

Member	Matthew Guy	Electorate	Bulleen
Period	1 October 2025 to 31 December 2025		

Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$12,802.65
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$3,561.81

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
24-Nov-25	26-Nov-25	Shadow Ministerial Meeting with NT Government	\$740.70	Darwin	\$740.70
27-Nov-25	28-Nov-25	Shadow Ministerial Meeting and Tour of Transport Muesum	\$205.80	Alice Springs	\$205.80
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			4		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$946.50		

Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Mode of transport	Value of transport
24/11/2025	24/11/2025	Shadow Ministerial Meeting with NT Government	\$45.03	Rideshare	\$45.03
25/11/2025	25/11/2025	Shadow Ministerial Meeting with NT Government	\$45.63	Rideshare	\$45.63
26/11/2025	26/11/2025	Shadow Ministerial Meeting with NT Government	\$11.86	Rideshare	\$11.86
27/11/2025	27/11/2025	Shadow Ministerial Meeting and Tour of Transport Museum	\$24.52	Rideshare	\$24.52
28/11/2025	28/11/2025	Shadow Ministerial Meeting and Tour of Transport Museum	\$46.20	Taxi	\$46.20
24/11/2025	27/11/2025	Shadow Ministerial Travel to NT	\$56.00	Airport Parking	\$56.00
24/11/2025	28/11/2025	Shadow Ministerial business in Darwin and Alice Springs with the Northern Territory government	\$1,683.19	Flights	1,683.19
Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims			4		
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance			\$1,912.43		

Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims			
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid
28-Aug-25	08-Sep-25	Overseas trip, to hold meetings with Ministers and government officials in Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina. Matters relate to parliamentary, shadow ministerial and government business.	\$1,534.73
Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims			11
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance			\$1,534.73

**VICTORIAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT DELEGATION TO
PARAGUAY, BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA
Thursday 28 August – Monday 8 September 2025**

Matthew Guy MP

PURPOSE

Four times now since 2019, I have sought to engage the Victorian Government's well presented South American Engagement Strategy to further Victoria's relationships with that continent.

The strategy's focus being education, agriculture, infrastructure and knowledge. This trip – again conducted for parliamentary business - was the second that the Member for Narracan, Wayne Farnham, accompanied me.

Unlike previous parliamentary business trips, we had the opportunity to meet some senior political figures, particularly in Paraguay and also in Brazil. Noting the opportunity that was presented to us, we embarked earlier than planned from Australia to ensure we could make the first of those, in Paraguay, occur.

As I have stated in previous reports, South America presents Australia, and particularly Victoria, with huge economic and cultural opportunities. It is to our long term peril that we ignore this continent of half a billion people. Victoria's – and indeed most of Australia – have a focus toward limited parts of Asia and traditional markets in North America and Europe, while forgetting that in our hemisphere, operating on our school years, financial years, with the same seasons and in some cases with a similar post World War two migration mix, we have nations that seek and greatly appreciate our interest, when it comes.

The southern parts of South America are, in our view, the greatest opportunities for Victoria. They are wealthier, have similar economic bases, and nowadays a more stable political climate. Chile, Argentina, Brazil and even Paraguay are nations we should be engaging with as their economies develop and diversify further.

But not just economically, the potential for closer political ties remains obvious to Wayne Farnham and myself. In all of the four nations we have now visited in this region, all (except for some parts of Chile) are surprised to see Australian politicians (in most cases the first delegation for our nation they have ever encountered) and are more than pleased to be doing so.

Concerningly, most have had no contact with Australian business as well; except for some with links to Sydney or mining in Queensland or Western Australia.

This is despite huge population opportunities for Australia – particularly Victoria. The overwhelming conversation with younger people in these nations is their desire to learn English, and not in the United States. Most therefore flock to Canada. Some in Brazil seek to head to Queensland.

Yet the potential for Victoria to further its own Engagement Strategy with sourcing of students to our state from these nations remains live and a huge opportunity for us. Yet there is no coordinated focus for Victoria to do so, no leadership from government toward developing any MOUs with Victorian institutions and southern South Americans ones that we were advised of. Victoria is missing this huge economic opportunity to our own long term peril.

As Wayne Farnham and I have both stated in previous reports – there must be a strong focus on the South American Engagement Strategy being actioned by government, by more people in the Victorian Parliament than just two members.

The longer term opportunity for a second government business office, this time on the east coast of the continent, is one we both offer as a serious and important recommendation to the current or

any future Victorian Government's to action. The corporate knowledge of our state in these markets is limited. Too limited than it should be.

The potential for a future sister state relationship between Victoria and a Brazilian state – like we did which Shandong Province in the 1970s to kick start a strong business relationship with China – should be considered.

The Legislature of the state of Santa Catarina was exceedingly welcoming to us for the time we were there - the meetings, events, social media and collegiality we engaged in developed very rapidly and was evident of a people who genuinely want to engage Australia. They look up to us as an economy worth learning from, and we should look up to them as a nation with a big population whom, we could mutually benefit from by engaging respectfully and with sincerity.

A sister state relationship with that state could be a longer term but hugely beneficial step forward for Victoria and the state of Santa Catarina.

Like previous reports in this one we have summarised five full days of meetings and events for the most useful and noteworthy of the delegation. There was a large amount of commute time which sadly ate in to a lot of the total time away, but this is to be expected from a large continent where connecting flights between locations are the only way to reach many cities that lack direct flights.

As always the trip was productive and yet again left us with a firm belief that Victoria should be doing more to engage this welcoming continent of much potential and mutual opportunity for our state and these nations.

ITINERARY

Thursday August 28

Departed mid-morning from Melbourne, via Sydney to Santiago then to Asuncion, Paraguay, arriving in the late afternoon of the same day (local time).

Friday August 29

Meetings in Asuncion, Paraguay.

Saturday August 30

Tours in the morning then travel to Florianopolis, Brazil, via Sao Paulo.

Sunday August 31

Day of tours in Florianopolis, Brazil.

Monday September 1

Meetings in Florianopolis, Brazil.

Tuesday September 2

Morning meetings in Florianopolis, Brazil.

Afternoon flight to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Wednesday September 3

Meetings in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Thursday September 4

Meetings in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Friday September 5

Meetings in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Saturday September 6

Late afternoon flight to Santiago then evening flight connection back to Sydney then on to Melbourne.

Sunday September 7

Travel.

Monday September 8

Arrival back in Melbourne, Australia.

ASUNCION, PARAGUAY

Home to a third of the just over six million people in Paraguay, Asuncion is an old city, one of the first to be settled by the Spanish in the continent of South America. Paraguay is a welcoming nation, but not a wealth one.

Its downtown is historical, many older buildings are being restored as the nation's economy begins to grow strongly, and more capital becomes available to engage in physical restoration of older buildings. When the city was originally planned and built, however, money was not plentiful thus many basic works such as drainage were never put in place. These are in many parts of the city being retrofitted today. Thus, the downtown area is in many parts a construction site.

We chose to engage a new nation other than Chile, Brazil and Argentina on this trip, mainly due to links with the Paraguay community here in Melbourne who encouraged us to do so. With some community members here in Australia having links to senior officials in Paraguay, we engaged them to assist us in achieving formal meetings for the 36 hours we were in Asuncion.

Reuben Ramirez Lozcaro Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Paraguay

We were honoured that our first meeting on this trip – and the reason we chose to depart slightly early – was to meet with the Foreign Affairs Minister of the Republic of Paraguay, Reuben Ramirez.

We met Mr Ramirez for a lengthy period in his central office in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, in the downtown part of Asuncion.

Before formalities begun we presented Mr Ramirez with a gift that members of Melbourne's Paraguayan community had asked us to take to him – a photography and architecture book of Paris, made in the 1960s, where Mr Ramirez later studied as a student, a gift of personal interest to him. We also presented him some mementos of Melbourne, including a model of a Melbourne tram.

Mr Ramirez is a highly educated and articulate man; having been educated in Argentina, Paris and Los Angeles. By trade he is an economist. As the Foreign Affairs Minister he has held a number of senior ministerial posts in the Colorado Party governments long reign in that nation, and is one of the most senior and influential political figures in Paraguay and has been for some time.

He is a personal friend of Argentina's President Javier Milei and holds a deep and fundamental belief that the way to improve the lives of people in his nation is through a simple taxation system, encouraging private business growth, smaller government interference and greatly increasing financial and government transparency.

Topics for discussion included:

- Trade with Australia and potential avenues for growth, particularly for Victoria;
- Paraguay's taxation system which has been hugely simplified to a 10% income, 10% company, 10% VAT (the 10-10-10 system);
- The decline in poverty in Paraguay from 60 per cent down to 17 per cent in the last decade;
- Technology and the relationship with Taiwan where microchips from that nation are now also being produced in Paraguay;
- The linking of microchip processing to the education system and careers for students;
- The rise of childhood education numbers linked to the state providing three meals a day for all students;

- The extent of Paraguay's ability to feed other nations – its population of six million produces enough food to feed 60 million. There are 20 million head of cattle in the country with massive local and export production;
- Paraguay is powered 100 per cent from renewable energy – from the world's third largest power station – the hydro electric dam at Itaipu Dam, where it shares with Brazil, they are seeking to expand this facility and to double energy output.

A number of points we noted about this lengthy conversation. Firstly Mr Ramirez – as an economist – was visibly shocked at the concept of Payroll Tax. The simplification of the tax system to the 10-10-10 system was a huge incentive for business to locate in this nation from other South American nations.

Secondly, he was exceptionally keen to develop a better working relationship with Australia and was seeking at some point in the future to visit. The concept of building better trade, economic and social links between our nations; particularly focused on education, was of great interest to him.

And importantly, the linking of specific industries to secondary school aged children to pursue a career and develop their entire education on it is a key focus of Paraguay's drive out of poverty. We should learn from this.

It should be noted - we were the first Australian politicians Mr Ramirez had ever met.



We left Australia early directly to meet a foreign political leader as senior and as respected as Mr Ramirez is across the whole continent of South America. He has limited time, that Friday was made available to us, we didn't knock the opportunity back.

As such we were honoured he gave us so much of his time and that we could explore his thoughts on taxation, energy, agriculture and potential economic opportunity for both our constituencies.

Developing and maintaining better relations with the continent of South America will only happen for Victoria by engaging people of Mr Ramirez's calibre, influence and decency.

On departing our meeting at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry organised a number of tours for us which we sought – the current and former legislative buildings and the nation's Indigenous Museum.

Current and Former Legislative Buildings

The National Congress

The Palacio Legislativo, the National Congress building, was in session during our visit. Security was quite high and exceedingly lengthy to progress through. The building was constructed as a partnership with the Taiwanese government, a friendship that is very strong with the Paraguayan and Taiwanese, in 2003. The building it replaced was very small.

The current Congress contains 45 Senators and 80 Lower House deputies. There is a majority for the Colorado Party in both chambers; and the directly elected President, Santiago Pena, is also of that party.

Both chambers are elected with a direct proportional representation list system model, across the entire country. Members have a constituency or area office, where they can choose the location of.

Indigenous Museum

The former National Congress

Paraguay was originally settled by the Guarani people. Like Australia, they were colonised by a European power, in this case the Spanish, who dispossessed local people of their land, language and in many parts, their culture.

Like Australia, Paraguay faces a complex way of dealing with its colonial past and engaging many of the existent Guarani population. There are five million Guarani people, spread across Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil.

Unlike other South American nations, Paraguay has never sought to distance itself from this indigenous past to the extent that the Guarani language is today a national language, along with Spanish. Guarani is taught in all schools and is now understood by more than 90 per cent of the population.

We sought a tour of this facility to see how the nation presents and deals with a complex history, similar to ours. The use of such a stately location for the national indigenous museum was respectful, as was the museum itself. School children are taken here regularly and a genuine effort to reconcile and educate is made by the nation.

It was pointed out to us that as well as the national museum, this facility, specifically dedicated to the nation's Guarani past, was better able to present the Indigenous history, than just a section incorporated in to the general museum.

This could be a possibility for Melbourne, by potentially using a location like Federation Square or others, for something unique and similar to educate and acknowledge our indigenous history.

Rail Museum

Sadly Paraguay's last trains ran more than a decade ago, so the only transport issues we got to see in the afternoon before our departure were in a museum. What was apparent was the English nature of the rail network – similar to Australia, India, New Zealand and much of South America, where those from the British Isles originally established the systems.

Rail signalling, rollingstock design, safe working systems and ticketing systems were all highly visually similar to ours, let alone the other nations mentioned. For a nation that could well benefit from rail transport, particularly freight, there is some debate about the reintroduction of rail from Asuncion to other cities such as Encarnacion or Ciudad del Este, but this is some way off and with rail corridors that have, near the city areas, been largely built over already.

Note, if rail does close, it is important that governments retain the ability to reopen those lines in the future, or use them for secondary uses (rail trails) so should the need arise, the opportunity isn't lost forever as has been here.

Other points to note about Asuncion:

The National War Museum. Students are required to visit this facility a number of times in their education to learn about the country's national heroes. It's not a one off, they do this a number of times.

Closing streets for community events. Like Sao Paulo, we noticed that weekends have city streets closed for community stalls, food and performances, as a way of getting people back to the downtown post Covid. It is hugely popular.

Improving bike tracks. In Asuncion, bike paths are being improved across the metropolitan area, separate to main roads, to encourage cycle transport without impeding road traffic. Note this for Melbourne, without impeding or detracting from road traffic, or removing vehicle lanes.

FLORIANOPOLIS, BRAZIL

The capital city of the state of Santa Catarina is located around 500 kilometres to the south of Sao Paulo and is one of the wealthiest and safest cities in the country. It has a metropolitan population of around 1.2 million people. We had a day and a half for formal meetings in the city.

When we were last in Sao Paulo meeting with transport officials, a number who were from the states of Parana and Santa Catarina suggested this as one of the cities we should look at visiting next and making contact with officials in this location. We took their advice.

Legislative Assembly of Santa Catarina
ALESC Assembleia Legislativa de Santa Catarina

Office of the President, Daniel Dos Santos

We were met and welcomed to the Legislative Assembly by Daniel Dos Santos, who we had previously made contact with and who gave us a full introduction to the Assembly and its functions,

roles and methods of election. We felt that to establish relations with a new state and location, the Assembly was the best place to begin, and Mr Dos Santos was hospitable, welcoming and exceptionally informative about the role and functions of the federative structure of Brazil's democracy.

He also took much time to arrange us a number of tremendous meetings in and around the Assembly over the next day and a half which we had in Florianopolis.

The unicameral parliament of the state of Santa Catarina has 40 deputies, elected via proportional representation. The population of the state is 8.1 million, the tenth most populous of Brazil's 26 states and federal territory. The largest city is Joinville (population about 1.4 million, the capital is Florianopolis, population 1.2 million).

The Assembly was in session for the time we were present, thus we had a tremendous time to meet many of the state's 40 deputies, have brief chats with a number of them and highlight the fact that as elected representatives from our state, Victoria, we were keen to see a greater relationship between us and Santa Catarina. This was exceptionally well received.

The ruling parties of the state occupy 32 of the 40 deputy positions. Like the United States, the state's executive is directly elected, separate to its legislature. It was fortuitous for the two of us that the largest party in the Assembly is in fact the Liberal Party.

We were given a tour of the Assembly, met many, many of its staff, watched the Congress in session in the Plenary and, as stated, met a number of deputies in and around the chamber.

Chief of Staff to the President, Diego Viera

We had a long meeting with the Chief of Staff to the President, Julia Cesar Garcia about his roles, functions and that of his office. While it was our view initially that the Assembly's President was akin to a Presiding Officer in the Victorian Parliament, the role in Brazil is much more direct.

As the President, Mr Garcia is a part of the State Cabinet and thus makes decisions on a range of broad policy areas. Mr Viera gave us a full run down of some of those and how the Assembly interacts directly – and closely – with the executive. The relationship although from varied parties, is much closer than in an Australian instance.

We discussed topics such as:

- Transport, specifically bus transport and the drive to turn the cities bus fleet to a fully electric one;
- Housing; like Melbourne in a wealthier city the young are missing out on housing opportunities and the Assembly was debating a number of key initiatives around tax incentives and long term payments for younger generations to buy their first home;
- Law and order. In a nation like Brazil it's hard not to avoid asking this question as there is a perceived lack of safety, which was not the case in Florianopolis. Nevertheless the Police here have been granted much greater search powers to crack down on crime;
- Environment, specifically coastal issues. Being on the coast and famous for beaches,. The Assembly has recently sought to strengthen planning restrictions on development near shorelines and near wooded, park areas. Like Queensland however, much of this is probably too late, but the topic was very interesting.

At the end of the meeting we met Mr Garcia for a brief conversation before he headed back to the Plenary Hall for the afternoon sessions.

ALESC Media and Communications, Alessandra Flores

We had a terrific meeting with Alessandra Flores who runs the Media and Communications team for both the President and the whole Assembly. Her team of around a half a dozen people was young and as expected, heavily focused on social media.

The team talked about their ways of targeting messages to a younger demographic, notably to talk about the importance of democracy, not just the politics of the day. This these of educating the young about democracy was a common one, one we both fear appears lost in Australia where our educational systems appear too caught up in educating about the politics and not the importance of our democratic system.



After a lengthy chat including topics such as:

- Education around democracy;
- Education around policy (tax, housing etc)
- The use and targeting of social media to specific demographics in multiple languages;
- Managing expectations from all ALESC members around the use of the team;
- Engaging with the community about the Assembly and its relationships in Brazil with other states and with South America.

Wayne and I decided to offer our services for expanding the last point to include Victoria, Australia and were enthusiastically taken up. That afternoon we filmed a number of social media clips talking about Victoria and why we'd come to make contact with Santa Caterina for the Assembly's social media channel.

We talked about how we'd like to see more Brazilians visit Victoria, specifically see more younger people study in Melbourne and how we should both engage in better relationships given we have so many shared similarities.

The highlight was a mock presentation to the Plenary by both of us, which was watched by many deputies and staff when recording and again gave us the opportunity to invite people to Victoria and to make awareness that we wanted to build a better relationship between us.

Like with Paraguay, most had never met an Australian dignitary before.

ALESC International Office, Rodrigo Forte

One of the more interesting meetings we had at the Assembly was with the International Office, as its name suggests, the office that manages the visits of foreign dignitaries but also manages relations with foreign parliaments and manages the state's presence in Brasilia.

The benefit of this meeting was to raise and discuss the possibility of sister state relationships; how they are formed, managed and adopted, from the Brazilian end. While Wayne and I have clearly no formal ability to suggest perusing this proposal on behalf of the state of Victoria, it was a worthwhile step to put in the minds of Mr Forte and his staff.

It is also our personal belief that something like this should eventually be pursued for economic, education and cultural links.

At the meeting with Wayne, myself and Mr Forte and three of his staff, we all noted:

- The states of Victoria and Santa Caterina have a similar migration patterns from Europe post World War two;
- Both are big agriculture producers for their nations, in horticulture and dairy;
- Both states have a focus on education; technology and have food and fibre strategies;
- We have similar sized state populations;
- We have similar climates and operate on the same educational year;
- Australians and Brazilians are both outward looking, international people.

Wayne and I maintain that closer political ties are easy to establish, we hope to have commenced that, but the economic links that come next are harder but more important. Contact with the International Office was a good step should either of us get the chance to continue the policy concept of a sister state, or be able to pass this contact, information or advice to a government who may examine this concept.

Court of Accounts, Carolina Dias

Our meeting with two people from the Court of Accounts was fascinating, but the structure of the organisation is hard to place for those from the British form of Parliamentary and Government oversight.

In the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds, the Court of Accounts was a way of historically ensuring that the Royal Families money, being spent on government projects, was not being abused or corrupted. As these nations have evolved to Republics, the role is the same, although now focused on the state's finances, not the Royal families.

The Court of Accounts in each state in Brazil has vast powers. It is hard to reconcile the extent of their ability for financial oversight in all levels of government administration.

All public entities with a public funded budget need to have them approved by the Court of Accounts. The Court can intervene on spending by the state, it can stop any spending that is considered wasteful.

The Governor appoints most of the presiding officers for the court, ALESC (the Legislative Assembly) one as well. They operate completely independently.

The Court oversees the implementation of all financial transparency laws. They propose new laws; they request the removal of dated provisions. It is hard for any Assembly or Governor to argue or deny the Court with their requests and thus, their level of financial power is quite stunning.

The Court of Accounts occupies a central building in Florianopolis, across from the Assembly, near the Governor's office, cementing their role as a central part of the state's – and indeed every states, financial transparency armoury.

In a Victorian sense, it was like multiple Auditors General operating at once with massive powers of oversight, investigation, veto and recommendation.

Fenix Consortium, Mr Marlon Aurelio

Florianopolis's busses are predominately run by the Fenix Consortium. The city has half a dozen central bus stations and more than 60 lines on which they operate. I took the time to travel across the main bridge to the Monte Cristo area of the city to see the consortium's head office and the depot areas where I met Mr Marlon Aurelio, who runs the consortium's Florianopolis office.

With no metro rail system, buses are the major form of public transport in the city. Despite this, the city bus networks offer incentives for using the system and getting people off an increasingly clogged freeway network:

- Free wifi at bus terminals;
- Newer buses that are better accessed by the disabled or elderly;
- Extended services, now running from 5 am to past midnight;
- Tap on and off ticketing, a smart ticket system;
- Cheaper, set fares from R\$3 – R\$5 for all rides.

The bus system is integrated and for a small city in area, quite vast. The lessons for Melbourne remain around frequency and connectivity; with bus timetables designed to link to each other, similar to that of a metro rail network.

It should be noted that the airport link in the city was also fast, very frequent and very inexpensive.

Other points to note about Florianopolis:

Active Transport, there is a vast network of e-scooters available across the city and good bike lanes on which to use them on major routes. We accessed a number of meeting by using these.

Florianopolis Airport is an entertainment venue. Concerts and events are held at the airport so that the facility has become the mix of a convention centre, concert hall and transport location.

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

This was my fourth and Wayne and I second visit to the Argentinian capital. Our principal interest remains the transport system of this city. It is vast and complex yet offers many solutions to issues that Melbourne faces in our drive to expand our rail and bus networks.

The Argentine capital is the twelfth largest metropolitan area in the world, home to over 16 million people - there is much to see, do and learn from this city. A large number of the public institutions were, like Australia, founded by the British over 100 years ago, before they were abruptly removed from many of these institutions by a Spanish language nationalist government.

Like Brazil, we firmly believe the economic opportunity in this comparatively wealth city remains high for Victoria, predominately in the education areas. Argentinian youth are very keen to learn and study in English speaking nations. To date this void has – as always seem to be the case – been filled by Canada. There is no reason we should not be seeking to further these opportunities for Victorian institutions. When I came here in September 2023 I met a number of education providers who reiterated what we again heard on this trip, that being the interest in studying abroad in English speaking nations remains high.

In the 1990s there were direct flights from Argentina to Australia. Both Qantas and Aerolineas Argentinas offered flights to either Melbourne and Sydney. None exist today. Pre covid there were Air New Zealand flights on offer from Australia to Auckland then to Buenos Aires, but again, none today.

The only reasonable access today to Argentina remains through Santiago. The opportunity for direct flights from Melbourne to the eastern end of the South American continent remains. It should be one the state government seeks to advance.

Melbourne has a growing Argentine community, particularly in the south eastern suburbs. Access to the eastern side of the continent from Australia remains cumbersome; direct flights, even only a handful of times per week, would surely present real and tangible economic opportunity for both. It should be on the government's radar to persue.

Congress of the City of Buenos Aires Armal Hernandez

We were met and given a briefing and tour of the Congress (Parliament) of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires – which has state status within the Argentine Republic. The city legislature has 60 members, elected in a unicameral parliament for four year terms via proportional representation.

The Mayor (who is directly elected) has a running mate, who becomes the Vice Chief of Government and thus the presiding officer of the city legislature.

The Autonomous City is responsible for a range of roles that in Australia would be local and state government combined, from footpaths to urban planning, the underground railway network to park management and creation.

Much of the city services are nowadays privatised and thus, the Autonomous government has assumed a regulatory role for their operation. In this vein we were keen to discuss the operation of the Subte underground rail network.

The network was established in public hands, privatised, then nationalised in the 1980s then privatised in the 1990s, where it remains today. The operator, Metrovias South America, is seeking to expand on the six lines it currently runs today, but with assistance and financial support from the Autonomous City government. In previous reports I have discussed the ease at which the Subte operates. The singular ticketing system between buses, above ground rail comprising three operators and the Subte itself. This ease of ticketing and the operation of it is worth Melbourne learning from, but it seems that debate has eluded our government for the best part of a decade.

Other topics discussed:

Environmental protection from the cities eco park and pollution via stormwater drainage, which are now being collected and sorted before they are flushed to sea.

Active transport and the loss of some providers due to criminal use of the bikes. This is being sought to be overcome through new regulation.

Electric buses are being sought for some of the new bus routes planned for the north of the city. However charging locations, stations and power availability are all presenting problems that are yet unresolved. Very similar issues to Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Retiro Railway Station – Marcelo Befaro

Our second and my third meeting with Marcelo Befaro from Trenes Argentinos was as interesting as the last two times. Previously he had shown us the operation of *Comando Trenes Seuguros*, the central train command which oversees the operation of the entire above ground rail network in Buenos Aires.

The system has now been expanded further. We both viewed security scanning of various stations, with detailed, panel operated CCTV that could identify people with incredible facial accuracy. The importance Trenes Argentinos are placing on network passenger security is beyond anything we see in Australia and extends from major and serious crime down to petty crime. Their drive to make the above ground rail network a safe space for all travellers is admirable and advanced.

There are a number of measures that I have previously referred to and again point out with interest for adaptation by Melbourne's rail network such as:

- Security strike teams to be deployed to stations in rapid time if issues emerge;
- Hundreds of security personnel that roam the network at all hours, not just after hours (similar to PSOs) who can also be easily deployed to other various stations;
- The visual reassurance to the general public of a security presence such as large public tv monitoring of stations for the public to view as CTS are going about their surveillance work. Such a system could feature at Flinders Street station.

While at Retiro we took the opportunity, post our formal meeting and post permission being granted, to spend a lengthy amount of time meeting rail workers. We spoke to Train Guards, Drivers, and on train staff, particularly of the above ground suburban trains and also to some of the long distance rail network crew.

While imminent privatisation remains an obvious topic of conversation, many spoke about the following issues:

Track condition: poorer track condition from declining maintenance which is causing more frequent derailments. This is apparent on the regional network as well.

Overcrowding: The suburban diesel hauled trains are no longer fit for purpose, servicing the vast north western suburbs of Buenos Aires. These lines need to be electrified. The synergy with

Melbourne's north west (Melton) needing to be electrified was not lost on us. In both cases, electrified trains carry a far greater capacity, particularly crush capacity.

Various operators run the public transport network in Buenos Aires, from Trenes Argentinos to Transporte Publica and Belgrano Norte Linea, who are just some. While this is manageable in a bus network, many felt in the rail system it was problematic and lead to lack of timetable efficiency. We would hope that in time the Suburban Rail Loop operation, if it is to be completed, would be linked in with Melbourne's rail and tram/light rail providers.

Trenes Argentinos

Laura Romano from Trenes Argentino Corporate gave Wayne and I a briefing on the operation of what is a ten year old government business enterprise, operating both passenger and freight services across the nation. It may be one that has its operations but not infrastructure privatised by the current national government.

The organisation is divided in to four areas: Freight, Passenger, Operations and Infrastructure. Hence these divisions may form the break up of the organisation.

Trenes Argentinos operate a number of suburban rail networks outside of Buenos Aires, in both Cordoba, a small network in Rosario. They operate the bulk of the above ground, broad gauge services in Buenos Aires. They are the sole major provider of rail freight movements across the nation.

However their infrastructure is dated and ageing. The biggest issues remain lack of investment in tracks and signalling/safe working for some decades. Derailments are common and increasing and this is impacting the reliability of service and the belief to private companies that freight by rail remains viable.

Rail corridors that are only offered for freight traffic have now experience severe speed down grades rather than track upgrading. While it was easy to be horrified at this revelation, the same situation exists in Australia, particularly Victoria. It is why a number of Victorian freight only lines nowadays have maximum speeds of barely 60 km/h, compared in New South Wales to the equivalent lines carrying traffic at 115 km/h.

Further points to note from this meeting:

Disability Access on Trains has previously been ignored for years and is now a key focus for Trenes Argentinos. This was evident on a number of the diesel hauled rollingstock services we saw.

Public Information is now a key focus of the organisation. They now offer station tours, and engagement strategies with schools to get younger people interested in a career in public transport.

The Subte

While we have met Oscar Santos from the Subte operator on previous trips, we again had time for a discussion on this delegation, seeking a focus on rollingstock. I am most interested in the small loading gauge (height, width, length) of the Subte trains which are in use and which vary enormously from the comparatively large loading gauge of above ground, broad gauge Argentinian trains.

This is relevant for Melbourne in what is potentially happening with the Suburban Rail Loop.

When originally built the Subte was built, for cost reasons, with very small trains. Thus it has limited the numbers who can fit on board and as such, the crush capacity of Subte rollingstock is vastly

different to above ground trains. In Melbourne's case, as the government ploughs on with the SRL proposal, it is not lost on us that in order for the business case to stack up, smaller loading gauge, four car trains are being proposed.

The long term problems with designing rollingstock simply to make a business case stack up rather than providing what is future proofing any rail proposal is a concern. Buenos Aires is now left with small stations, small trains and major overcrowding of its underground network that cannot manage the passenger numbers being sent to it via the above ground rail network.

If the state government is to be believed that many people will use the SRL when/if completed, then the Buenos Aires lesson here is one to heed now, now after the event.

Buenos Aires Customs House

Despite logistical and language issues we managed to secure a tour of the now restored Customs House on Juan Domingo Peron Plaza. We failed to secure a look at this facility last time and didn't want to miss this on this opportunity, given two levels of government, city and national, had directly sought to rebuild it, noting the heritage value of the building.

XXX XXX provided us with a tremendous look at how the facility was in a degraded state for many years and, like Melbourne's Regent Theatre, was restored to its incredible grandeur today through direct government intervention. The same could and should be the case for Flinders Street station.

The building has huge ornate wrought and cast iron supports and frames, a large number of stained glass windows and stone work dating back to 1910 that is incredibly ornate. Fifteen years ago when the city declared the building a national monument, works commenced to upgrade it.

The building was a tremendous example of a city preserving its built form heritage for all citizens to enjoy and be proud of. It was tremendous to see the building up close.

Other points to note about Buenos Aires:

Port Relocation was a fascinating topic of our trip to the Casa Rosada, House of the President. The underground stone work from the city's original port is a magnificent look in to old built form heritage. We were given a tour of the stone work and above ground area behind the Palace. It also prompts the Melbourne discussion about previous discussions on port relocation and use for urban renewal, as was done in Buenos Aires around 80 years ago.

Bomberos (Firefighters), we met a number of firefighters at the La Boca Bomberos (Firefighting) station who were campaigning for greater funding for their volunteer squad. We were given a tour by local firefighter Ignacio. It was interesting to note, after the station tour, that their volunteers are entirely community funded and have similar funding issues to what the CFA and SES do in Victoria.

Active Transport, again we used the remaining e-bikes that exist in the city, from meeting to meeting location. It was sad to see that many of them have disappeared, and the service has declined in the last twelve months.

Central Bus Station, my good contact and friend Alejandro Bermudez was always on hand to show us his issues with the city bus network, despite new routes being added to the northern suburbs. Over crowding at the city terminus remains a massive and obvious problem as routes are clearly under provided for on the major trunk lines. However newer bus platforms in parts of the suburbs resemble rail stations and or Brisbane's new Metro bus system.

San Telmo Markets, parts of which have been recently restored and opened up to open air stalls on certain days, now has a carnival feel rather than a simple market. Great lessons to rebrand and

refocus the Queen Victoria Markets seeing San Telmo markets in a difficult state a few years ago to booming today.

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I have stated for a number of years that there lies huge social and economic opportunity for Victoria in developing better relations with southern South America, home to hundreds of millions of people.

Wayne Farnham and I have now twice visited the continent and build strong and developable links, particularly in government circles, that could easily be expanded on by any Victorian MP or minister on a delegation to that continent.

We cannot expand our state's economic sphere internationally by leaving it all to the private sector, or by emails and google searches – being on the ground as an ambassador for our state - like every MP is and should be – is key to building these links. That is what we have been doing.

We both believe all MPs have a duty and responsibility to present Victoria in a positive and unified manner while on these missions; that is what we have always done. It is also why we base our studies off the current government's South American Engagement Strategy. It's a reasonable document but needs more than two MPs to own it.

Apart from the United States and increasingly Canada, South American nations appear to have little or no regular cultural or governmental contact with any other English-speaking nations. Their awareness of Australia is at best, minimal. This includes Victoria

It is time for that to change.

We present this latest parliamentary business report with more ideas and sensible suggestions to achieve a greater long term awareness of our state in South America, for the long term benefit of all Victorians.

Accommodation

Asuncion

Two nights accommodation at
Total \$782.09

Florianopolis

One night accommodation at
Total \$175.91

Buenos Aires

Four nights accommodation at
Total \$612.90

Brazilian VISA

Total \$253.10

Commercial Transport

Uber and taxi receipts totalling: \$166.25