

Member	Matthew Guy	Electorate	Bulleen
Period	01 July 2023 to 30 September 2023		

Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$10,354.14
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$0.00

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	\$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

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
5/06/2023	8/06/2023	Parliamentary Business	\$3,919.99	Plane	\$3,919.99

Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims 1
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance \$3,919.99

Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims			
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid

Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims 7
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance \$0.00
See attached travel report for further details

PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO ARGENTINA
Tuesday 5 September – Sunday 10 September 2023

Matthew Guy MP

PURPOSE

Argentina and Australia have many historic similarities, socially and economically. But despite both being southern hemisphere nations with significant twentieth century settler populations that built the bulk of the existent populations, Australia has relatively little interaction with Argentina, and most South American nations, outside of Chile.

This is despite a continental population of over 420 million people.

Victoria has a great opportunity to embrace the Argentine economy and the more than 40 million people who call that country home as a market with potential for greater Victorian interaction in the future. It is worth noting that Victoria has a respectably large Argentine and broader South American population, mostly centred in Melbourne's south east.

While some recent strategies from both federal and state governments to engage these markets has been welcome, more work and more frequent engagement is required to ensure their success. To date, there has been almost no interest from Victoria in following up on the current government's South American engagement strategy.

It has been a long belief of mine that Victoria has great opportunity in international education, agribusiness and tourism with South America, particularly Argentina. But these opportunities will only be realised with more frequent and sincere engagement and a dedicated focus on ensuring strategies released produce genuine and long term results.

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Four years ago in 2019 I led what I believed to be Victoria's first official delegation to Argentina, this century. I committed to return to follow up a number of the issues I had focused on during this trip; however, due to the onset of Covid, my 2020 trip was aborted, and I was unable to return until this year.

Returning this year was significant. Buenos Aires and Melbourne had both faced some of the harshest lock downs in the world during Covid. Both cities are making efforts to recover from this period. Further, I was keen to revisit some of the environmental, transport and education issues that had been raised with me on my 2019 delegation trip.

Domestically, this is a pivotal moment for Argentina. The national elections scheduled for October and November of this year may see the election of Javier Milei; a firebrand candidate from the political right who aims to cauterise Argentina's near century old economic woes with some dramatic economic action, such as dollarising the entire economy to prevent the current and not historically rare situation of triple digit inflation.

Milei is currently leading in the first round of voting and looks certain to be one of two candidates in a probable presidential run off, later this year.

While this trip was relatively short - I spent only four full days on the ground - it was worthwhile and educational. I intend to lead another delegation next year to further intensify ties between our state and Argentina so that a consistent interest is displayed and thus, greater more tangible results can be achieved.

ITINERARY

Tuesday September 5

Arrive early evening in to Buenos Aires; capital and largest city of Argentina.

My flight from Melbourne to Santiago was the second of LATAMs reinstated direct flights from Melbourne to Santiago, for many years.

Wednesday September 6

Meetings and tours in northern suburbs of Buenos Aires.

Thursday September 7

Meetings in and around the Puerto Madero and Centro areas of Buenos Aires.

Friday September 8

Travel to and meetings in La Plata, capital of Buenos Aires Province.

Saturday September 9

Morning meetings in Centro, downtown Buenos Aires.

Sunday September 10

Depart for the return to Melbourne in the afternoon.

METROPOLITAN RAIL TRANSPORT, BUENOS AIRES

THE SUBTE

The Buenos Aires Underground (*Subterraneo de Buenos Aires*) – known as the Subte – is an extensive, privately run underground rail network that dates back 110 years. It has six operating lines with close to 100 stations that service the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

The Autonomous City has the status of a province and is home to the national government and its administration as well as more than three million of greater Buenos Aires' more than fifteen million residents.

The Subte is exceptionally well used and an excellent system to ride. On being given a briefing on the Subte system at Carlos Pellegrini Subte station (a station that dates back from the early 1930s) the following points were made which should be considered for Melbourne's underground rail network.

- Subte trains now carry 'watchmen' which patrol all services; similar to on board PSOs. They operate in large teams and display a presence of security on the trains; particularly in the Centro region stations which carry a large amount of patronage.
- Free wifi for travellers has been credited for patronage increases, particularly from some of the stations further from the city central stations;
- New charging stations at major Subte stations are well used and add to the appeal of Subte stations as a minor commercial hubs;
- An increasing number of Subte stations are being used as places for local artwork to be displayed; increasing the visual appeal of the stations – some plain walls are being made available to local artists;
- The use of Subte stations as art destinations has seen the development of 'art trails' similar to Victoria's silo art trails; attracting Subte tourism in itself.

It should also be noted that there is a zero tolerance approach to graffiti and vandalism on the network. Those caught damaging property can be made to pay for the damage; those caught spraying graffiti on rollingstock can be forced to spend time cleaning the externals of rail carriages.

These moves are credited for a decline in both themes of crime and are not without merit. I used the Subte almost a dozen times on my four days in the city.

ARGENTINIAN RAILWAYS, ABOVE GROUND SUBURBAN RAIL NETWORK

SECURITY

Argentina has historically had a very large rail network which, like Australia, has been served by multiple different rail gauges. Like Australia, this continues to cause logistical problems even today.

The network in and around Buenos Aires is primarily served by the 5'6" broad gauge commuter rail network which forms the bulk of the *Trenes Argentinos* (Argentinian Trains) above ground metropolitan rail system.

This network – complimenting the inner city Subte – primarily services the outer suburbs of the Greater Buenos Aires metropolitan area and is well patronised.

A number of major city stations, such as Retiro, Once', Buenos Aires and Constitucion service almost a dozen lines that stretch as far as seventy kilometres from the Centro, downtown area. A number of these key stations service two rail gauge operations that do not interact.

My visits to Retiro and Constitucion stations afforded me an observation visit to the *Comando Trenes Seuguros* (Safe Trains Command); which is located very publicly at a number of major stations across the above ground network.

There are now five Safe Trains Command systems – when I was in Buenos Aires the fifth, serving the San Martin line, opened. On this line alone it manages 15 stations that are monitored through 450 surveillance cameras and 13 safety communications towers. In addition, passengers can directly contact Safe Trains Command via 43 totems on platforms.

On the San Martin line alone 200 security and Police can be activated with 10 immediate response motorcycles and direct access back to the state 911 (triple zero) emergency system for more significant threats.

In a city with a growing petty crime problem, Safe Trains Command is an exceptionally coordinated and direct way to increase security on the urban rail network. Stations are monitored by CCTV back to each *Comando* centre, who then observe incidents as they occur and send dispatch squads on the spot. This allows crime to be identified and countered as it is happening, not long after the event.

Safe Trains Command also dispatch roving squads of officers to locate at busy stations across the network in high patronage periods.

The end result has been a dramatic drop in crime across a number of key urban lines where it has been implemented and where passengers can actively see from the glass enclosed Safe Trains Command control centres, that they are being monitored and protected at all times of their journey.

It is a fabulous way of taking direct action; a big step up from our PSO policy, introduced by the Baillieu government, and has produced real results to date. Argentinian Railways are rolling out more of these command centres given their great success to date and it is a policy that should be observed and possibly repeated here in Melbourne.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Like a number of Australian cities, Buenos Aires is seeing a large injection of expenditure to update and upgrade track condition and rollingstock in order to attract commuters off a crowded freeway network.

It is fair to say that since the early 1990s there has been limited track upgrades across a number of national administrations, right across the broad gauge above ground network; this has seen great need for spending in a shorter time frame.

Being briefed at Retiro station on the condition of the state owned above ground network and the future plans for upgrading the system; I travelled at length and multiple times on the Suarez, Mitre and Tigre lines (all to the northern suburbs on the broad gauge network) and Roca line to the south east, when I later travelled to La Plata.

I note the two different rollingstock with various features on the newer vehicles that could be adapted for Melbourne commuters.

- Onboard displays of the train status between stations, giving passengers ample advance warning of where the train's position is and thus being able to move through crowded peak hour carriages to access doors; and
- Using some windows that have the ability to slightly open at the top, giving passengers the ability for fresh air rather than being locked in recirculated air only.

Most importantly, it is worth noting that in the 1990s Argentina faced a similar problem to Victoria – they were out of money.

Thus in order to cut down on the cost of building new infrastructure, Argentinian Railways have opted for two modes of power connection to their newer commuter rail vehicles, to make expansion and modernisation cost effective.

On the older, established electrified lines, traditional overhead power is in place, overhead wiring, picked up by pantograph and basically sent to the motor converters for power. This is what the entirety of every Australian suburban network currently has.

Trenes Argentinos (Argentinian Trains) also adopted third rail power connection. Third rail is as the name suggests, a third track that runs, slightly elevated and electrified next to the vehicle; power is collected via a shoe, connected to each bogie, which then runs power collected to the converters for power of the rail vehicles.

Third rail is covered for protection both from the elements and from any direct interaction with any person who may be walking near or over the third rail power. On my site visits to the northern suburban network's three lines, I noted third rail usage on all of them.

The use of third rail is significant; it hugely reduces infrastructure cost for future electrification; it has no speed restrictions for suburban use, it can easily be retrofitted to existing rolling stock and it allows a much, much faster roll out of electrified services to areas that are currently served by diesel hauled rolling stock.

Like Melbourne, Buenos Aires has a large portion of its above ground metropolitan and interurban network that is diesel hauled. The use of third rail is a huge cost saving measure to introduce electrified services to areas that do not have it; to greatly expand the number of services and the passenger 'crush' numbers that urban trains can accommodate compared to diesel hauled rolling stock.

It should also be noted; third rail is not uncommon. The majority of the London and UK Network South East system is powered by third rail; as are many, many urban networks across continental Europe.

Third rail power should be a live option that could and should be considered for Wyndham Vale, Melton and potentially Wallen rail extensions. It would allow the electrification and thus greater passenger number availability for these lines at a much faster rate than the so far decade old and unfulfilled promise from the current state government.

STATION PRESENTATION

Noting the success of the Spencer Street station rebuild to the modern Southern Cross station; a key feature of that project was to create a 'European' style interchange with a large, covered roof, creating a greater arrival/departure experience for passengers and also allowing for better commercial development hub growth.

In each major station in the Buenos Aires area (Retiro, Constitucion, Once') the major platform areas are covered by a large central roof – two of them with a semi-circle roof. Retiro and Constitucion are wonderful travel precincts unto their own right; they create a travel feeling that is welcoming and inviting.

Southern Cross station has been a success; it is imperative for Melbourne that we do something with Flinders Street station as well; thus, creating a better arrival/departure experience for passengers.

The concept of a large semi-circle roof covering all of the Flinders Street platforms, eliminating current platform awnings, would be a magnificent addition to our city and to travel experiences for those using the network.

I would hope that one day soon, a state government looks at the upgrade of Flinders Street Station to give passengers a better experience and to create an inexpensive but architecturally significant form for our city.

While in central Buenos Aires I visited the four major stations of Constitucion, Retiro, Once' and Buenos Aires – Chacarita; although met officials at only at Retiro and Constitucion.

NETWORK ISSUES

Buenos Aires has three different rail systems serving one metropolitan area; three different systems in practical terms means there is an above ground network operating on 5'6" Spanish Iberian gauge tracks; an above ground network operating on 3'3,3/8" – metre gauge, Andean gauge tracks and the Subte which operates on standard gauge, 4'8,1/2" tracks.

Three different rail gauges across one network is a nightmare for trying to operate a functional network, but *Trenes Argentinos* - who coordinate the private operators as well as their own system – do a good job at making the best of a physically dysfunctional network.

Dual gauging has been previously used, but I was advised that this was found to be more complex than envisaged and was not pursued broadly.

Australia faced similar issues to Argentina, three rail gauges in operation nationally. Victoria and South Australia adopted 5'3" broad gauge; New South Wales and the Commonwealth Railways pursued 4'8,1/2" standard gauge and Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, part of the South Australian network and a single line south of Darwin all opted for the 3'6" narrow gauge option, predominantly due to its cheaper cost of construction.,

Melbourne's urban network is a single gauge, 5'3" broad gauge. Bizarrely, the current Labor government is now seeking to build a single line from Cheltenham to Box Hill with no interaction with the current rail network.

The Suburban Rail Loop, which is not actually a loop, is planned to run on 4'8,1/2" standard gauge tracks.

Noting the difficulty of rollingstock, track width and train loading gauges (physical construction dimensions) that have no ability to interact, which I witnessed first hand in Buenos Aires, it would be absolutely mad for Melbourne to pursue an entirely different rail system for this Cheltenham to Box Hill railway line which will have huge cost implications.

Different rolling stock, different train maintenance, different infrastructure maintenance, different staff training, and an entirely new operating procedure will have to be put in place for a single railway line in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

If pursuing this project, the government would be well advised to make this new railway line at least be one that interacts with the current rail network.

The logistical problems of networks that cannot interact that I witnessed first hand in Buenos Aires are testament to a problem of multiple systems across one city that can be and must be avoided.

RAIL HERITAGE

Near Retiro station is the *Museo Nacional Ferroviario* (National Railway Museum). This museum has seen and is continuing to see new investment that is turning this museum in to a wonderful showpiece for national rail heritage.

It is a basic and sensible concept; we should be reasonably investing in heritage preservation; whether that is built form, artistic or cultural.

Victoria has done very little with its rail heritage compared to other states. New South Wales' PowerHouse Museum is well presented, as is the Thirlmere Transport Heritage Museum and the National Railway Museum in Adelaide.

Victoria would do well to look at a longer term use for the Newport Railway Workshops – which are heritage listed – to, rather than store old trams in much of them, allow for the under cover exhibit of rail heritage items and the use of rail restoration in both of the two major buildings.

It's a longer term idea that, on looking at this museum, we would be well advised to emulate.

TICKETING

It appears that most cities, unlike Melbourne, have got their mass transit ticketing systems right at the first instance and that we can learn plenty from systems that have done so.

Buenos Aires is no different; the SUBE travel card can be purchased from any railway station, subte station, bus stop or Kiosko (local city kiosk) and topped up very easily.

It allows for seamless travel anywhere across the city; tapping on and off at any location on a train or bus system, government or public owned. The ease of which the card can be topped up makes the use of the card exceptionally easy and while the system is for an Australian visitor amazingly cheap, the most pleasing thing about the SUBE travel card is definitely the ease to add more funds to it, as well as every reader giving you a remaining balance on your card.

METROPOLITAN BUS TRANSPORT, BUENOS AIRES

Complimenting the rail network is a large, well patronised government and private bus network across the city.

Servicing a metropolitan population of over 15 million people requires not just a big rail network, but a bigger bus system as well.

Central to the success of the Buenos Aires bus network are large, rail station like Bus terminals, particularly the major Centro bus terminal. The use of bus terminals that emulate a railway station is highly efficient. It allows for faster embarkation and disembarkation; is disability compliant and processes more buses, more often.

An interesting piece of feedback I was advised was that the bus network's patronage had grown faster since the end of Covid than the rail network, principally due to newer and more direct routes being prioritised in to the Centro area.

There is no doubt that some form of central bus station in Melbourne is needed, compared to what exists today. The Buenos Aires bus terminal was created in the middle of what were in the past car parks on the grand *Avenida 9 de Julio* (Avenue of the 9th of July); it has been an immense success.

While it is not easy to find a comparable location in Melbourne to build such a large terminal from scratch, terminating more services at one location, like Southern Cross, could start to create the same central point for buses as exists for trains at both it and Flinders Street station.

COVID

Buenos Aires and Melbourne were Covid's most locked down cities, anywhere in the world. The city endured 234 days of lockdown from March 20, 2020 until November 11, 2020 as well as a ten day 'circuit breaker' in May 2021, apparently only bettered by Melbourne for locked down length.

This was one of the major reasons I chose to revisit this city and seek an update from City authorities as to the impact on this national decision to lock down the city – where around 40 per cent of the national population live.

The feedback was stark as were my visual observations; the Centro areas, as well as nearby Recoletta, have not recovered from these extended lockdowns; business continues to suffer and many locals, known as *Portenos*, are choosing not to come in to the city areas any more to shop, to eat or to visit.

The economic impact is great. Homelessness has dramatically increased, petty crime has increased and the number of shops that are for lease or just boarded up is clearly much greater than when I was last here in April 2019.

The extent of extended lockdowns on small businesses is clear across many first world cities and while Melbourne's CBD still suffers today, so does that of Buenos Aires.

The advice I received was that it will take many more years to build confidence back in the local population to revert to older habits of coming back in to the Centro region for the pre Covid activities.

While office work is at much higher levels than Melbourne (although I was advised above 80 per cent of companies are adopting a hybrid home/office work schedule), the social aspect of downtown activity is not.

One way that Buenos Aires City authorities have sought to change people's attitudes to the abandoning of the downtown area is to establish a large number of children's playgrounds throughout the Centro area, in many open spaces.

It's a novel and so far moderately successful way of building more foot traffic by the day; attracting parents and families to eat in town again, while the kids play in eye sight.

Playgrounds have established at many open space areas, even on the lawns across from the National Congress – the national houses of parliament.

COVID MEMORIAL

In front of the Casa Rosada (the Pink House) which is the official work place of the Argentine President, is an originally unofficial, now official, Covid memorial.

Located on the Plaza de Mayo, the Covid memorial consists of stones, with names written on them (an old Jewish tradition) of Argentinians who died from the pandemic. There are said to be tens of thousands of stones that are present.

It is a strong reminder of the pandemic; it's a powerful reminder of what the nation endured, and the memorial is now glasses off so that they remain and are kept as a permanent place to honour those who died.

While Australia struggles to hold any meaningful public hearing in to the pandemic in our nation, it would be decent and deserving for a memorial of some kind to be established in Melbourne to remember those who tragically died during the pandemic in Australia.

BUENOS AIRES, URBAN RENEWAL

Since my last visit to Buenos Aires I was keen to tour and be briefed on the growth of the Puerto Madero urban renewal precinct on the eastern side of the Centro downtown area of the city.

Puerto Madero was once the old port area, like many major cities the commercial shipping ports have moved and in the 1990s development began on changing this area from industrial to mixed use, predominately residential.

The mixed use precinct was designed to feature offices, retail and a large portion of residential development as well as some of the city's largest hotels when it was first conceived and it is fair to say the twenty year vision has been well realised.

Puerto Madero is almost fully built out, except for residential areas to the south, and boasts much of what was originally planned; including the city's tallest buildings along Dock 3 and a number of pedestrian only streets.

Interestingly, I was advised that every street in Puerto Madero is named after women and the key pedestrian bridge linking the east and western sides of the dock within the precinct, is named *Puente de la Mujer* - the Women's Bridge. This, I was advised, is a deliberate and conscious effort to recognise the role of women in the growth of the national capital.

While the precinct lacks heavy rail passenger or Subte connection, it is still relatively accessible by foot and, I was advised, there are long term plans that may see underground trains extended 600-700 metres from Plaza de Mayo Subte station by one stop, in to the urban renewal precinct.

URBAN PARKLAND

Next to the Puerto Madero urban renewal precinct is the very large *Reserva Ecologica Costanera Sur* (Costanera South Ecological Reserve).

This 860 acre parkland borders the built form of the city to the east and the banks of the Rio de la Plata to the east. It is huge, well situated and a centre for huge visitation on pleasant days.

Unfortunately, the day I was to be shown around the park was not a pleasant one; the constant rain forcing the cancellation of an official visitation. Nevertheless, I obtained a number of details to which two days later and owing to better weather, I was able to observe by myself.

The reserve is a spectacular lesson for Australian cities about the use of urban habitat and connection with built form, in this case, with an urban renewal precinct.

The Australian example is usually to create a manicured parkland that befits an orderly, well maintained park image, which has been consciously avoided in this instance.

City officials in Buenos Aires have sought to create habitat with defined walk and break out zones for people to enjoy, but an area mainly for water birds and other animal life to flourish in a natural setting, right next to the city. The end result is quite spectacular and a good lesson for Melbourne urban parkland.

While it should be noted, many areas reserved in Melbourne's urban precinct structure plans do reserve areas as land for wildlife, this is not the case close to the city.

While it is obviously hard to retrofit areas like this in existing parkland, areas along the Yarra that are being reclaimed for use could be considered for new nature reserves, albeit on a smaller scale.

EDUCATION

One of the key aspects of the Victorian, South American engagement strategy was to look at ways to better market Victoria as a destination for international education for South American students wanting to study abroad.

Chile and most certainly Colombia have large and growing numbers of students who are coming to study in Victoria, and more recently as does Brazil.

These markets alone are large and provide great opportunity in education for Victorian providers, but we should seek to diversify across the continent, not just to two and maybe three primary markets.

While I briefly discussed this point with our Ambassador the last time I visited in April 2019, this time I met a provider who advised me of a number of issues from the Argentine side of the Andes, which are believed to be hindering growth of the market in Argentina for Victoria's education institutions.

The take away points were:

- Lack of knowledge of Victoria and Australia in general;
- Lack of proficiency in English for Argentinians;
- Lack of opportunities in Spanish in Australia;
- Lack of direct flights to Australia;

- No defined prospects or options for what students can do in Australia once they qualify;
- A cultural belief that to learn and study in English, only Canada and the United States are realistic options.

Some of these points can be tackled by Victoria, others are national marketing issues. But it was important to note that the willingness to study in an English speaking nation is high.

There is a general acceptance that our educational opportunities are of quality, but they seem 'a long way' from anything realistic compared to Canada and the United States.

This is an interesting point to note given Vancouver and San Francisco are further away by flight time from Buenos Aires than is Melbourne now that LATAM have resumed direct flights to Santiago.

To make this relationship worthwhile it is clear that Victoria should use its Santiago based trade office to engage marketing to the Argentine student market; creating an awareness of Australia as an option, in particular, Victoria.

This would also be a healthy follow through on our Victoria- South American engagement strategy that was launched some years ago by the then Andrews government, but to which no Minister has ever appeared to follow up on, on the South American continent.

LA PLATA

Note: La Plata is the capital city of Buenos Aires province. While most of the suburbs of Buenos Aires metropolitan area fall within the province, the downtown and inner suburbs are run by the City of Buenos Aires, which is an autonomous city/state unto itself.

La Plata is around 65 kilometres from downtown Buenos Aires to its downtown area. This is unique for an Australian – the metro area of Buenos Aires houses around 15 million people, yet just 65 kilometres away there sits a separate city of just under a million people.

The two metropolitan areas are separated by around 5-10 kilometres of farm land; which is an enforced break between the two metropolitan zones.

I travelled to La Plata by above ground Buenos Aires commuter rail; which took around 1 hour and ten minutes. La Plata is the end of the General Roca line of the Buenos Aires commuter network.

BUENOS AIRES PROVINCIAL CONGRESS

I was given a tour of the provincial legislature which governs over 17 million of Argentina's more than 40 million residents. Like all continental European legislatures, it has a semi circle structure with a presiding officer sitting in a raised, central position facing the delegates.

The bicameral parliament has 92 lower house members in the Chamber of Deputies and 46 members of the Provincial Senate.

The current state government is of the Peronist side of national politics and will face election later this month (October 2023).

LA PLATA CITY HALL AND DOWNTOWN

I took a quick tour of the La Plata City hall, a magnificent 1880's structure in the centre of the city area. The City government in La Plata is not on the same scale as the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, but it does have a number of planning responsibilities and local functions.

La Plata, when viewed from the air, is shaped in a quad, square design. The entire city area is a square with four dissecting roads. It's a magnificent design and has noted a number of key planning controls by the City government to preserve the dramatic city square area and grow the central quad in defined areas.

Most interestingly are the many plazas that intersect the quad design of the city. Rather than leave these areas as cold, windswept and uninviting, the City government has given each a theme. Some are named after former presidents, explorers, famous Argentines - and all have material; statues, displays or small museums to compliment the name and these of the square.

Most noticeable was Plaza Malvinas. The Malvinas are the Argentinian name for the Falkland Islands. The plaza featured names of those who served on the Argentine side of the conflict and a well-maintained museum with the Argentinian interpretation of the war and the islands' historical link to the nation as part of the plaza.

The concept of the La Plata City authorities to theme public open space in this way made them interesting and a unique way to draw people to the city centre; both visitors and locals.

This report cannot ignore the striking Catholic Cathedral in the centre of La Plata. The church is enormous; rises in a sole manner from the city's central square and is one of the striking features of the city.

It reminds that religious buildings such as these must have more active support from government to maintain their heritage appearance – as the Cathedral does – in order to maintain themselves in a reasonable condition.

I was advised that planning law has also been put in place to protect the vistas and unprotected visual landscape of the cathedral; as Melbourne has with the view up Bourke Street to Parliament House and St Patrick's Cathedral.

PASEO DEL BOSQUE (FOREST WALK) and MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

I took the time to visit the Forest Walk, a city park in La Plata on the northern end of the city that is touted as the downtown area's "city lungs". Similar to my remarks on the *Reserva Ecologica Costanera Sur*, the Forest Walk is another example of using urban parkland are more than manicured lawns. It is part of an urban precinct that contains the National History Museum of La Plata.

The National History Museum is traditional; there are no apologies for Spanish colonialism, and many factual displays on biology, history and national development.

The museum was an interesting place to drop in to see how non English speaking cultures have retained a deliberate story of their recent history, as opposed to other nations, like Australia, where many museums appear to eliminate anything before 1972 and anything after 1788.

UNIVERSITY TRAIN OF LA PLATA

In keeping with my deliberate transport theme of this trip, I was to travel on the local La Plata commuter service, called the University Train. The train, as the name suggests, runs from La Plata station where the Buenos Aires commuter service concludes and the city university only a few kilometres away.

The service is planned for expansion, but tenders so far have not been activated and the overcrowded nature of each of the services made a trip on the regional urban commuter service unable to be realised.

The Liberals and Nationals have for a few years held the policy view that Geelong should be the hub of a local commuter service. Like La Plata, regional city commuter services are useful and can serve several short lines.

In Australia the Hunter Valley has a reasonably substantial commuter service, as does the Illawarra; but seeing the huge patronage on this line again reinforces my belief that Geelong regional commuter rail is a policy that must be advanced as its success and popularity await a government with the vision to implement it.

...

In conclusion I reiterate that if the Victorian – South American engagement strategy is to succeed, it needs to have greater attention paid to it. We have tangible opportunities for economic growth and partnership, most definitely in education. But this relationship requires more attention.

I wish to place on record my appreciation to the Australian Embassy in Buenos Aires and to the two Ambassadors I have now met on two trips (April 2019 and September 2023); both had/have an excellent insight in to potential for the South American relationship and the mutual benefits attention to this relationship can bring.

Hence my past and continuing interest in furthering it.

I firmly believe in the Australian, Victorian and South American opportunities and will continue to pursue them. It is my hope and intention to return some time to this continent in 2024.

**Matthew Guy MP
September 2023**

Addendum

Buenos Aires Subte

My formal briefing was led by Mr Oscar Santos of San Martin, Buenos Aires. He is an employee of Emova Movilidad; the private rail operator of the Subte.

Trenes Argentinos, Comando Trenes Seuguros

My formal briefing was given by Mr Marcelo Befaro of Liners, Buenos Aires. Mr Befaro is an employee of Trenes Argentinos and manages one of the Safe Train Command security teams.

Rail Infrastructure

I was given briefings in three locations by Mr Diego Gervasoni. His role is the director for project upgrades to northern suburban lines (Suarez, Mitre, Tigre) I was briefed at Beccar, Belgrano C and Vicente Lopez railway stations.

Rail Network Issues

I was briefed by two current above ground train drivers; both of whom I made contact with in Australia. We conducted this at Retiro broad gauge railway station.

Rail Heritage tour

I was given a full briefing by one of the museum's formal guide.

Metropolitan Bus Transport

Briefing given by Alejandro Bermudez of Haedo, Buenos Aires and a current unnamed driver. Mr Bermudez is recently retired and a former General Manager of Linea 1, (Moron-Centro) the busiest line on the metropolitan bus network. He runs an advocacy group for better bus transport. I met Mr Bermudez in Centro, the main bus terminal.

Covid Update

This briefing was given by Ms Giselle Delacha of Cabillito, Buenos Aires. Ms Delacha works for City of Buenos Aires government.

Urban Renewal

Ms Liliana Hermida of Palermo, Buenos Aires hosted this tour. Mr Hermida is a local architect and urban designer. Our tour was a walking tour throughout the Puerto Madero urban renewal area, beginning at the Women's bridge.

Education

I was given this briefing by Ms Silvana Santos from La Boca, Buenos Aires. Ms Santos sources students for the overseas market and has a private firm that operates primarily with education facilities in Canada and the United States. She came to my contact via private higher education providers here in Melbourne.

Formal La Plata tours

I was provided this tour by a formal guide at the congress; as I was at the La Plata City Hall and the La Plata natural History Museum.

Australian Embassy

I met our Ambassador Mr Simon Twisk at the Embassy in the Belgrano district of Buenos Aires.