

# Twenty-third Australian Delegation to the United States

Saturday 11 March to Friday 24 March 2006

## DELEGATION REPORT

### Delegation List

- The Hon Jackie Kelly MP (Liberal Party of Australia), Federal Member for Lindsay NSW, *Delegation Leader*
- Mr Simeon Duncan (Liberal Party of Australia), Adviser, Government Members' Secretariat
- Ms Zoë McKenzie (Liberal Party of Australia), Senior Adviser, Office of the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training
- Mr Anthony Moate (Liberal Party of Australia), Adviser, Office of the Hon Gary Hardgrave MP, Minister for Vocational and Technical Education
- Ms Mary Wood (Australian Labor Party), Adviser, Office of Ms Tanya Plibersek MP, Shadow Minister for Work and Family, Childcare, Youth and Women
- Ms Kate Jones, (Australian Labor Party), Media Adviser, Office of the Hon Robert Swarten MLA, Queensland Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing
- Ms Courtney Hoogen (Australian Labor Party), Media Adviser, Office of Mr Stephen Smith MP, Shadow Minister for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations, and Member for Perth
- Mrs Victoria Mencshelyi (National Party of Australia), Adviser, Office of the Hon John Anderson MP, Member for Gwydir
- Mrs Kim Baker (Council Representative), Secretary, Australian Political Exchange Council

The delegation would like to congratulate the American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) for their well organised program and also thank the United States Department of State, the El Pomar Foundation (Colorado Springs, CO) and Tenix Holdings Inc. for making this program possible.

The ACYPL continued with their tradition of providing an excellent program for the delegation to participate in. The tour incorporated visits to Washington DC; Providence, Rhode Island; Denver, Colorado; and, Colorado Springs, Colorado - encompassing places of national and cultural interest as well as giving delegates a snap shot of the United States political system.

The delegation arrived in Washington DC late evening on Saturday 11 March 2006, hence not starting their exploration of Washington DC until the Sunday. Members of the delegation amused themselves attending the various places of interest - i.e. the Smithsonian Institution, Washington National Cathedral, St John's Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square and Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to name a few. The delegation was met early afternoon for a guided tour of Washington DC followed by a welcome dinner hosted by ACYPL Executive Director, Mr Brad Minnick.

### **Elections, Campaigns and Government**

The delegation was able to meet with various highly experienced elected officials and strategists who have established themselves in the political arena.

The delegation found these persons and organisations of considerable interest. With their steely determination and obvious hunger to achieve for their respective parties and organisations, they imparted valuable knowledge to the delegates which could take a number of interesting pointers away from their meetings.

Some of the meetings of interest were:

- Mr Mark Glaze, Principal, The Raben Group. Mr Glaze has more than a decade of experience in communications, politics and law before taking up positions with a wide range of not-for-profit advocacy groups. His focus was through direct access to national media, targeted placement of opinion pieces in credible journals and considerable legislative lobbying.
- Mr Martin Hamburger, Laguens Hamburger Kully Close. Mr Hamburger is a political consultant and author, working on congressional, senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns around the world, consulting with various political leaders.
- Ms Alixandra Wade, Campaign Director, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). The DCCC is the official campaign committee of the Democratic Party, charged with the recruiting, funding and candidate election to the United States Congress. Ms Wade has been involved in several Democrat congressional and presidential campaigns and most recently serving as Washington Director for John Kerry's Presidential campaign and other campaigns in the state of Colorado where the delegation also had been fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit.
- Mr Jonathon Poe, Political Director, National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). The NRCC is charged with increasing the Republican Party's representation in the United States House of Representatives (HoR). Currently, the Republican Party holds a 15 seat majority in the HoR.

The NRCC is working closely with state and local party organisations to recruit top-tier challengers and open-seat candidates as well as to ensure that current Republican incumbent members of Congress have the resources necessary to be returned to office.

Through meeting Mr Poe it was evident that the Republican movement in the United States was far more sophisticated and effective when it came to targeting marginal seats and potential voters using developed national voting files to target voters on specific issues of interest.

- Congressman Langevin, Democrat, United States Representative for Rhode Island's Second Congressional District. Congressman Langevin is the first quadriplegic to be elected to congress and among other achievements Langevin was the United States' youngest elected Secretary of State.

Langevin's priority while in office was health insurance issues for those with disabilities and when asked what achievements he would like to be remembered for he responded both during his time as Rhode Island's Secretary of State: limiting Rhode Island budget spending to 98 per cent of revenue; and downsizing the legislative assembly from 100 to 75 members and 50 to 38 Senators.

- Attorney General Patrick Lynch, Rhode Island Attorney General. Like most positions this is an elected position and Rhode Island is only one of three states where the Attorney General is also the District Attorney responsible for prosecuting cases. The major issues that confront the Attorney General are the constitutionality of random breath tests; lead paint cases and abatement; and, gay marriage and the defence of the Marriage Act.
- Walt Klein, President, Walt Klein Advertising is a full service advertising, marketing and public affairs agency. Mr Klein's involvement in politics started on the presidential campaign for Mr Richard Nixon as a national committee field operator. Walt Klein Advertising does advertising campaigns for all sorts of companies not just political. He believes that you need to spend a lot of time on research, strategy and tactics for the Ballot campaigns, an expensive well placed advertising campaign that is on message will always equal more wins.

### **United States and Australia Relations**

While on tour the delegation was able to meet with Mr Howard Kravitz, Director of the Office of Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, United States Department of State. The delegation was interested to note that the Department of State is the Executive Branch of the Federal Government and therefore only answers to the President and is charged with the implementation of his policies. The Department of State is also charged with conducting the United States' international relations.

The delegation was invited to join legislators of Rhode Island for their annual celebrations of St Joseph's and St Patrick's Days followed by Dinner with Senators - further cementing the United States and Australian relationship.

The following day the delegation met with the Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court and ex-Army Captain, Frank J Williams. The Chief Justice spoke effusively of the Australian soldiers he served with in Vietnam and praised and thanked Australia, stating we are a good ally of the United States and member of the coalition of the willing. He continued to portray the current political climate in the United States as fractious saying it is the most divided it has been since the Civil War.

### **International Terrorism**

Congressman Edward Royce, Republican Party for the State of California and Chairman, International Relations Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Non-proliferation. Ms Amy Porter, Chief of Staff, and Mr Hunter Strupp, Legislative Assistant for Foreign Affairs.

As Congressman Royce is the Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Non-proliferation, he is at the forefront of some of the most important issues facing the United States and the world - concentrating on the threat posed by Islamist terrorism; terrorist financing; terrorist sanctuaries and failed states; and, capacity building of foreign forces to fight terrorism. The delegation was able to visualise the link between the United States and Australia and how our contribution assists these global issues.

### **Places of Cultural Interest**

In Washington DC the delegation at leisure took in various places of interest including the Smithsonian Institution, Washington National Cathedral, St John's Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square and Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to name a few - not to mention the White House.

At the White House the delegation was privileged to meet with Ms Anita McBride, Chief of Staff to First Lady Laura Bush. Ms McBride was extremely generous with her time. She is a remarkably accomplished person, working previously in the White House during the Reagan and Bush Snr administrations.

Ms McBride presented the role of the First lady in the administration to the delegation and gave an overview of the First lady's personal priorities. While the First Lady has no statutory authority in the Executive or direct policy role, Ms McBride considers the First lady to be the best Ambassador for the President. Mrs Bush travelled abroad extensively in the last year, representing the President and undertaking her own projects in 27 countries.

The highlight of the meeting for the delegation was when Ms McBride's assistant appeared at the doorway to notify the group that the President would be landing in ten minutes on Marine One on the south lawn. We were invited to go outside and witness the President's arrival. Partisan politics were immediately pushed aside and replaced with political junkie excitement as we headed to the lawn to witness President Bush's arrival.

Marine One turns out to be a pretty big helicopter, and its arrival and landing with President Bush alighting from the aircraft was everything it promised to be. Our group was about 20-30 metres from the President as he entered the White House and the propeller power of Marine One added to the atmosphere. Our high was carried into the residence where we were shown through the State Rooms.

During our first morning in Rhode Island, we focused on the history of Rhode Island and the birth of the American Industrial Revolution. At the Blackstone Valley Visitor Centre in Pawtucket, we were treated to an overview of the settlement of Blackstone Valley. This valley offered the potential for water powered electricity due to the strong river and steep falls.

The delegation found the birth of the American Industrial Revolution fascinating. American history states the revolution commenced with the immigration, settlement and employment of a young Samuel Slater, a former apprentice miller machinist from England who had been involved in the textile industry and had developed expert knowledge in the operation of textile machinery. This contravened England's laws which prevented the emigration of textile millers in order to protect trade secrets.

The delegation also visited the Slater's Mill and the Museum of Work and Culture. Both locations portrayed a very bleak picture of Blackstone Valley's economic beginnings.

Rhode Island State House was also on our itinerary. Built in 1895, this beautiful building houses not only Senators and Representatives but also the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State and General Treasurers. The delegation was treated to an extraordinarily generous welcome, a tour and able to meet with the Governor, after which time our welcome was ceded to Joe Pangolin (The Sopranos) and Alex Baldwin who would be addressing both chambers.

The delegation was also able to take a tour of the Old Newport Colony House, which is the fourth oldest State house still standing in the United States, and the Breakers Mansion which is the grandest of Newport's summer cottages and a symbol of the Vanderbilt family's social and financial pre-eminence. Today, the house is a designated National Historic Landmark.

## **Education and Philanthropy**

Mayor Hickenlooper of Denver - Denver, Colorado is the home of many not-for-profit organisations. There are 17,000 federally registered philanthropists living in Denver. Through these organisations, Mayor Hickenlooper has been able to considerably reduce the homeless rate in Denver.

The Daniels Fund – the Daniels Fund founder believed in a free market system and the belief that fairness needed to be introduced to the market by intervention of individuals not government.

The Daniels Fund developed Daniels College. The main component of the college is to conduct business degrees with integrated ethics training where 50 per cent of the scholarships given are to residents of metropolitan Denver as 40 per cent of high school students in Colorado do not graduate. The foundation works to identify low income and “at risk” students at homeless shelters or youth recreation centres. Students of the foundation are expected to pursue a bachelors degree with 71 per cent of all scholarship recipients (graduates) remaining in the mid-western states after graduation. Hence the Daniels Fund actively puts back into the economic growth of the region and offers the otherwise underprivileged a way to progress and break the homeless cycle.

### **Conclusion**

The delegation returned with high praise for the tour of America, not only for the introduction to the United States political system, but also the contacts and friendships they have developed with the American delegates. The delegates found the meetings with opposing sides of politics insightful and gained valuable knowledge of polling and campaigning techniques. The introduction to various Congressmen, Senators and Mayors was an experience not to be forgotten, it gave the delegation an opportunity to delve into their political minds gaining understanding for their issues and priorities.

The tour was not all political and it was very interesting to not only view different processes of government in the neighbouring states, but also how the not-for-profit organisations influence the quality of life for the residents of the underprivileged areas.

The delegates would like to applaud the American Council of Young Political Leaders and the Australian Political Exchange Council for their efforts and for offering the delegates an opportunity to establish career changing contacts and knowledge to assist them in their political careers.

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