

Member	Bridget Vallence	Electorate	Evelyn
Period	1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024		

Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$12,079.83
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$3,340.96

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	\$0.00
Suburb in which the member's parliamentary accommodation is located	n/a

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
04-Mar-24	08-Mar-24	Parliamentary Sitings and Shadow Ministerial meetings	\$1,418.33	Melbourne	\$1,000.00
18-Mar-24	22-Mar-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$1,465.87	Melbourne	\$1,100.00
29-Apr-24	02-May-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$1,040.94	Melbourne	\$825.00
06-May-24	08-May-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$735.20	Melbourne	\$550.00
13-May-24	15-May-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$776.97	Melbourne	\$550.00
27-May-24	29-May-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$817.69	Melbourne	\$662.10
17-Jun-24	21-Jun-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$1,509.38	Melbourne	\$1,240.00
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			21		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$7,764.38		

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
27-Mar-24	11-Apr-24	Accommodation in Athens for electorate business to explore economic issues and investigate industry, innovation and trade opportunities relevant to the state.	\$2,199.78
Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims			15
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance			\$2,199.78
See attached travel report for further details			

Travel Report – Bridget Vallence MP, Parliament of Victoria

Electorate	Evelyn District
Shadow Ministerial Portfolios	Industry, Innovation, Manufacturing, Tertiary Education, Skills and Training
Places visited	Athens, Greece
Dates of travel	27 March to 11 April 2024

Purpose of travel

Industry and Economic Development, Technology & Innovation, Trade & Investment, Skills and Training

The purpose of this electorate business was to explore industry, innovation, skills, education, and trade opportunities for the economic benefit of the Evelyn Electorate and the state of Victoria, and to enhance the close cultural ties between Victoria and Greece, also noting my membership of the Parliament of Victoria's Parliamentary Friends of Greece group.

My visit to Athens included engagements with several Ministers of the Hellenic Government, government officials, diplomatic officials at the Australian Embassy including the Ambassador, Greek industry stakeholders and leaders within my Shadow Ministry portfolio areas including the Athens Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Enterprise Greece Trade and Investment organisation, and were conducted from Friday 29 March to Wednesday 10 April 2024, excluding weekends.

Victoria and Greece enjoy a strong bilateral relationship, underpinned by significant cultural ties, shared democratic values, and increasing two-way trade and investment. Trade opportunities that would benefit Evelyn Electorate businesses and the Victorian economy were explored, with the most promising for the Evelyn Electorate being in premium beverages, and for Victoria in education, ICT, fintech and biotech.

Further, discussions with Members of Parliament, industry stakeholders and the Ambassador resulted in significant learnings about the Greek economy and government institutions and programs that are being put in place to help rebuild the Hellenic economy after a period of significant economic decline, learnings that will help with development of policies to arrest the economic decline Victoria is currently facing.

It is important to strengthen relationships with representatives in Greece. The Greek community is one of the most well-established communities in Victoria. It is also one of the largest Greek communities outside of Greece, and many Victorians of Greek heritage remain involved in business in both economies.

Greek migration to Australia began in the 1840s, and significantly increased between 1950s to 1970s with the Australian Government assisting tens of thousands of Greece-born people to migrate post World War II. The 1971 Census recorded that 47% of Australia's Greek-born population lived in Melbourne and this emerging community established cultural groups, churches, newspapers, and schools, which continue to thrive today and make an immense contribution to the community and economy of Victoria. The 2021 Australian Census shows the Greek community in Victoria is the largest in Australia with over 181,000 people of Greek ancestry in Victoria, of which nearly 47,000 were born in Greece. Over the past decade, Victoria's Greek community has been provided over \$10 million in funding from the Victorian Government.

Two-way trade between Australia and Greece is valued at \$395 million. Imports from Greece include vegetable, cheese, and cereals. Australia's exports include nonferrous waste, wheat, pharmaceuticals, and services principally in education, within my portfolio responsibility, an area which Victoria should grow. Victoria's investment relationship with Greece is growing and will be of increasing benefit for our state.

Greece continues to be a key strategic and cultural partner for Victoria, with growing trade and investment prospects, and insights gained from this visit will help inform policy development to benefit Victoria.

Overview of engagements and key insights to benefit the Evelyn Electorate and Victoria

Australian Embassy in Greece

In Athens I visited the Australian Embassy and received a briefing from Her Excellency Ambassador Alison Duncan, and Deputy Head of Mission, Lachlan Scully. A broad range of issues were discussed including trade and investment opportunities and the strengthening economic and cultural ties between Victoria and Greece, given the significant proportion of the Greek diaspora in Victoria with many maintaining business links.

The Ambassador outlined the key industries in Greece were tourism, food manufacturing, shipping, and that technology and innovation is emerging. One of the key challenges is workforce and skills, having a small population and reluctance for immigration. The Ambassador is promoting visa opportunities.

Opportunities for trade for Evelyn Electorate businesses and to benefit the Victorian economy include financial services, education services, ICT, biotech, bushfire and emergency management, hospitality services, and transportation services. Interestingly, despite Athens being in the wine region of Attica, the Ambassador believes there is a strong opportunity for export of premium wines and distilled beverages, including from the Yarra Valley region in the Evelyn Electorate.

It was interesting to gain insights from the Ambassador about the Greek economy and other opportunities that may benefit Victoria from both economic and policy perspectives.

Greece's New Democracy Government is now in a period of economic recovery after the country had faced a sovereign debt crisis under former governments in the aftermath of the financial crisis. The Greek government debt crisis emerged in 2009 exposing structural weakness in the Greek economy and that data on debts and deficits had been underreported by the Greek government, with a debt-to-GDP ratio rising to nearly 180 per cent. Greeks were subjected to austerity measures, tax increases and spending cuts and the country received bailouts from the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank.

Currently, Victoria is experiencing rapidly rising debt and an increased debt-to-GSP ratio, increases in taxes, spending cuts, and downgrades from global credit ratings agencies. We must learn lessons from other economies. Strong public financial management, transparency and accurate reporting is vital.

Tourism will be a major driver of economic growth, with more tourists visiting Greece each year than people in the nation's population. Additionally, Greece is exploiting its strategic advantage of the Port of Piraeus on the Saronic Gulf and its world-renowned shipping industry. The Port of Piraeus is Greece's biggest port, the 24th largest container port globally, the 4th largest in Europe and the largest in the Mediterranean. It is centrally positioned for traffic passing through the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean and Black Seas to the Balkans, and also attracts Asian shipping without requiring significant deviation from established trade routes, making it the best-connected port in the Mediterranean.

Greek Government and European Union plans are to turn Greece into a regional and global logistics hub centered on Piraeus as the key entry point which will drive further expansion of industrial and logistics markets. Port of Piraeus has achieved impressive container volume growth over the past decade with both an increase in the number of ships and the average shipment size. Interestingly, Piraeus Port's largest trading partner is China, with Greece now China's fourth-largest trading partner among Central and Eastern European countries, and China being the third-largest trading partner of Greece and its biggest trading partner outside the European Union. Given the increasing dominance of China, it's another reason why Victoria and Australia must maintain and strengthen our long-standing trade ties with Greece.

Bushfire and flooding are common challenges for Victoria and Greece. Greece has suffered many significant and devastating floods and bushfires in recent times, including bushfires that impacted Athens and caused tragic loss of life. The terrain in fighting fires is quite different, however the Ambassador was keen to promote CSIRO technology in fire spread modelling that is used for prediction and planning and could greatly benefit the Greek government.

Plans for an ANZAC Day commemoration later in the month to be held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery in Athens were discussed. Also, I was briefed on the construction of the Lemnos Remembrance Trail, an Australian Government funded commemorative initiative that will serve as a lasting memorial to the ANZACs and Australia's medical personnel. During World War I, 150,000 Australian servicemen were stationed at Lemnos, many of whom later served in the tragic Gallipoli campaign. Lemnos was a key staging point for Allied forces and served as the site for Allied Hospitals, staffed by Australian nurses. Later in World War II, ANZACs fought alongside Greek and British troops in the Battle of Crete to repel the German invasion. The Deputy Head of Mission advised that the Victorian Parliament's co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Greece has also been appraised of the status of this project.

Minister for Development and Ministry representatives

In Athens I met with one of my counterparts in the Hellenic Government, Maximos Senetakis, Minister for Development. We discussed further strengthening of bilateral relations and explored trade and investment opportunities of mutual benefit to the Greek and Victorian economies, particularly in technology and innovation being our shared portfolio areas. The Minister provided an overview of policies and initiatives that the Greek Government is pursuing as it reforms its economy and pursues sustainable economic growth.

The Minister invited some representatives from the energy sector into our meeting providing valuable insights for energy transition in Greece and across the EU, and insights for policy development for Victoria. Greece is also engaged in decarbonisation and energy transition from lignite coal. However, industry remains heavily reliant on energy produced from coal, as coal fired power generation remains the main source of electricity for Greece but is planned to be phased out by 2028 with 5 billion Euro being committed to assist impacted communities. Greece is making progress on its energy transition, including implementing reforms and simplifying licensing for renewable projects and offshore wind.

There was discussion around EU targets and the reality facing industry and the economy presently, and there are some parallels for Victorian industry as our economy too pursues a net zero strategy. A key issue for Victoria, where lessons can be learned from European countries, is transition sources of energy and development of transmission networks. The Victorian Government continues to struggle with the ageing of

existing transmission infrastructure and the challenges to rollout new transmission infrastructure from regional Victoria to metropolitan Melbourne to support the distribution of renewable sources of energy.

The Minister is eager to arrange a delegation to Australia – Sydney and Melbourne – that would include Greece’s Prime Minister. I strongly encouraged the delegation visit Victoria, not only to pursue economic opportunities but given the large Greek diaspora in Melbourne and the economic boost of such a visit.

Deputy Minister for Industry and General Secretary for Industry

In Athens I met with another of my counterparts in the Hellenic Government, Anna Mani-Papadimitriou, Deputy Minister for Industry, as well as Themis Eftychidou, the Secretary General for Industry. We discussed the importance of strengthening industry and economic ties between Greece and Victoria. Greece’s Department of Industry and Development is doing significant work to engage with and support small and medium businesses across the country as part of the country’s economic recovery. Similarly to Victoria, Greece recognises the value of small and medium businesses and has identified the need to provide public support with digital transformation of these businesses. The Hellenic Government has instituted a High Level Government Committee for Industry, which acts as a taskforce including representatives from industry, and is a policy initiative that would benefit Victoria.

Deputy Minister Mani and the Secretary General for Industry discussed how the Hellenic Government is ambitious in relation to the digitalisation of Greek industry and has embarked on this across the public sector. They are working on analysis of the digital maturity of Greek industry and manufacturing to underpin preparation for a comprehensive Industry 4.0 strategy, because they realise that they are lagging behind in digital transformation of their economy and industry. They will implement practical initiatives and financial support to small and medium businesses to support digital transition, particularly those in the manufacturing sector to adopt advanced technologies and be better placed to achieve economies of scale.

The digital transformation of Greek industry is seen as imperative for achieving sustainable growth. So too is this the case for our state of Victoria, so that smaller scale manufacturing businesses can remain competitive and positive contributors to the Victorian economy, it is vital we support such businesses.

Deputy Minister Mani further outlined the Hellenic Government and European Union plans to make Greece a hub for technology and innovation. There is the development of industrial parks using funding from the Recovery and Resilience Fund to improve infrastructure and make Greece a more attractive investment destination.

The Deputy Minister briefed me about the exciting Thessintec project in Thessaloniki – a sister-city of Melbourne, Victoria. Thessintec, the Thessaloniki Innovation & Technology Centre, is proposed to be a large-scale 4th generation science and technology park bringing together tertiary education, research institutions, industry, investors, and the public sector, in a culture of innovation and competitiveness. The Hellenic Government and the EU see this as a geographically strategic location, which they hope will become a key investment destination.

Also, we discussed enhancing educational and cultural exchange between Greece and Victoria, as well as opportunities for digital nomads given both economies are ideal destinations for such professionals.

Athens Chamber of Commerce & Industry

I met with Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) President, Sofia Kounenaki Efraimoglou, the first female president of this prestigious commerce organisation. I was impressed by the fact that many senior positions in ACCI were held by women. In my meeting with the President, this was also attended by Eleni Foti, Director of International Commercial Relations, Maria Zografou, Head of International Relations Department, Fotini Lampropoulou, International Relations Department, and Tina Retzeka, International Relations Department.

We discussed trade and investment opportunities of mutual benefit to Athens and Victoria. Earlier in the year, ACCI hosted a “Discover Australia and New Zealand” event in collaboration with Enterprise Greece, the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, and the Greek Exporters Association, and was supported by the Australian Embassy in Greece. There was much discussion about engagement with Victorian businesses for two-way trade exchange.

The President also holds a separate role within the European Union. We discussed the status of the Australia-European Union Free Trade Agreement, and how there could be significant benefits for Greece and Victoria if negotiations were to be reignited (currently stalled), noting the challenges with key issues of contention in relation to agriculture and food manufacturing, in particular.

As the Greek economy recovers, and with influential commerce leaders like the President who sees the value in cooperation with Victoria, we must continue to seek opportunities to promote Victorian businesses, facilitate business opportunities within Greece, and raise awareness of potential benefits of increased two-way trade, including in key sectors of infrastructure, energy, hospitality, firefighting services, education, science, technology and innovation sectors.

Minister for Labour and Social Security and Ministry representatives

In Athens I met with another counterpart in the Hellenic Government, Vasileios-Petros Spanakis, Minister for Labour and Social Security. It was a valuable and insightful meeting, discussing a wide range of topics. Also in this meeting was Theodoros Tryposkoufis, the General Secretary, Yianna Hormova, Deputy Governor of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and Liana Karagianni, Head of Department for European Affairs and Bilateral Relations.

The Minister and I discussed our mutual interest in common Parliamentary Committees we have served on and the importance of these, both having economic backgrounds. The Minister has served on the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and on the Financial Statement and State Budget Committee, which appear to have similarities to that of the Victorian Parliament’s Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on which I served for several years applying scrutiny to expenditure of public monies.

In the spirit of strengthening ties between Greece and Victoria, we discussed promoting improved mutual understanding amongst young people in both communities for work and holiday visa opportunities. I outlined how many young Victorians including from the Evelyn Electorate could be interested in pursuing work and holiday visas in Greece, which would benefit their personal development and also Greece’s tourism economy. Equally, we discussed opportunities for young people in Greece pursuing educational advancement and skills development with Victorian higher and tertiary education institutions.

Like in Victoria, there is a focus in Greece on skills development through continuing Vocational Education and Training (VET). VET forms an integral part of the Department’s measures and supporting people into

sustainable employment opportunities, with a focus on lifelong learning. Similarly to Victoria, skills are required for occupations in emerging industries, and we discussed policy initiatives in relation to this, for example a policy of the Greek Government is 'payment by results' with payment to VET training providers directly linked to completion results, with payment only after successful certification of the trainees.

There is future opportunity for the Victorian higher vocational education sector to export services to Greece. This is because the Hellenic Parliament has recently passed new legislation to enable overseas educational institutions to set up and provide services in Greece, which could be in a variety of areas relevant to their economic recovery such as hospitality, tourism, renewables, or ICT.

Enterprise Greece – Trade and Investment

During my visit to Athens, I had a briefing from Enterprise Greece, Trade and Investment organisation. I met with Dr Marinos Giannopoulos, CEO of Enterprise Greece, as well as Elias Eliades, Director of Investment Promotion – Industry, Logistics, Technology and Innovation, and Vasso Kyrkou, Director General of Communications, Marketing and Stakeholder Relations. The meeting was very detailed and valuable, gaining insights into Greece's trade and investment policies as key drivers of economic recovery and growth, and the government's pro-business stance.

We discussed export opportunities that could benefit the Evelyn Electorate and Victoria, including priority areas such as ICT services, fintech, biotech, renewables technologies. While there may be limited opportunities for Evelyn Electorate fresh produce, manufactured food products, and cheese, it was acknowledged that there is interest for distribution of high premium alcoholic beverages including distilled beverages and Australian wines into Greece, where I outlined the benefits of Yarra Valley region and the breadth and depth of beverage producers in the Evelyn electorate.

Enterprise Greece is keenly engaged in unlocking Greece's innovation potential, so there are potential opportunities for Evelyn Electorate and Victorian entrepreneurial businesses and investors. Enterprise Greece promotes investment opportunities and provides facilitation services that support Greek industry looking to expand and export.

There has been impressive foreign direct investment since 2019, with a clear strategy for attracting investments in specific business sectors, generous investment incentives (for example fast-tracking of planning), and pro-investment business environment. Greece's credit rating was upgraded to investment level as it progresses its economic recovery, with GDP growth of nearly 6% in 2022, 37% increase in exports, and 48% increase in FDI.

ICT is a leading sector in investments and innovation, with investment opportunities in data centres, information security services, smart cities, software development, and call centres. An interesting statistic for Victoria to consider in relation to digitisation of the public sector, Greece has over 1000 online government services available to the public and business. The Victorian Government has been very slow to rollout basic online public services and is far behind NSW or Queensland (and Greece, it seems) in many areas including digital driver licenses.

Also, as part of a pro-business environment, the Greek government has reduced corporate taxes significantly in the past few years. Whereas the Victorian Government is only increasing taxes on businesses, which will only stifle growth and dissuade investment.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery, Phaleron War Cemetery

I attended the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery in Athens to pay my respects and commemorate the Australian and New Zealand service men and women who fought together and paid the ultimate sacrifice as part of the ANZAC Forces. The cemetery was peaceful and memorials beautifully maintained. 584 Australians and 731 New Zealanders died defending Greece during the Second World War. There are now over 2000 Commonwealth servicemen of the Second World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery from conflicts in Greece and Crete, the Dodecanese Islands and in Yugoslavia. There is also a memorial within Phaleron Cemetery to 74 servicemen from the army of India who died in these conflicts.

Secretary General for Higher Education, Hellenic Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs & Sports

I met with Emeritus Professor Odysseas-Ioannis Zoras, the Secretary General for Higher Education in the Hellenic government. We explored areas of mutual benefit for Greece and Victoria in relation to tertiary education and research. The Professor had spent time working in Sydney, Australia as a medical surgeon. The Professor outlined some of the key policy initiatives of the Hellenic government relating to the enhancement of their tertiary education sector. He briefed me on Greece's university and higher education sector and the growing potential for overseas educational institutions to export services into Greece.

There is a growing willingness for this to occur in Greece to enhance the skills of its people, and there has been recent legislative change to support this. This presents a good opportunity for the future for Victoria's institutions to potentially pursue this in Greece – as has been the case, for example, of RMIT in Spain, though this would be expensive it may help the expansion of international education as a key Victorian economic driver further into Europe. The Professor outlined a key policy imperative of the Greek government is a strong focus on lifelong learning and skills development for jobs of the future, given energy transition, medical research, science and technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Elevate Greece

On the referral of the Hellenic Minister for Development, I had the opportunity to meet with Fragiskos Theofylaktos, CEO of Elevate Greece. Elevate Greece plays an important leading role in the development of the Greek innovation ecosystem and maintains a register of Greek innovation businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups. Learning about its operation was of interest given my Shadow Ministerial portfolio responsibility of Innovation. Elevate Greece is an initiative of the Hellenic Government and is responsible to identify promising startups and support their growth through various policy initiatives and taxpayer funded grant opportunities. It was an interesting area to discuss with the CEO of Elevate Greece, as the Victorian Government has also provided taxpayer funded grants to the innovation and start-up sector, and additionally has set up Breakthrough Victoria acting as a venture capital fund, something that did not appeal to Elevate Greece as a sensible plan. Elevate Greece provides a platform for Greek startups to be officially accredited by the Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments, specifically the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation, on the National Startup Registry. This monitors startup entrepreneurship based on specific key performance indicators, which in turn attracts foreign investment.

InnovAthens at the Technopolis City of Athens

I toured Technopolis City of Athens and visited InnovAthens. Antonis Ekonomou is the Project Manager at InnovAthens, a hub that promotes entrepreneurship and innovation and contributes to the development of Greece's creative and cultural industry. It conducts seminars, networking, competitions, hackathons, etc., for people with ideas, researchers, academics, businesspeople. A young entrepreneurs seminar was underway during my visit. It is one of the main networking and knowledge exchange centres in Athens. Established in partnership with Samsung Electronics Hellas and Athens Energies, InnovAthens represents 350 innovative businesses in Athens.

Hellenic Parliament

I had the opportunity to visit the Hellenic Parliament at Syntagma Square, which translates to Constitution Square. The Venizelos Hall features exhibits of Greece's political history with original documents, manuscripts, photos, and propaganda that depict the turbulent times since Greece gained its independence. The junta from late 1960s to early 1970s and the events surrounding its end, ultimately led to the formation of a new constitution and democratic government in Greece. Greece has only been under a continuous democracy for around 50 years. The debating chamber in the Hellenic Parliament has 300 seats. I understood that parties are apportioned either to the left, right or middle, according to their political alliance. A majority of 151 seats is required to form government.

Interesting consideration for Victorian Parliament is that the Hellenic Parliament has automated voting. In 2014, the manual roll-call system that the Greek Parliament utilised was replaced by an electronic process. Members of Parliament are issued with their own unique electronic ID cards which are inserted into the device to register votes automatically. As part of the constitution, 75 members of Parliament must be present with a minimum of those being half of the elected government in order for Parliament to sit.

Benaki Museum

Near Syntagma Square is the Benaki Museum. I took the opportunity to visit the Benaki Museum, which has in recent years collaborated with Melbourne's Hellenic Museum with art inspired by the Parthenon in Athens. The partnership was supported with funding provided by the Victorian Government for art including sculpture and photographic exhibitions. The unique partnership between Victoria's Hellenic Museum and the internationally renowned Benaki Museum combines the ancient with the contemporary, through exchange of collections, ideas, and expertise. The ongoing exchange relationship also benefits the professional development of Victorian and Greek curators and conservators, and further strengthens the cultural ties between the museums and Victoria and Athens.

Acropolis, Parthenon and Ancient Agora

Incredible to tour the Acropolis, having immense historical and architectural significance, and to visit the Parthenon and Ancient Agora. The Acropolis of Athens is one of the most important representations of Greek civilisation. The Parthenon is not only a monument of immense significance in Greece but also one of the greatest achievements in European culture as well as architectural and construction brilliance. It was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987. The monuments are world-renowned and

inspire our ideals about democracy and human rights. The Parthenon was a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena Parthenos. Today the Acropolis of Athens inspires artists, architects, and innovators.

Byzantine & Christian Museum – Women Changing Architecture Exhibition

The Women Changing Architecture is an exhibition by Hellenic Institute of Architecture was at the Byzantine & Christian Museum which presents a new and inclusive point of view on architecture. It featured international women architects and designers who have contributed to achievements of modern and contemporary architecture from the post-war period to the present day. For Victoria, it is important we find similar ways to support and promote the achievements of women in architecture and design.

The Impact Hub – AntiFlood

The Impact Hub in Athens hosted AntiFlood during my visit, part of Urban Innovations Group with CEO, Konstantinos Tsinitzas, one of Greece's leading manufacturers of urban equipment. AntiFlood is a Greek business that designs and produces anti-flood solutions for public, industrial, domestic, and military use. Moving from traditional sandbags, these demountable anti-flood solutions are designed to be used in the protection of public facilities and infrastructure. Given climate change and increased frequency and intensity of rain events causing inundation and flooding in Greece these are interesting products that could have potential benefit for Victorian communities including in the Evelyn Electorate that have experienced, and are likely to continue to experience, flooding events. Such anti-flood solutions could be well utilised in flood mitigation near homes, businesses, and public facilities.

Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center and the Women of the World festival

I was keen to visit the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens, a massive public building initially constructed with the benefit of philanthropic funds, but now is part of the Greek state. It is where cultural, educational, sporting, environmental activities and major events occur. It is home to the Greek National Opera and the National Library of Greece. Its architectural design is stunning, with a green roof canopy full of Greek indigenous species and making it a prominent example of one of the most environmentally sustainably public buildings in Europe.

I understand it is the first large scale cultural project of its kind in Europe based on principles of sustainable construction and environmentally innovative practices that focus on water and energy efficiency, reduction of emissions and rational management of resources. The Stavros Niarchos Park is one of the largest green spaces in Athens and was amazing to see so many residents using the outdoor public gym equipment for exercise, the running track, playing soccer, and doing yoga.

The Stavros Niarchos Park was particularly beautiful, and I enjoyed viewing a broad variety of flora including indigenous Greek plants which, it is advised, take up to 85% of the total area making it the biggest public Mediterranean garden in the world. The Park has doubled the green surface per capita in the local area and has a significant impact on the local microclimate.

I was fascinated that the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center hosted the Women of the World festival during my visit, an initiative of the WOW Foundation, celebrating women and girls and exploring

key and contemporary issues including gender equality, gender-based violence, gender stereotypes, reproductive rights, and women in policy making.

The Australian Embassy in Greece supported Australian playwright, Suzie Miller, presenting at the Women of the World festival portraying extracts from her play Prima Facie, instrumental in highlighting the need for change in legal systems. I am passionate about enabling opportunities for women in public office, policy making, in the corporate world, and in entrepreneurialism and innovation. This type of festival could be hosted in Victoria, which not only supports equality and the advancement of women but could provide an economic boost to our state as it would attract visitation to such a major event.

Accommodation in Athens cost AUD\$3538.71.

Sincere thanks to the Trade Commissioner at the Consulate General of Greece in Sydney for the assistance with facilitating various meetings.

Bridget Vallence MP

Member for Evelyn, Parliament of Victoria

Shadow Minister for Industry

Shadow Minister for Innovation

Shadow Minister for Manufacturing

Shadow Minister for Tertiary Education

Shadow Minister for Skills and Training