

Member	Richard Riordan	Electorate	Polwarth
Period	1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024		

Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$14,991.76
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$3,458.00

Regulation 7 - Motor vehicle allowance	
Total amount paid to member for motor vehicle allowance	\$0.00
Member did not receive the motor vehicle allowance in the previous quarter and member has elected to receive the motor vehicle allowance for this quarter	No

Regulation 9 - Parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	
Total amount paid to member for parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	\$7,396.48
Suburb in which the member's parliamentary accommodation is located	Melbourne

Regulation 10 - Travel allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Town or city in which accommodation was located	Value of the accommodation
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$0.00		

Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Mode of transport	Value of transport
Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance			\$0.00		

Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims			
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid
29/09/2024	12/10/2024	Accommodation costs Sri Lanka/India for electorate business and for Parliament, stakeholder and business meetings	\$2,822.31
29/09/2024	12/10/2024	Return flights to Sri Lanka/India and internal flights for electorate business for Parliament, stakeholder and business meetings, additional cost for flights	\$600.00

Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims		13
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance		\$3,422.31
See attached travel report for further details		

International Travel Report

India and Sri Lanka

29 September 2024 – 12 October 2024

Attendees

Mr Brad Battin MP, Member for Berwick
Mr Richard Riordan MP, Member for Polwarth

Itinerary – base cities

India

Bengaluru, Karnataka
Hyderabad, Telangana

Sri Lanka

Colombo
Anuradhapura
Negombo

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Overview

Summary

Objective: The primary objective of this delegation was to engage with educational institutions and government organisations to strengthen relationships and continue ongoing discussions from previous tours and interactions. This study tour was for electorate business to represent the electorates of Berwick and Polwarth.

Given that India is one of Victoria's largest partners in the education sector, fostering these connections is crucial to ensuring mutual benefits for both Victoria and India. India is also moving forward with research and opportunities in health, including mental health. Governments must consider methods, policy and research that is conducted to ensure we have the best available services for our state, and we can often learn from mistakes of other nations, so we do not repeat.

Focus Areas:

The meetings covered a wide range of policy areas, including:

- Health and Mental Health
- Addiction and treatment options
- Energy
- Law and Order
- Agriculture and innovation
- Foreign trade options
- Technology and Innovation – including start up business options
- Cultural interaction and learning
- Supporting schools in lower socio-economical areas.

These discussions allowed for an exchange of information aimed at shaping future policies that benefit both Victoria and the electorates represented by the delegation.

Cultural and Religious Engagement: In addition to formal meetings, the delegation met with various religious groups and visited places of cultural and historical significance. Victoria's rapidly growing Indian and Sri Lankan communities make it essential for us, as representatives, to gain a deeper understanding of their cultural and historical backgrounds.

This understanding informs the development of programs and initiatives that support these communities, ensuring that they can fully participate in Victoria's broader society.

This report outlines the key policy discussions held during the visit and highlights potential future engagement opportunities in the various fields mentioned above. The trip has provided valuable insights that will aid in developing strategies to strengthen Victoria's relationship with India and promote mutual growth in areas such as education, environment, and security.

Travel and Accommodation:

This trip included flights from Melbourne to Sri Lanka and India as well as internal flights. The total cost of the flights was \$5500 per person for 4 International flights and all internal flights. The accommodation was in each of the above listed cities. The accommodation was and was within the Victorian Parliament guidelines.

Meetings were conducted as listed below. With time difference travel days were 29/30 September, 5/6 October, 8 October, 11/12 October. All meetings are compliant with the parliament guidelines.

The accommodation was in the following cities:

Bengaluru – 4 Nights - \$713
Hyderabad – 2 Nights - \$360
Colombo – 1 Night - \$197
Anuradhapura – 2 Nights - \$507
Negombo – 4 Nights - \$1280

Meetings

Tour of Vidhana Soudhi – State Parliament of Karnataka

The tour of the Vidhana Soudhi was arranged by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) as part of regular visits by CPA members to parliaments in other Commonwealth nations. The visit included tours of the Parliament chambers, an insight to the history of the parliament and a broad discussion on the Westminster system shared by Victoria.

During the tour multiple unarranged meetings occurred with the support staff, clerks of the parliament, translators and other staff who work to support the daily operation of the parliament.

Rahim Khan – Minister for Municipal Administration and Haj, Government of Karnataka

Mr Khan formally held Ministerial Positions for Youth Empowerment and is a member of the Indian Congress Party. In his previous role Mr Khan faced challenges with a changing culture in India with the next generation of youth and their parents focused more on improved education outcomes and improving opportunities for all to access education and other services.

As the Indian standard of living increases particularly in states like Karnataka where the standard of living is ahead of many more regional states, the expectations on education and access to services increases. Bengaluru has a population of approximately 15 million people

making it one of the most populated cities in India. Mr Khan highlighted the importance of access for students to educational opportunities overseas. However, Mr Khan spoke highly of the improved access to education locally in fields like astrophysics, science and health.

There are opportunities for universities in Australia, particularly Victoria, to improve partnerships to deliver education in Victoria as well as in collaboration with campuses in Bengaluru.

[Dr Arathi Krishna, Deputy Chairman Non-Resident Indian Forum, Karnataka](#)

The Federal Parliament of India has a specific office within the parliament dedicated to Non-Resident Indians, meaning any Indian citizen who lives abroad. This can include students, tourists, government staff, and people on working visas or permit residents to another nation. The Karnataka government had a stand-alone office prior to the BJP taking office, and the Indian Congress Party have re-established this office for members of their own community to have access to government services when away.

The system is designed for example when a member of the electorate of Berwick has a health concern and due to their status or visa, they are unable to access the services in Australia due to the cost impact, this office can assist.

The office can also assist in connecting Indian Nationals to support for visa concerns or requirements for business and trade. As a representative of one of the largest communities from Karnataka in the Casey region access to this office will support many constituents.

[Ravi Hegde – Editor in Chief, Kannada Prabha Publications Ltd.](#)

Media have a broad understanding of the issues impacting on the local community and can often have a better gauge of the impact of international affairs on people in the areas they represent. Meeting with staff at Kannada Prabha Publications was an opportunity to discuss local and foreign affairs and the impacts on the local community. This included feedback on the views of the local community and how they perceive the impact of unrest in Ukraine / Russia and Israel / Palestine on the local economy and access to energy supplies.

As reports continue in Australia on the conflicts, it is important that as elected representatives we have a broad understanding of the various views on the conflict in our own communities. Victoria is proudly a multicultural community, and we have welcomed people from all over the world, not all will have the same opinion of the conflict.

Large media content producers such as Kannada Prabha Publications Ltd, access all traditional and social media platforms and see their market very much as the Indian diaspora across the world. This insight into external political information and influences on the Indian diaspora here in Victoria was discussed as many Australian Indians still receive their news and updates from local media outlets in their home state.

Hon H.D. Devegowda, Former Prime Minister of India

India and Australia have had a long history of building strong relationships and working collaboratively towards common goals. Trade in food, fibre, education and services continues to grow. The Hon H.D. Devegowda visited Australia on multiple occasions including during the building of major energy and irrigation projects.

In our discussions it was apparent India was still reliant on gas and coal as the major source of energy, and providing affordable energy for a population of over 1.4 billion is essential to creating opportunities for many to build financial freedom in the future.

H.D. Devegowda is still an MP in the Federal Parliament as a representative for Karnataka.

Hon H. D. Kumaraswamy, Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries

This meeting was cancelled at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances.

Police Inspector B.S Ashok

A tour of a local police station and meeting many police officers in a growth area community to gain an understanding of the interaction and move towards positive action in changing the attitude towards women in the community. The Hosakote station is a small station in a growing area.

In our discussions the police highlighted in recent history senior management and political figures had highlighted the need to increase the number of female frontline staff. In the Hosakote area, concerns of domestic violence, acts of violence and intimidation against women and offences with women as victims had increased. Many women in the community were reluctant to report to a male dominated police service.

The major change was to increase the numbers of women in training to 35% leading to increasing the number of frontline police officers. Access to female officers has seen an increase in the reporting of many gender-based crimes.

It was discussed this is a positive outcome and overtime the police will aim to have improved options for reporting and support for female victims.

Sharanya Narayani International School (SNIS)

Lakshmi Reddy, Academic Director and Trustee and Nagaraj Reddy Managing Director and Trustee offered a tour of their new international day and boarding school. The need for high quality internationally accredited secondary education for domestic and expat students was discussed and the opportunity Sharanya Narayani International School aims to create for students.

This school has a local education option and a boarding opportunity for students who would otherwise need to travel long distances. Students can begin in pre-school and complete their entire primary and secondary education on site.

The school offers high level academic studies, access to sports and other extra-curricular activities. All students have access to post class study options with support.

The school is active in working with families to engage with further education within India and opportunities abroad. Students from SNIS have succeeded in Australia, Canada and other European nations. Both trustees have successfully studied overseas in the United States of America and continue to believe education is the future to break down the barriers of poverty in India.

SNIS operates a student lead learning approach to reduce the stress and impact from the increasing pressure of targeted outcomes. The environment is designed to create self-motivated students with a desire to learn and push academic boundaries. This is a private school that operates as a not-for-profit organisation. The funding model prevents many who cannot access the required financial requirements from attending or sending their children.

Concerns were raised by the school, students, and families that the Victorian Tertiary study options were becoming very expensive. This is leading to Australia in general dropping down the priority list for many students. Options in Europe and Canada were being viewed as better value.

[Government High School and Junior College, Belatur Colony, Kadugodi, Bengaluru, Karnataka](#)

The visit to this Government School was with Vimove, a social enterprise working with government students to improve outcomes.

Many students at government schools in India do not get the same opportunities as students in international schools. The education offered is at the minimum curriculum and many students miss out on learning basic life skills that will assist with personal development and building confidence.

Speaking to the students in their final years of high school education, their teachers and others involved in the delivery of the Vimove programs, it was clear the aim of the social enterprise in the school was about advancing opportunities for young people into the future, taking into account a range of issues not otherwise made available in the curriculum. One of the largest impacts was for young women who were learning skills of financial management and individual empowerment.

In Australia it has long been identified as a key concern for women who remain in violent relationships is the lack of financial literacy and independence. This can lead women to remain in dangerous relationships putting themselves at risk as they fear homelessness or the ability to even open a bank account.

This change to have external organisations deliver programs on basic life skills including investing and managing money will change lives and could be adopted in Victoria.

Cadabam's Group Health

Cadabam's health group was started as a family operated business after a family member Amitha M. Cadabam passed away at just 21 years old. The health group offers a range of services from mental health support, addiction therapy, psychosocial rehabilitation services, long term care for people living with an intellectual disability, diagnostics and many natural style options for support in mental health or addiction.

As the organisation has grown the options to offer more affordable services to the community has increased. The Cadabam's group are moving into affordable aged care with facilities that will support not just the client, but the family as they transition to a residential health care model in the future.

A key point discussed with the management team was the move to education of families and communities where people living with an intellectual disability live to offer improved services and support and to ensure all people feel accepted in their own community.

Women Wellness and Recovery Centre

The women's wellness and recovery centre has been designed for women who have addictions to alcohol or drugs. The need for support services for women in India is not new, it is only just now becoming more acceptable for women to use these services.

There are currently only four centres at the time of writing that assist with in-patient facilities for women facing those challenges of addiction. This service began in 2007 and continue to grow. The Cadabam's group are committed to making the services affordable for all in the community.

Exclusive Women's Residential Block

The Amitha unit is a residential service offered to women who face mental health issues and need longer term support or options with live in support. The services delivered are a mix of group therapy, individual support services and natural therapy.

There are many conditions that are treated when at this centre including depression, bipolar, personality disorders and other mental health programs.

Access to a safe and secure environment for women for these services with a residential program can improve the outcomes for clients.

Emergency Response

Cadabam's offer a service to families with emergency response to mental health concerns where families can contact a 24/7 emergency line. The service offers over the phone

support and options for the family to work with patient, access to a call out service to assist in the home with a patient or in high-risk situations an ambulance will be sent to transport the patient safely.

This service does not impact on local ambulance services as it is a fully independent response not available for standard health use.

Facility Tour

The facility tour highlighted the integration of patients with community. Many organisations in India separate the patients from guests touring the facility. This was not the case at Cadabam's. This service is about allowing people living with a disability or mental health issues to interact with all guests.

Accommodation can vary depending on the cost of the room and facilities in the room. The services are offered to all patients including group and individual support. Patients are encouraged to engage with each other and build on their skills and confidence to communicate in the community.

The most important element of the process was working to engage with the local community and build a better understanding of disability and mental health. Seclusion is not the option to improve lives.

Conclusion on Cadabam's Group

Victoria offers services for mental health and addiction. However, there is room for improvement when we are dealing with new Australians. Education into communities about the support services available and the options to create an inclusive community for all.

Mental health and disability can be isolating for those who are living with these illnesses. It is important as a community we understand many people are coming from nations that have traditionally not had our level of acceptance of these illnesses. We can learn from these organisations to develop best practice to engage with the community to build acceptance and understanding in the future.

Management at Cadabam's in Meeting

Cadabam M Ramesh – Chairman
Sudha R Cadabam – Vice Chairperson
M K Saraswathi – Vice Chairperson
Sandesh R Cadabam – Managing Director
Neha S Cadabam – Consultant Psychologist and Executive Director
Dr B R Madhukar – Medical Director
Dr Sunil M R – Director Facilitator

Meeting HH Devanatha Jeeyar Swamy, Hyderabad

Learning the many cultures that are moving to the Southeast of Melbourne remains an important element to attending meetings in India. The statue of Equality was a vision from HH Chinna Jeeyar Swaniji and a place of prayer and support for the community.

The tour of the temple and surrounds as well as the meeting with Devanather Jeeyar Swamy highlighted the importance of faith for many from India and they explained the importance of staying connected no matter where in the world they lived for peace. The many Hindus based in the Southeast of Melbourne and increasingly around Victoria, continue to inform their local MP of their strong traditional religious and faith connections that support building a stronger community in Victoria. The continued recognition of the many celebrations and traditions are seen as vital links to past for the future generations. Attending the religious and traditional home of these faiths assists in working with these communities and creating stronger relationships with local residents.

Community Breakfast - Hyderabad

A community breakfast was held with local leaders and family of residents of the Southeast. These connections are important to build confidence and trust as we work towards improving services for all Victorians.

The state seat of Berwick includes many new Australians and people who have a heritage from India and Sri Lanka. These meetings with local leaders from political, business and religious organisations are vital to improve our knowledge and understanding of how we can better serve the community.

T- HUB – Hyderabad Technology City

The State Government of Telangana decided 20 years ago to create an international technology and innovation focus in a new city centre. It has attracted many of the worlds leading IT companies but is also heavily focused on start ups and using innovation and technology to drive the prosperity of the region. We visited the T-HUB which is one of the worlds largest tech start up incubators. Set in the middle of this vibrant commercial and innovation centre T-Hub is working in two areas of great interest to Victoria and Australia.

We received a presentation on the work being done with other States in Australia around mining innovation. Using AI and technology to lower costs and improve environmental and other outcomes.

The Telangana Government is keen to see agricultural innovation help drive increased productivity and better outcomes for India. Strong relationships with farmers and regional communities are being developed to help harness the collective and unique problem-solving skills of workers in agriculture. The concept of funding and supporting regional agricultural workers and businesses to harness their collective knowledge to drive innovation has huge scope in Victoria also.

Anuradhapura – Education Visits

Katarampura Primary School

12 months ago, we joined former Sri Lankan medical professionals, now providing permanent surgical and anesthetic care in Polwarth, to deliver much-needed resources to an isolated school in north-central Sri Lanka. This small school, with approximately 85 students is located east of Anuradhapura in the rural village of Dutuwewa.

To expand on this relationship the Member for Polwarth and Member for Berwick attended the school to see how the previous donations had assisted in the education in the village. The support had assisted the students in building confidence and gave them access to alternative learning materials using the laptops.

On this occasion we worked with Sri Lankan Airlines and other local businesses to deliver an additional three laptops, sports equipment and a stationary kit for each child. This was a combined effort with support from the Berwick Strikers Cricket Team President Milinda Dasanayaka. His support and the local community are dedicated to giving children opportunity in Sri Lanka and is important in continuing relationships between my community and their home.

By supporting projects like this, we hope to continue making a meaningful difference in communities facing such challenges.

Dutuwewa Central College

Dutuwewa Central College is located 5 minutes from Katarampura Primary and has student transition to this school. The school is building a reputation of students who grade well enough to attend university in Sri Lanka. This is important in the area to give families confidence in education and to develop the local skills of young people to build business, continue farming and create opportunities for the local area.

The school has recently qualified for top level cricket and required support to allow them to play. A donation of cricket equipment including cricket balls, bats, helmets, pads etc will give young people the chance to develop their skills. This equipment was purchased from a local supplier in Victoria EN Sports, and we were pleased to donate it.

Pothanegama School

The area around this school is a mix of fishing and farming families. There is a broad mix of students with various socio-economic backgrounds. Working with Shawn Mendis Lawyers and the local community we visited the school and delivered stationary packs for all students.

The school has faced challenges with access to basic items and this will make a difference in the education options for young people.

Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi Tree

In keeping with our mission to connect with places of great cultural importance for our Victorian Buddhists, we were granted a meeting with the Chief High Priest of Atamasthana who is responsible for overseeing 8 Buddhist temples and the 2300 year old Bodhi Tree. Millions of visitors a year come at all times of day and night and particularly during a full moon to pay homage to this special place.

Parliament of Sri Lanka

The Parliament of Sri Lanka was in recess at the time of the visit due to elections. Whilst the presidential elections were complete, the elections for the parliament are to take place in December.

A discussion of the parliament processes was held with Kushani Rohanadeera - Secretary General of Parliament, Hansa Abeyrathne – Assistant Secretary General Parliament of Sri Lanka and Chaminda Kularatne – Chief of Staff.

This was an educational tour including a tour of parliament and the grounds.

Meeting with Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith

As one of the Vatican's most senior Cardinals, Cardinal Ranjith represents only around 6% of Sri Lanka's people who are Catholic but is Internationally respected for his stance on terrorism and sectarian violence. We received a briefing on the role of leadership and the influence Church and State can have following the 2019 Easter Bombings. During this troubled time in Sri Lanka Cardinal Ranjith was credited for maintaining peace in Sri Lanka through his on ground actions and quick response to maintaining peace.

Meeting with Hon. Vijitha Herath, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Meeting to discuss current affairs and to build relationship with the new government for the future. The Minister was one of three cabinet members appointed during the transition between parliaments.

The discussions were supportive of building relationships for future options including education as an export for Australia. Skilled workers were discussed as Sri Lanka has a high level of training for trades. The current training programs are based on a model of training from the United States of America and would be compliant with Australian Standards.

This will be an ongoing discussion with the Government and private enterprise in Victoria looking to explore opportunities.

Other Attendees at Meetings include:

- School Executive Sri Lankan Schools
- Dr Bhaskaran Raju – MLA and Candidate
- Chaminda Willgamage
- Avishka Perera – Director Perera and Sons
- Dhanusha Muthukumarana – Managing Director Potenza
- Sashika Wickramatunga – Hospitality and Business Development
- Nathiees Loganathan - Hospitality and Business Development
- Hon. Mohan Perera – Leader Democratic National Alliance
- E.A.D Sanjeewa – Senior Manager HNB (Hatton National Bank)
- Supun Dias - Assistant General Manager HNB
- Damith Pallewatte – Acting CEO HNB
- K.S.T Perera – President Liberal Democratic Party
- Sherman Gunatillake – Senior Deputy Chair Liberal Democratic Party
- M.U.M Ali Sabry – President’s Counsel
- Rakesh C – Director Wanya
- Rony Joesph – CEO Flyworld Group

Meeting Dates

- 29 September
 - Travel Day
- 30 September
 - Hon. Rahim Khan, Minister for Municipal Administration
 - Tour of Vidhana Soudi
 - Dr Arathi Krishna, Deputy Chairman Non-Resident Indian Forum
 - Ravi Hedge – Kannada Prahbha Publications
- 1 October
 - Hon H.D. Devegowda, Former Prime Minister
 - Hon H.D Kumaraswamy, Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries (Cancelled last minute by Minister)
 - Police Inspector B.S Ashok
 - Sharanya Narayani International School
 - Government School, Belatur Colony
- 2 October
 - Cadabam’s Group
- 3 October
 - Travel by train to Hyderabad
- 4 October
 - Devanatha Jeeyar Swamy
 - Community Breakfast
 - T-Hub
- 5 October

- Flight to Sri Lanka
- 6 October
 - Travel to Anuradhapura and dinner with community leaders
- 7 October
 - Katarampura Primary School
 - Dutuwewa Central College
 - Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi Tree and meeting religious leaders
- 8 October
 - Pothanegama School
 - Travel to Negombo
- 9 October
 - Parliament of Sri Lanka
 - Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith
 - Hon. Vijitha Herath, Minister for Foreign Affairs
- 10 October
 - Meeting with business leaders including HNB Bank at a arranged dinner
- 11 October
 - Free Day – Depart to airport at 9pm
- 12 October
 - 12:20am Flight return to Melbourne

We submit this report to the Parliament of Victoria as per the requirements of the Members Guide current in October 2024.