climate change and security; and global issues facing Israel and Australia.

HalGal Sheli

HalGal Sheli combines surfing and education to provide at-risk youth 'a real opportunity to ride the wave to a better life'. HalGal Sheli runs a yearly multi-step educational program empowering youth from all walks of Israeli society including Jews, Christians, Muslims, secular and religious, gender-neutral, boys and girls. The teenagers who attend Hal Gal Sheli come from low socioeconomic conditions, some with a criminal history, who have dropped out of the formal education system or were on the verge of dropping out. It operates out of eight surf centres along the coast of Israel and has had more than 9000 graduating students since its first official program in 2014. Many former teenage students are now surf instructors and mentors at HalGal Sheli.

The delegation was privileged to have a tour and meet with the amazing HaGal Sheli team, including teachers and students. HaGal Sheli is a non-profit organisation, receiving much of its funding from private donors as well as government agencies. The Australian Government provided funding support for the educational surf centre building at Ma'aravi beach in Tel Aviv-Jaffa.



Delegation members at HaGal Sheli Educational Surf Center in Tel-Aviv Jaffa

Occupied Palestinian Territories

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the delegation held constructive conversations on how Australia can work collaboratively with parliamentarians, officials and citizens in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The delegation was keen to exchange views on issues of common interest to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Australia and to develop parliament to parliament relationships.

United Nations Representatives

The delegation appreciated the opportunity to meet with two representatives of the United Nations (UN): Ms Lyn Hastings, UN Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process; and Mr Thomas White, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.

Both Ms Hastings and Mr White provided the delegation with insights into the circumstances of people and refugees living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including West Bank and Gaza. Matters discussed included foreign aid; human rights; fuel security; taxes; peace and security at the borders; and education and employment.

Australia continues to provide support to the Occupied Palestinian Territories through its development program, including an expected \$32.2 million in assistance in 2023-24, of which \$20 million is to UNRWA. The UN representatives outlined these programs which support education, medical and food security to Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and neighboring countries.

Meetings with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

On 20 July 2023 the delegation travelled to Ramallah, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and was privileged to be welcomed by the Palestinian Prime Minister, Mr Mohammad Shtayyeh. Constructive discussions about issues in the region, supporting credible elections, and Australia's development and humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories provided useful insights into priorities and concerns of the Palestinian Authority.

The delegation was honoured to meet with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Mr Riyadh al-Maliki and discuss issues of mutual interest, including strengthening bilateral relations between Australia and the Occupied Palestinian

Territories, democratic processes, human rights of the Palestinian people, and international law.



Delegation members meeting with Prime Minister Mr Mohammad Shtayeh

Assistant Professor Dr Dalal Iriqat

The delegation welcomed the opportunity to meet with Dr Dalal Iriqat, Assistant Professor, Conflict Resolution & Strategic Planning, Arab America University Palestine. Dr Iriqat is active in the academic, journalistic, and business sectors. Discussions with Dr Iriqat provided the delegation with valuable perspectives into leadership, empowering women, and politics in the region.

Centre for Policy and Survey Research

Delegation members had a fascinating discussion with Dr Khalil Shikaki, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Dr Shikaki's research has focused on the peace process, state building,

public opinion, transition to democracy, and the impact of domestic politics in the Occupied Palestinian Territories on the peace process. Dr Shikaki has conducted more than 200 polls among Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and, since 2000, dozens of joint polls among Palestinians and Israelis. He discussed statistical findings in relation to demographics and public opinion on matters such as security, politics, and elections.

St John Eye Hospital

The delegation had a tour of the St John Eye Hospital in Sheikh Jarrah and met with doctors and staff at the facility who are helping to fight eye disease and save the sight of thousands of patients. In 2022, the St John of Jerusalem Hospital Group saw over 142,000 patients and undertook 6000 major sight-saving surgeries. Through the Fred Hollows Foundation, Australia assists the St John Eye Hospital network in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.



Delegation members at the St John Eye Hospital in Sheikh Jarrah

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

Members of the delegation welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Australian parliamentary visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The program achieved its objective to give participants a greater insight into current political, social and economic issues faced by Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It was extremely valuable to delegation members to hear the perspectives of people in Israel, including parliamentarians, officials, experts, and citizens on a variety of pressing and important issues.

Parliamentary delegations, such as this, provide a strong bipartisan mechanism to engage with our counterparts and support the excellent work being done by Australia's diplomatic missions and of all Australians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The delegation wishes to record its appreciation of the work that went into preparing for the visit, including the arrangements made by the Australian Parliament's International and Parliamentary Relations Office and officials from the Knesset and the Palestinian Authority. The knowledge imparted by the tour guides in Jerusalem was appreciated and added to the immersive experience for the delegation members. The delegation also thanks the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Australia's representatives in our Embassy in Israel and Representative Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for their work in developing the programs in addition to the excellent support and hospitality provided during the visits.

The Hon Milton Dick MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives and Delegation Leader

14 November 2023

Appendix A: Official Program of Activities

ISRAEL

SUNDAY 16 JULY 2023 – JERUSALEM	
1.45pm to 3.30pm	Country briefing with Australian Embassy Officials His Excellency Dr Ralph King, Australian Ambassador to Israel Matthew Wise, Deputy Head of Mission <i>Venue: Kedma Mamila restaurant</i>
MONDAY 17 JULY 2023 – JERUSALEM	
10.00am	Welcome Ceremony at the Knesset Ceremonial arrival of the Speaker Salute and raising of the Australian national flag Playing of national anthems Speaker inspect the Honour Guard Speaker lay a wreath at the Gal-Ed memorial for fallen soldiers Ceremonial signing of the Visitors' Book Official photograph with both Speakers and the delegation <i>Venue: Knesset Courtyard</i>
10.30am	Meeting with Mr Amir Ohana, Speaker of the Knesset <i>Venue: Speaker's rooms and the Plenium Hall</i>
11.30am	Meeting with MK Danny Danon, IPU Representative, former UN Ambassador, former Science Minister <i>Venue: Knesset committee room</i>

12.00pm	<p>Meeting with diverse group of Members of the Knesset (MKs)</p> <p>MK Moshe Roth, <i>United Torah Judaism</i> MK Ron Katz, <i>Yesh Atid</i> MK Mansour Abbas, <i>Leader of Ra'am</i> MK Sharon Nir, <i>Yisrael Beitanu</i> MK Tsega Melaku, <i>Likud</i></p> <p><i>Venue: Knesset committee room</i></p>
12.45pm	<p>Meeting with the Israel–Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group</p> <p>Co-Chairs: Ms Sharren Miriam Haskel, <i>National Unity Party</i> and Mr Ohad Tal, <i>Religious Zionism</i></p> <p><i>Venue: Knesset MKs Dining Hall</i></p>
2.00pm	<p>Tour and briefing of artwork in Chagall State Hall</p> <p><i>Venue: Chagall State Hall</i></p>
2.30pm	<p>Meeting with MK Yuli Edelstein, Chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee</p> <p><i>Venue: Knesset committee room</i></p>
3.30pm to 5.00pm	<p>Visit Yad Vashem (The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre)</p> <p>Guided tour of the Holocaust History Museum Visit to the Book of Names Memorial ceremony and wreath laying ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance Visit to Children’s Memorial and Signing of the Guest Book</p> <p><i>Venue: Yad Vashem</i></p>
7.00pm	<p>Dinner with local journalists and other representatives accompanied by the Australian Ambassador and Deputy Head of Mission</p> <p>Professor Amichai Cohen, The Israel Democracy Institute Naomi Feldman, Associate Professor of Economics, Hebrew</p>

	<p>University of Jerusalem Anshel Pfeffer, The Economist and Haaretz Correspondent Professor Alex Weinreb, Head of Research and Demography, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies</p> <p><i>Venue: Ambassador Garden Restaurant, King David Hotel</i></p>
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TUESDAY 18 JULY 2023 – BEERSHEBA, JERUSALEM	
10.30am	<p>Visit Beersheba Commonwealth War Cemetery</p> <p>Met by Speaker Ohana and Museum Curator and site staff Introduction and explanation of the Beersheba War Cemetery Wreath laying</p> <p><i>Venue: Commonwealth War Cemetery, Beersheba</i></p>
11.30am to 1.15pm	<p>Visit the Israel Cyber Hub</p> <p>Briefings from Israel National Cyber Directorate officials Tour of facilities, including the Computer Emergency Response Team and the National Cyber-Kinetic Lab</p> <p><i>Venue: Israel National Cyber Directorate, Beersheba</i></p>
7.30pm	<p>Official dinner hosted by Speaker Ohana</p> <p>Israeli officials in attendance:</p> <p>Amir Ohana - Speaker of the Knesset Moshe (Chico) Edri – DG of the Knesset Dan Marzouk - Secretary General of the Knesset Rony Tal - Chief of Staff to the Speaker Ben Zilberberg - Advisor to Speaker Itay Gliner - Press Secretary to the Speaker Amb. Isaac Bachman – Knesset Diplomatic Adviser Liat Shimoni-Konitzki - Knesset Chief of Protocol Yael Richards - Knesset Director of International Relations Dafna Kaplansky - Knesset International Relations Coordinator Rafael Harpaz – DDG for Asia and Pacific Affairs, MFA</p>

	<p>David Levy, Director of Pacific Department, Asia and Pacific Division, MFA</p> <p><i>Venue: Ambassador's Garden Restaurant, King David Hotel</i></p>
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WEDNESDAY 19 JULY 2023 –JERUSALEM, TEL AVIV	
7.30am to 10.15am	<p>Walking guided tour of the Old City, Jerusalem</p> <p>Tour Guide: Mr Zel Lederman</p>
12.00pm	<p>Briefings at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)</p> <p>Prof Eyal Zisser, Vice Rector of Tel Aviv University Dr Ilan Steiner, Chief Financial Officer Operations, INSS Brig Gen (res.) Udi Dekel, Head of the Palestinian Arena Program Brig Gen (res.) Assaf Orion, Director of Israel-China Policy Center Dr Yoel Guzansky, Normalization with Arab countries</p> <p><i>Venue: Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv</i></p>
2.30pm	<p>Visit HaGal Sheli: Australia-Israel Surf Education Centre</p> <p>Tour and explanation of the facility Briefing from team at HaGal Sheli, including Yaron Waksman, Founder and CEO</p> <p><i>Venue: HaGal Sheli Educational Surf Center, Tel Aviv-Jaffa</i></p>
6.00pm	<p>Country briefing with Australian Representatives in Occupied Palestinian Territories</p> <p>Edward Russell, Head of Post, Ramallah Craig Gilbert, Deputy Head of Post, Ramallah</p> <p><i>Venue: Meeting Room, King David Hotel</i></p>

7.00pm	<p>Dinner with Ms Lynn Hastings, UN Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator and Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process</p> <p><i>Venue: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem</i></p>
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OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

THURSDAY 20 JULY 2023 – JERUSALEM, RAMALLAH	
8.00am	<p>Breakfast briefing by Mr Tom White, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)</p> <p><i>Venue: Ambassador's Garden Restaurant, King David Hotel</i></p>
10.15am	<p>Visit the St John Eye Hospital</p> <p>Briefing on Australian funded program (through Fred Hollows Foundation) hosted by Mr Ahmad Ma'ali, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p><i>Venue: Saint John Eye Hospital, Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem</i></p>
11.45am	<p>Meeting with Mr Riyadh al-Maliki, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates</p> <p><i>Venue: Foreign Minister's offices, Ramallah</i></p>
1.00pm	<p>Working Lunch with Dr Dalal Iriqat, Assistant Professor, Conflict Resolution & Strategic Planning, Arab America University Palestine</p> <p><i>Venue: Darna Restaurant, Ramallah</i></p>
2.30pm	<p>Meeting with Professor Khalil Shikaki, Director, Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research</p> <p><i>Venue: Centre for Policy and Survey Research, Ramallah</i></p>

4.00pm	Meeting with Prime Minister Dr Mohammad Shtayyeh <i>Venue: Prime Minister's offices, Ramallah</i>
End of official engagements	