

Member	Bridget Vallence	Electorate	Evelyn
Period	01 October 2023 to 31 December 2023		

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

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

Regulation 9 - Parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	
Total amount paid to member for parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	\$0.00
Suburb in which the member's parliamentary accommodation is located	n/a

Regulation 10 - Travel allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Town or city in which accommodation was located	Value of the accommodation

Total number of nights for travel allowance claims 0
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance \$0.00

Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Mode of transport	Value of transport

Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims 0
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance \$0.00

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

Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims 0
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance \$0.00
See attached travel report for further details

Travel Report – Bridget Vallence MP, Parliament of Victoria

Electorate	Evelyn District
Shadow Ministerial Portfolios	Industry, Innovation, Manufacturing, Skills and Training, Employment, Industrial Relations
Places visited	London, Paris, Rome, Florence
Date of travel	2 to 22 September 2023

Purpose of travel

Innovation, Industry, Manufacturing, Skills and Training, Economic Development, Investment

The primary purpose of this electorate business was to explore economic issues and investigate industry, innovation and technology, skills and training, and investment opportunities relevant to the state of Victoria.

This included engagements with Global Victoria, tertiary and research institutions, innovation hubs, policy organisations, chambers of commerce, not-for-profit organisations, trade and investment organisations, and parliamentary committees. This provided the opportunity to make key connections and strengthen relationships that will benefit the state of Victoria.

The recent finalisation of the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement and the AUKUS Partnership provides considerable opportunities for Victorian industry to further engage in these markets, develop local industry capability and capacity, create new jobs and a skilled workforce, especially in relation to innovation, quantum technologies and advanced manufacturing.

Europe is rapidly becoming an increasingly important trade and investment partner for Victoria, which will be further strengthened through the Australia-European Union Free Trade Agreement currently under negotiation and forms an important part of Victoria's economic recovery.

International trade and global engagement is vital to creating jobs and growing the Victorian economy. Throughout my visit I gained considerable insights into emerging technologies, risks and opportunities for Victoria to consider, and the policy settings and strategic frameworks that are being implemented to drive economic prosperity and improve social impact. These learnings will be of significant benefit and are very transferable to Victoria's economy.

September 2023

Benefits of travel to the State of Victoria

Innovation, Industry, Manufacturing, Skills and Training, Economic Development, Investment

London

The London School of Economics, The GenDen

The GenDen at The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is LSE Generate's Innovation Centre. Whilst I was in London, I met with and received a briefing from LJ Silverman, Head of LSE Generate, and David Ai JD MS MBA, Head of LSE Innovation, and Inês Sequeira who leads a social innovation hub in Portugal that assists social entrepreneurs and impact-driven organisations.

Victoria can benefit by gaining insights into how leading institutes like The London School of Economics carry out world-class research, enable entrepreneurship, and facilitate collaboration between the research sector, venture capital, and industry, and to what extent government can play a role. LSE shared insights into their work which facilitates commercial outcomes, but also pursues impact-driven innovation to help solve complex social issues. This will help Victoria to benchmark our own leading institutes and develop policy initiatives that support Victoria's innovation ecosystem.

As part of the briefing with LSE, government funding and programs were discussed. They warned against government 'trying to be the VC itself' – an interesting insight in the context of Victoria's own Breakthrough Victoria. The Economic and Social Research Council is the UK's largest funder of economic, social, behavioural and human data science and has made many grants available.

Additionally, benefits for local industry were discussed, such as products and services in the social sciences delivered through digital tools. For example, 'The State of The States' is a database of state-level legislative solutions to common problems in the US, initially focused on unemployment, homelessness, and COVID-19. Similar tools could be deployed to benefit the state of Victoria.

Some initiatives of The London School of Economics include supporting entrepreneurship hubs, entrepreneur prizes for school students, accelerator program for young entrepreneurs where they facilitate networking with investors and family businesses in a 'shark tank' environment, upskilling people in digital, and promoting to industry the benefit of innovation for business.

UK Parliament – Commercialising Quantum Technologies Inquiry

Quantum technologies have been identified by the UK's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology as one of five critical technologies that it will focus on under its new Science and Technology Framework. The UK is a science and technology superpower and there has been significant success in their quantum technologies sector that we can learn from for our own state of Victoria, in terms of government policy and supporting the development and growth of this industry to benefit our economy and jobs.

Whilst I was in London, I attended the United Kingdom's Parliamentary Inquiry into Commercialising Quantum Technologies, conducted by the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee of the

House of Commons. The Inquiry heard from leading experts including Professor Sir Peter Knight FRS, Emeritus Professor at Imperial College London and Chair Quantum Metrology Institute at National Physical Laboratory, Dr Michael Cuthbert, Aegis Professor at University of Bristol and Director at National Quantum Computing Centre, and Lousi Barson, Director of Science, Innovation and Skills at the Institute of Physics.

In the 10th year of the program, there are now around 45 quantum startups in the UK which have been research-based but are now shifting more heavily into commercialisation. Roughly half of these are in computing. There is significant economic value in this sector and a wide range of applications. There are four government funded hubs in the UK which bring together research and industry and has been an important factor in an entrepreneurial research vision for the sector. UK also has a strong supply chain to support the sector, and in Victoria too we can develop capability and capacity in our own supply chain. Government and industry need to work together on a clear strategy for growth, scaling up, and developing a skilled workforce. There is a great emphasis on industry-led research projects.

Quantum technologies present great opportunity to address key challenges for our state of Victoria, for example in healthcare, the environment and reaching net zero emissions, communications, cyber-security, defence, and other areas. Rather than simply being a funder, the Inquiry heard that governments can and should have policies that extend to government departments and authorities being an early user to test technologies. A challenge for government is not simply funding organisations in the quantum technology sector (and that funding 1:1 is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain) but ensuring there is strict criteria and a rigorous review program.

Australia was discussed in terms of AUKUS and emerging technology and building of resilience. The Australia-UK relationship, indeed Victoria-UK relationship, is important as we share the same values and vision for delivering better outcomes through improved technology. It is important to actively work on this relationship now, and to identify and develop opportunities between Victoria and the UK given the AUKUS program has a 10-year timeline, and much of the work from research to commercialisation will take years.

The Inquiry also heard that while quantum computers are vitally important, they have poor environmental credentials. Quantum computers use a significant amount of energy and are therefore highly emitting, and data centres use a lot of water or gas. This has attracted criticism, and more work is required to develop more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable outcomes.

As collaboration across Europe has become more challenging for the UK this presents an opportunity for our own state, Victoria. Also, a key area that government can play a role in is via education and raising awareness of the benefits to our Victorian economy – to people and to businesses – of quantum technologies. There will be increasing cautiousness in relation to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and trust in new technologies that can be transformative and of significant benefit for Victoria's economy and the Victorian people.

UK Parliament – Electric Vehicles Inquiry

Victoria is on a pathway to reduce its emissions, and the government's Climate Change Strategy outlines its roadmap to net-zero emissions and a climate resilient Victoria by 2050. The strategy includes investment in innovative technologies, such as zero emissions vehicles and to partner with

businesses and communities to encourage their adoption. There remains significant work to do to address uncertainty for industry and consumers and contemplation of legislative reform and how that may impact the transition.

I attended the United Kingdom's Parliamentary Inquiry into Electric Vehicles, conducted by the Environment and Climate Change Committee of the House of Lords. The Inquiry examined the importance of decarbonisation of transport and transition to electric vehicles to secure net zero targets, hearing from experts including James Taylor, Managing Director at Vauxhall Motors, Professor Tim Schwanen, Director of the Transport Studies Unit at University of Oxford, Lauren Pamma, Program Director at Green Finance Institute, and Mike Hawes, Chief Executive at Society of Motor Manufacturers.

With the transition toward electric vehicles, there are challenges in meeting government and industry targets for the phase out dates for non-zero emission vehicles, as well as obstacles and barriers to meeting the UK's 2030 and 2035 targets. With an emphasis on passenger cars, there was an examination into how governments can explore measures to make the transition easier and more accessible for consumers in the adoption, and for businesses in meeting market demand.

However, a lack of certainty across multiple facets of the transition was a key focus of the Inquiry.

Certainty for industry is required in meeting the phase-out targets of internal combustion engine vehicles. Industry representatives sought legislated phase out targets to provide industry with certainty in order to ensure future investments and commercialisation would align with market and consumer demand. Furthermore, in relation to the take-up by consumers of electric vehicles, which are considered expensive to buy, governments not only need to consider introducing incentives to buy new vehicles, but how to develop the used car market and considerations in relation to after-market servicing and replacement batteries.

There is uncertainty in relation to charging infrastructure. The UK has just phased out the 'plug-in car grant', an incentive for consumers to install private charging stations at their homes. Furthermore, in the inner-city where the majority of households have on-street parking, there is uncertainty about an increased demand for electric vehicle charging and how more vehicles will actually be able to be charged. This is equally a challenge for Victoria to consider especially for inner-city Melbourne, in places like Brunswick, Carlton, Richmond, Hawthorn, Box Hill, and others, where the only option for many residents is on-street parking.

A further important insight, and source of uncertainty, from the Inquiry is that Electric Vehicles are substantially heavier than current internal combustion engine vehicles. This insight is also important for Victoria to consider, given the current condition of the state road network. Many Victorian roads are degrading and riddled with potholes including many major transport arterials, and the Victorian government's road maintenance funding has drastically reduced over recent years and has not kept pace with the safety upgrades required to accommodate a heavier passenger vehicle footprint.

Victoria has introduced purchase rebates, as well as an electric vehicle user tax which is subject to a High Court challenge. Victoria will need plans as to how it will keep pace with an increasing demand for charging infrastructure in inner-city, suburbia and regional Victoria, and as to how it will upgrade the state road network to support a heavier vehicle fleet. Additionally, Victoria can learn from the Inquiry as to what legislation may be required to support a transition to more electric vehicles.

UK Parliament – Prime Minister’s Question Time

At the invitation of the Speaker, the Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, I attended the Prime Minister’s Question Time in the Speaker’s Private Gallery. This provided an insight into parliamentary procedure and the running of Question Time in the UK Parliament as compared to that of the Victorian Parliament.

Furthermore, and interestingly, this Prime Minister’s Question Time coincided with significant media reporting on the day prior concerning revelations that nearly 150 school buildings in the UK are facing closure because of safety risks as a result of being built with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), that was now degrading, delaying the start of the school year for tens of thousands of British students. Unsurprisingly the Opposition Leader’s questioning of the Prime Minister focussed on this major issue.

For Victoria, there has been some inroads in to removing asbestos from schools and other public buildings, however lessons can be learned in relation to maintenance programs and refurbishment of existing school infrastructure and the government could consider developing a mitigation and recovery plan for similar risks.

Policy Exchange – Skills and Training

I met with Policy Exchange in London and received a briefing from Iain Mansfield, Director of Research and Head of Education and Science. Policy Exchange is an independent public policy organisation. The briefing included localist solutions for high-quality and industry-desired skills, micro-credentialing, upskilling, and how to best enable collaboration across education, industry, and government sectors, which can be utilised in policy initiatives for Victoria given the significant skills challenges being faced by our state and the desire to promote and strengthen TAFE.

Key topics of discussion included Britain’s apprenticeship levy which, as a policy solution, has cross-party acknowledgement that it is not delivering the high-quality apprenticeships that the country needs, with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and SMEs being hit the hardest. Transforming the program will better support training of high-quality skills including shorter and more flexible courses that the economy demands, and that SMEs need to be enabled and supported in their role in the apprenticeship system.

The briefing included information about successful government policies, including a review of technical skills qualifications with industry standards, digitisation of qualifications, ‘T-levels’ for 16- to 18-year-olds in computer sciences enabling government subsidised work placements, and short courses for young people in construction, heavy vehicle, digital, and other key areas, as well as degree apprenticeships.

Science Museum – Injecting Hope: The race for a COVID-19 Vaccine

I attended the Science Museum for the Injecting Hope: The race for a COVID-19 Vaccine exhibition. An important showcase of the incredible response to a global crisis which had scientists and

innovators collaborating around the world, including from Australia, to tackle the pandemic resulting in vaccines being produced against a new disease in record time, less than one year, to save lives.

The pandemic created a catalyst to the way governments, the research sector and industry responds, with Victoria investing in local mRNA research and production capability. The lessons learned from the pandemic continue to shape policy initiatives and investment decisions.

Accommodation was at the Travelodge London Central Southwark, 202-206 Union Street Southwark in London, costing AUD\$1098.68.

Paris

Global Victoria Paris Trade Office

The Victorian Government has established a Trade Office in Paris to enable greater opportunities for Victorian business, including those in the Evelyn District, to export to Europe, connect with international investors, and engage with businesses in Europe for inputs vital to growth and jobs.

I attended Global Victoria's Paris Office to meet with and receive a briefing from Gönül Serbest, Commissioner for Victoria to Europe, and Leonore Marteville, Strategic Advisor for Europe, Global Victoria. Additionally, Gönül Serbest introduced me to four other staff recruited to the office to pursue trade and investment opportunities across the broad portfolio of Europe and the Middle East.

The European Union is one of the world's economic superpowers comprising one-sixth of the global economy and is a key trade partner of Victoria. Ensuring Victoria maintains and grows its relationship with Europe has become increasingly important – not only post Brexit but also as Australia pursues a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. Having a presence in Paris, France, the biggest economy of European Union countries, is of significance and should be supported.

Two-way trade between Victoria and the European Union was valued at \$17.3 billion in 2021/22 and the Paris Trade Office has enhanced the work of raising the profile of Victorian businesses, particularly in target sectors such as life sciences, technology including EdTech, SportsTech and FinTech, renewable energy and defence.

Importantly, a key focus for the Paris Office is opportunities for investment back into Victoria to help grow our state's economy and create more local jobs. Between 2018-2022 there is around \$10.5 billion invested by European businesses into Victoria in key areas of focus for our economy such as renewable energy, infrastructure, transport, defence, life sciences, and technology. Examples of European businesses investing in Victoria with headquarters and/or operations include Alstom France, Segula Technologies France, WAM Italy, BayWa Germany, Telix Belgium, Transdev France, and BioNTech Germany.

Identifying and fostering these investment opportunities creates economic activity and jobs in Victoria. These opportunities also help Victorian businesses to establish a foothold in Europe, such as Ultra Violette and Ego Pharmaceuticals, Victorian skincare businesses exporting to multiple European Union countries.

The prospect of a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union was discussed. A key challenge and opportunity is in relation to Victoria's agriculture sector. Much has been reported in relation to wine producers from Victoria, including the Yarra Valley, to continue to be able to use the term Prosecco, and the importance of this has been conveyed to federal counterparts involved in the

negotiation. Also for consideration are concessions in relation to beef exports, and opportunities for the export of high-end premium wine and distilled spirits.

Furthermore, a potential Free Trade Agreement with the Europe Union will also have implications for Skills and Training for Victoria, including recognition of qualifications, and the level of and attraction of skilled migrants, important considerations as we combat the skills shortage facing our state.

Additionally, European made machinery and equipment has been vitally important for growth and innovation in Victoria's agricultural sector. For example, Cherryhill, one of Australia's largest cherry producers with farms in Wandin and Coldstream in the Evelyn District, has an ongoing partnership with Unitech Industries Italy, installing a sophisticated optical machine developed and manufactured in Italy at the Coldstream facility that photographs and assesses individual fruit, then grades and packs the fruit accordingly. This Victorian farming business retains close connection with the Italian technicians involved in the installation to ensure ongoing optimisation of the machinery.

There was discussion with Global Victoria in relation to potential opportunities for Victorian businesses to secure work for the Paris Olympics and Milan Winter Olympics, and it was reinforced that Melbourne has sister city relationships with Milan in Italy, and Thessaloniki in Greece due to extensive trade and cultural ties with these cities supported by the Victorian government.

Business France

I met with Business France in Paris and received a briefing from Philippe Yvergniaux, Director for International Cooperation, and Jean-François Ambrosio, South East Asia and Oceania Coordinator within Business France HQ. Business France supports the international development of the French economy by fostering export growth of SMEs, engaging with prospective commercial partners in target markets, promoting France's businesses, promoting France as an attractive investment location, and running the VIE International Internship Program which enables businesses to give young people a unique skills development opportunity with a temporary assignment in a foreign country. It collaborates closely with the French Chamber of Commerce.

The briefing included information about France's approach to trade and investment and insights were gained that can benefit Victoria in this regard. Interestingly, since Brexit, France is increasingly looking at opportunities in Australia and Victoria, where it had not previously been an 'obvious' market. Distance has been a factor, but with the rapid evolution in innovation and tech many barriers are breaking down.

Business France maintains a strong working relationship with Global Victoria. In the briefing, it was outlined how appreciated the setup of the Global Victoria Office in Paris had been, demonstrating Victoria's interest in, and valuing of, the relationship with Paris, France, and all of Europe. The setup post-Brexit was noted as strategic and important and France values the further development of this relationship. As relationships deepen, this will be of enhanced benefit to the state of Victoria. Additionally, Business France continues its close working relationship with the Australian Trade Promotion Office and assists in the screening of companies that want to export. Business France has a presence in 55 countries around the world, 12 of these are in Asia Pacific as there is strategic interest for France to develop this further in the Asia Pacific region.

Opportunities of mutual benefit for Victoria and France were discussed including in wine (importantly Business France was aware of the high-quality products out of Yarra Valley in the Evelyn District), agriculture including farm machinery and consumables (such as wine barrels), infrastructure aircraft, space, and sports (including sports tech), health, education, and FinTech.

In terms of innovation, entrepreneurship and supporting start-ups, the briefing outlined the strong commitment from the French President, Emmanuel Macron, to French tech and start-ups, with there being around 25 unicorns, and a focus on both B2B and B2C.

The briefing also provided insights into France's VIE International Internship Program for young graduates, which is a program that could be considered for Victoria to help young people gain valuable career experience and personal development. This initiative is supported by the French government and has supported 10,000 young French nationals since 2002, with around 360 of these young people gaining their experience in a French business located in Australia.

Expertise France

I met with Expertise France in Paris and received a briefing from Prune Bokobza, International Expert in Hydrogen & Renewable Energy, and Omar Coulibaly and Inès Schmitt both from Expertise France's Cooperation and Sustainability Department. Expertise France is the French international technical cooperation agency, a public institution under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for the Economy, and the Ministry of Finance.

Expertise France has a close working relationship with Invest Victoria. Expertise France identifies experts that are supported by the French government for a variety of strategic opportunities and partnerships across the world in areas including climate, biodiversity, sustainability, health and human development. For example, Prune Bokobza who is currently stationed in Melbourne but was in Paris for this meeting and briefing, is currently doing work with Invest Victoria supported by the Victorian government.

It is important to understand the benefit for Victoria that these engagements and appointments bring, particularly where there is Victorian funding allocated to the activity. In this instance, to support Victoria's ambitious targets in renewable energy, there is much that can be learned from the French and European experience and expertise. This can include investment in Victoria, economic development, technical consultancy and capacity building for Victoria, as well as supporting ongoing networking and international dialogue. There are benefits for both Victoria and France given shared values and common goals, such as the target of net zero emissions, uptake of low emissions technologies including offshore wind and working towards green hydrogen.

The prevalence of trilateral agreements in areas of mutual benefit were discussed. For example, Australia-Japan-France interest in offshore wind, or Australia-Chile-France in terms of regulatory network for hydrogen and use of natural resources.

There is significant opportunity both in terms of industry and skills development for Victoria in renewables, and there is significant insights we can gain from French (and European) expertise.

The Victorian Hydrogen Hub, led by Swinburne University of Technology in partnership with CSIRO and Germany's ARENA2036 factory, was discussed, building on international connections and

bringing together researchers, industry partners and business to drive the implementation of the hydrogen economy, having received funding from the Victorian Government.

In the briefing, Expertise France outlined how hydrogen is a rapidly emerging clean fuel and industrial material however it is important to understand the key differences between brown hydrogen and green hydrogen.

There is an extremely long timeline to transition to green hydrogen, and the Victorian government must consider how to attract further investment and ensure it remains transparent with the electorate in relation to time and cost. The French government's 'France Hydrogène' strategy is set to invest \$9 billion over 10 years, 2020-2030, which includes developing hydrogen from nuclear, a 50:50 mix of nuclear and hydrogen, and new investment toward renewables including wind and biomass.

France is almost exclusively pursuing green hydrogen. Whereas the challenge for Australia and Victoria is the import and use of hydrogen from Japan which is brown hydrogen.

A key strategic imperative for France regarding the use of both nuclear and hydrogen is to ensure its industry and manufacturing remains well supported, and especially heavy mobility transport. In the briefing, it was noted that Alstom, a French company, has developed the first hydrogen train in the world. Airbus, a French company, is currently pursuing the first hydrogen air travel. Transdev, a French company, has developed a hydrogen bus. Enhancing the connection with Expertise France and gaining insights from their experience and wealth of knowledge is of benefit to Victoria as the state pursues its energy transition, continues to invest in technologies, and identifies the skills and workforce needed to support industry into the future.

Station F – Innovation Hub

I attended the Europe SaaS conference at Station F, the world's largest start-up incubator, with presentations from Microsoft France on Artificial Intelligence paths for B2B success and Government Business Executive Forum on innovation technologies and regulation. For Victoria and Australia, the increasing prevalence of AI is an opportunity and a challenge, and government has a role in enabling industry but also responding with a regulatory framework to manage risk. Furthermore, Station F has been accepted by the French government despite it being a privately funded start-up incubator.

Accommodation was at the Airbnb apartment, 83 Rue Saint Dominique in Paris, costing AUD\$2249.51.

Rome and Florence

European Parliament

In Rome I toured the European Parliament's Rome office and gained information and greater insights into how the European Union works, and how the European Parliament make decisions that impact the citizens of its member states. It is important for Victoria to deepen its ties with Europe given the pursuit of a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union and increasing trade and investment opportunities to benefit the state of Victoria. The multimedia display and immersive installations provided a comprehensive experience and significant insights into the influence of the European Parliament's decisions on everyday Europeans, innovations, and aspirations of its member states, information that can be considered by Victoria in the way it engages with EU countries.

Sapienza University of Rome

Sapienza is the oldest university in Rome and the largest in Europe, and is noted internationally for education, research, and international focus. Sapienza University of Rome was this year's host location for the International Association for Mathematics and Computers in Simulation conference opened by Carlo Massimo Casciola, Dean of the Civil and Industrial Engineering Faculty of the University 'La Sapienza, Emilio Fortunato Campana, Director of the Department of Engineering, ICT and Energy and Transport Technologies of the National Research Council, and Roberto Natalini, Director of the Institute for the Applications of Computing. I engaged with conference chair Rosa Maria Spitalteri attending as an observer to the plenary session with members of the science and technology sector. Simulation technology can be used to tackle some of the world's contemporary challenges and presents opportunities for collaboration and developments by Victoria's own research and innovation sectors.

Unioncamere

Unioncamere is the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture, a public body that represents the Italian chamber system and I visited the office in Rome. Unioncamere facilitates programs and manages services of interest to the Chambers of Commerce in the system, working with national or local public bodies, and promotes and supports connection of the chamber system with businesses, workers, and consumers.

At the European Union level, Unioncamere represents the Italian Chambers of Commerce to Eurochambres, the association that brings together the European business community.

Of the many programs and initiatives, one key area of interest that Victoria can consider the insights of is their support of Italian businesses with 'Digitisation and Business 4.0'. The Italian Ministry of Economic Development has activated a National Business Plan 4.0 which includes a set of measures aimed at supporting companies that want to acquire competitiveness through digitisation of their production processes, support and training for existing Italian workers to upskill and increase productivity, and the training of adequate skills for the development of new products and processes.

The government's plan acknowledges the important role the Chamber of Commerce play supporting the process of digitisation for Italian businesses, and how vital they are to the modernisation of Italy's business community and workforce through the implementation of projects and providing services.

Initiatives include support for businesses to measure their level of digital maturity, understanding economic opportunities for digitising their business, and a certification process.

Victoria has a vibrant Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), as well numerous suburban and regional chambers of commerce or business groups, yet further insights can be gained on how other countries ensure collaboration across government and industry sectors in order to support continuous improvement of local businesses to increase productivity, to expand, or to access new markets, and to help strengthen industry-led skills and training opportunities for their workforces as they embark on digitisation.

Accommodation was at the Numa Verso, Via Ippolito Nievo 12 in Rome, costing AUD\$1760.90.

Firenze Innovation Hub

The Firenze (Florence) Innovation Hub has developed a digital culture and supports initiatives from training to business acceleration. Marta Basani, community engagement manager, provides the tour of Firenze Innovation Hub which is an extremely interactive and multifunctional space devoted to innovation. The Firenze Innovation Hub includes a coding school, a studio dedicated to supporting entrepreneurs and startups, provides a co-working space, and offers acceleration programs for digital ventures. Florence is the birthplace of the Renaissance and has been a centre of creativity and innovation since the Middle Ages and has continued to lead and influence in this space. For hundreds of years Florence has used collaborative workspaces where innovations come to fruition, and long-term partnerships are created. For the state of Victoria, there could be further exploration of how similar innovation hubs can be deployed, including to regional centres.

Government, non-profit or private enterprise can pursue the revitalisation of existing spaces into such innovation hubs as it was for this initiative in Florence. As part of an urban regeneration project, the Fondazione CR Firenze, a non-profit organisation, funded and delivered the transformation of the Granary of Abundance, a building that stored grain for the city in times of famine, into today's innovation centre. The Firenze Innovation Hub now is a driving force for innovation and economic development, catalysing resources and skilled people.

Firenze Innovation Hub's coding school is the latest part of the centre to open. This provides many insights for Victoria in terms of innovation hubs and locations that enable young adults and children opportunities to develop their skills for the jobs of today and the future.

Leonardo Interactive Museum

I attended the Leonardo Interactive Museum in Florence, an exhibition dedicated to the genius of Leonardo Da Vinci. An exceptional interactive and immersive experience to discover the functioning and purpose of the many and varied innovations and machines designed by the Italian master. The exhibition offers an incredible experience for all ages with hands-on opportunities to recreate many innovations of Da Vinci that are used so frequently in everyday life today – from agriculture to infrastructure to warfare and defence. For young people today interested in coding, the exhibition provides unique context by displaying Da Vinci's codes in his own handwriting.

There are opportunities to develop such interactive and immersive experiences here in Victoria in order to increase awareness and interest of children in discovery, innovation, and technology.

Accommodation was at the Airbnb apartment, Via Cosseria 12 in Florence, costing AUD\$1354.14.

Bridget Vallence MP

Member for Evelyn, Parliament of Victoria

Shadow Minister for Industry & Innovation

Shadow Minister for Manufacturing

Shadow Minister for Employment & Industrial Relations

Shadow Minister for Skills & Training