

<b>Member</b>	Bronwyn Halfpenny	<b>Electorate</b>	Thomastown
<b>Period</b>	1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026		

<b>Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance</b>	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$10,973.70
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$872.34

<b>Regulation 7 - Motor vehicle allowance</b>	
Total amount paid to member for motor vehicle allowance	\$5,522.94
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

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

<b>Regulation 10 - Travel allowance claims</b>					
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		

<b>Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims</b>					
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		

<b>Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims</b>			
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

# International Travel Report Template

Abuja, Nigeria and Accra, Ghana

Individual Trip to increase cultural awareness and facilitate increased connections between countries and Victoria in areas of academia, science, health business education and trade

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September -Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Business was of an electorate and parliamentary nature but also exploring trade and business connections to advocate for as a member of the Victorian Government

Bronwyn Halfpenny  
Member of Victorian Parliament  
Legislative Assembly  
Thomastown District



Gain a greater understanding of people living on the continent of Africa and explore how Victoria can develop better connections and relationships for the purpose of cultural exchange, research, trade and investment. Whilst understanding there is great diversity across the region I decided to start with West Africa and the countries of Nigeria and Ghana. Nigeria was identified because it is the largest economy that is developing quickly with large investments in transport infrastructure housing and programs to extend electrification. Both Ghana and Nigeria are members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and their Parliamentary Democracy based on the Westminster system. The population of Victorians of African background is growing and it is important to understand the culture and respect the places of people's ancestry. Not unlike the work the State Government is and has done to build greater ties with countries such as India and China.

*Dates and locations on which business was conducted (travel diary)*

As attached

*The town, city or suburb in which the accommodation was located; and the value of the accommodation (if claiming the cost of accommodation)*

La Villa Boutique Hotel Ghana 13<sup>th</sup> Lne. Accra Ghana  
The accommodation in Accra Ghana was \$1830.37 for the 4 nights specified and the security transport from the International airport Abuja Nigeria to my accommodation in Maitama District was \$1151.85.

*The mode and value of commercial transport (if claiming the cost of commercial transport)*

Car, driver and security from Abuja International Airport to accommodation in Abuja due to the security situation as general advice by United Nations, Australian High Commission etc.

Car and driver during entire stay in Abuja, Nigeria. I was advised I should not travel on public transport, Uber and Taxi services for safety considerations.

Car and driver for entire stay in Accra, Ghana

*Member's objectives*

As per Report attached

*Parliaments and other organisations visited (if any)*

Parliament of Nigeria in Abuja Nigeria

Parliament of Ghana in Accra Ghana

All organisations and Government agencies included in attached Report

*Persons met in relation to the reason for the travel and the assistance or information obtained from such persons*

As per the attached Report

*Reference to documents or publications obtained or considered to be of interest in a Parliamentary sense*

*Summaries of the study areas pursued in the countries visited*  
As per attached Report

*Summary of the results achieved and any recommendations arising*  
As per the attached Report

## PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR ABUJA, NIGERIA

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity / Engagement</b>	<b>Venue / Location</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
<b>Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> Sept</b>	11:00 AM	Visit to the Discovery Museum	Wuse 2, Abuja Federal Capital Territory	Accompanied by Ms. Mercy Clements and guide
	1:00 PM	Meeting with Marcus Okra, CEO Okra, a Solar Smart meter micro grid system. Australian owned and operated innovative startup company.	9 Bobo Street, Maitama	Marcus Okra and staff
	6.00PM	Meeting members of the Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria. Representatives in attendance were in senior roles within Government and health.	Cilantro Restaurant	Dr. Bridget Nwagbara: President Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria and General Practitioner Mr. Aibi Jatua Ms. Kate Uwangu
<b>Thursday, 18 Sept</b>	10:00 AM	Meeting Ms. Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi Mandate Secretary Women's Affairs and Federal Capital Territory Administration. Discussed the Nigerian Government "Renewed Hope" Agenda	6 Peace Drive, Abuja Property Development Company (APDC) Building, Area 11	Meeting with Dr. Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi, Mandate Secretary of FCTA on Renewed Hope Agenda and women's affairs
	12.00PM	Followed by attendance and speaking role at the Emerge Women Development Initiative "She the People "Building a strong case for the Reserved Seat Bill introduced to parliament to increase womens representation.	ECWD Centre, Garki 2 Abuja	Mary Ikoku Convenor, She the People Rt Hon. Deputy Speaker House of representatives Benjamin Okezie Kalu Several panelists and audience
	1:30 PM	Meeting with Ms. Aisha Rimi, CEO – Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC)	Plot 1181, Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama District	Ms. Aisha Rimi

	3:00 PM	General tour Abuja		Mercy Clements
<b>Friday, 19 Sept</b>	10.00AM	Meeting with Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted by Director	Musa Abuja, Federal Capital Territory	Director General Mr. Agabaidu Chukwuemeka Jideani
	12.00PM	Attended Official “Flag Off” or sod turn for the construction of the Northern Parkway		Federal Capital Territory Minister Nyesom Wike, Representatives of the construction company Julius Berger, Principal Engineer Mr. Chenge Robert Amen.
	2:30PM	Meeting with Mr. Udo, NAPFG Clerk – Parliamentary Group of Friends, Nigeria and MP Hon. Aminu Jamo Daura Vice Chair Nigerian Parliamentary Friends of Australia	Parliament House	
	4.30PM	Meeting with Ms. Weyinmi Eribo, former DG Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mines and Agriculture (WCCIMA) and Entrepreneur  Tour of Foreign Ministry and Art Gallery	Ministry Foreign Affairs	Mercy Clements  Aisha Atrium Gallery
<b>Saturday, 20 Sept</b>	10.00AM	Visit to the site of the Renewed Hope City Project	Kasana West District, Abuja	Chief Engineer
	6.00PM	Meeting High Commissioner representatives	High Commissioners Residence	

<b>Sunday, 21 Sept</b>	10.00AM	Visit Arts and Craft Market		—
	5:00 PM	Departure to Airport	Abuja	—
	8.45PM	Flight Abuja to Accra	—	—

### PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR ACCRA, GHANA

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity / Engagement</b>	<b>Venue / Location</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
<b>Sunday, 21 Sept</b>	9.30PM	Arrive in Accra, Ghana	-	-
	5.00PM	Check in La Villa Ghana Boutique Hotel	E960 13th Ln, Accra, Ghana	-
<b>Monday, 22 Sept</b>		Meeting with host, Mr Issac Quist Public holiday  Visit to Mausoleum and Park of the Founding President, Dr. Kwame Nikrumah.  Traditional Ghana meal		Mr. Issac Quist
<b>Tuesday, 23 Sept</b>	8.30 AM	Meeting Dr. Hawaawu Hussein, Epidemiologist and researcher	Tamale Technical University of Ghana	Dr. Hawaawu Hussein
	10.00AM	Visiting Yemaachi Biotech in Abelemkpe, Accra	1 Round House Rd, Accra, Ghana.	Chelsea Akoto Executive Assistant +233(0)261603534  Aida Manu and Dr. Joyce Ngoi +233 50 252 8528
	4:00PM	Girls Industrial School Correctional facility	Osu, Accra Ghana	
	5:00PM	Accra Shelter for abused children		

<b>Wednesday, 24 Sept</b>	11.00AM	Parliament of Ghana tour and meetings	Parliament of Ghana	Deputy Clerk Mr. Camillo Pwamang
	2:00PM	Attended West Africa Agri Show		
	3.00PM	West Africa Centre for Crop Management, College of Basic and Applied Sciences, University of Ghana	PMB LG 30Legon, Ghana/ JRX8+M89, Noguchie Link, Accra	Professor Eric Danquah
<b>Thursday, 25 Sept</b>	10.00AM	Australian High Commission of Ghana  Trade Commissioner Jemima Schilling AusTrade	Australian High Commission of Ghana	Dep High Commissioner Penny Dennis
	1.00PM	Check out La Villa Boutique Hotel	E960 13th Ln, Accra, Ghana	-
	6.00PM	Flight Accra to Dubai	-	-
<b>Friday, 26 Sept</b>	10.05AM	Flight Dubai to Melbourne	-	-



Report of visit to the  
Federal Republic of  
Nigeria September  
17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>th</sup> 2025

Report by Bronwyn  
Halfpenny MP for  
Thomastown

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## Executive Summary

The visit to the Federal Republic of Nigeria aimed to lay the ground work for strengthened relationships between Nigeria and Australia — The emphasis was on partnership between Nigeria and the State of Victoria. The mission focused on building partnerships in governance, education, investment, renewable energy, women's support, and culture.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and largest economy, offers significant opportunities for collaboration in agribusiness, energy, mining, technology, and education. Its vibrant society and growing middle class make it an important partner for Australia and Victoria's global engagement.

Key meetings included discussions with members of the Nigeria–Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group (NAPFG), the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), Solar Smart Microgrid Systems, the Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria, and women leaders advancing economic and political inclusion.

The visit achieved the following outcomes:

- **Parliamentary and Institutional Links:** Strengthened commitment to ongoing collaboration through the NAPFG, with proposals for exchange programs and plan dialogue.
- **Investment and Economic Cooperation:** Identified key areas for Victorian engagement, particularly in agribusiness, renewable energy, education, and technology.
- **Women's Empowerment:** Supported projects promoting women's involvement in business and politics, including mentorship and leadership programs.
- **Urban Development and Infrastructure:** Explored partnership between Infrastructure Victoria and the FCTA under Nigeria's Renewed Hope Agenda.
- **Renewable Energy Partnerships:** Showcased Australian new ideas through Solar Smart's microgrid technology supporting Nigeria's rural electrification goals.
- **Educational Collaboration:** Promoted partnership on curriculum reform, teacher training, and mining governance with Nigerian and Victorian institutions.
- **Cultural and Diaspora Engagement:** Highlighted the Australian Nigerian community's contributions to Victoria and important bridge they can provide between the Nigeria and Victoria.
- The value of arts and museum collaboration.

Strategic Recommendations:

A significant barrier to deepening connections between Nigeria and Victoria economically and culturally is the lack of knowledge we have of the African continent. Therefore, recommendations include.

1. Consider establishing a Victoria–Nigeria Cooperation Framework to coordinate trade, investment, and education partnerships.
2. Develop joint programs promoting women’s business creation and leadership.
3. Encourage investment missions and knowledge exchanges.
4. Strengthen links between Victorian government agencies, the Nigerian Parliament, and key federal ministries.
5. Make better use of existing links with the diaspora and former students that have returned to Nigeria.

The mission confirmed Nigeria’s importance as a partner for Victoria and Australia in Africa, creating a strong foundation for future collaboration across government, business, education, and culture. Nigeria is one of the fastest growing economies and

# 1. Country Summary: Federal Republic of Nigeria

## A. Demographic Profile

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (Nigeria) is in West Africa and is the most populous country in the continent. Nigeria's population is about 223.8 million people. Within its population there are over 250 different ethnic groups. Prominent among them are the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo and Ijaw groups.

The Hausa-Fulani reside in the north of Nigeria and are the largest ethnic group in the country. They are predominantly Muslim and hold major influence in politics and are known for farming and trading. The Yoruba reside in the west of Nigeria and are predominantly Christian and Muslim (smaller percentage of people within the group). They have historically lived in urban areas and are known for their rich art, religious beliefs and history and governance traditions. The Igbo reside in the east of Nigeria and are predominantly Christian. They are renowned for their Pan-African influence, business creation and decentralized societies.

Nigeria's official language is English. There are also over 500 indigenous languages, with Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo being the most widely spoken. 54% of the population live in urban areas, concentrated in its major cities such as Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Abuja and Port Harcourt.

Nigeria is home to many highly educated and talented people but many migrate for better opportunity outside the country. Victorian companies could take advantage of a highly education and sophisticated workforce through investing in the country however this is not often considered because of the lack of knowledge or assumptions made about the country.

## B. Economic Profile

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy with GDP of 187.76 billion (USD) and an annual GDP growth rate of 3.4% (World Bank 2024). Its key industries are petroleum, services, agriculture and the growing information technology industry. petroleum is the backbone of the Nigerian economy making up 90% of its exports and half of government income. Agriculture employs

35% of the population. Its major crops are maize, sorghum, millet, rice, cocoa, casava and yams, the latter two being the country's leading agricultural export.

The country also has an underdeveloped manufacturing sector. Exports include cement, food processing, textiles and beverages. Lagos has become a hub for the developing information technology industry. Important sectors include telecommunications, fintech, and entertainment. Across industries Nigeria faces numerous challenges such as poor public works and vulnerability to global oil gas prices, high unemployment and high inflation.

### c. Political Profile

Nigeria achieved its independence on October 1st, 1960. Between 1960 and 1966, the country was governed by a parliamentary republic. Between 1966 and 1999, Nigeria experienced multiple military coups and political instability. Between 1967 and 1970, the civil war known as the Biofran War erupted after the Igbo attempted to secede from Nigeria. Since the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 Nigeria has had relative political stability however the civil war in particular continues to influence political thinking.

The current Nigerian Government is a federal presidential republic with 36 (plus one territory) administrative divisions. The head of state, head of government and commander in chief of the armed forces is the current president Bola Ahmed Adkunle Tinubu of the All-Progressives Congress party (APC) since May 29th, 2023. The president has a cabinet called the Federal Executive Council which by law requires representation of every administrative division.

The legislative branch of government is a bicameral chamber called the National Assembly. The house of representatives (lower house) has 360 seats. The biggest political parties elected to the National Assembly are the All-Progressives Congress Party (APC) with 180 seats, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) with 116 seats, Labour Party (LP) with 35 seats, New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP) with 19 seats and 10 other seats distributed among smaller parties.

The Senate (upper house) has 109 seats. In decreasing order of seat numbers, the parties in the senate are the APC with 59 seats, PDP with 36 seats, LP with 8 seats and 6 seats distributed among smaller parties. From what I observed the wife of the President also play a very active and meaningful role in Government supporting and driving initiatives for wealth creation and empowering women and children.

There is political nstability for example a 'State of Emergency" exists in the Rivers State and there is considerable regional disparity between the North and South of the country. In spite of this many Australian and Victorian companies operate successfully in Nigeria and do not suffer disadvantage as a result of the political situation.

Internationally Nigeria is an active member of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC and United Nations (UN). It is also a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

## 2. Nigeria- Australia Relationship

### A. Diplomatic Relationship

Both Nigeria and Australia are part of the commonwealth and share similarities in territorial organisation (both federal countries) and multicultural populations within their respective territories. Despite these similarities, high level diplomatic visits are infrequent.

The potential for deeper diplomatic, political and cultural engagement is an opportunity that Australia should seize. Cooperation between two federal countries could lead not only to country-to-country diplomacy but also state level collaboration and partnership. In multicultural matters, both countries could develop and exchange policies promoting diversity between both nations.

### B. Economic Relationship

The economic relationship between Australia and Nigeria revolves around trade and investment at a relatively low trade volume. Nigeria's main export to Australia is petroleum, semi-finished metals and fertilizer. It imports from Australia agricultural products, mineral fuels, wheat, manufactured goods, specialized machinery and alcoholic beverages. Investment is driven primarily by Australia. Mining and fintech sectors. Most of the investments goes towards the mining and resources sector with a special interest in exploration and services. Australian firms have also begun investing in Nigeria's growing fintech sector.

Australia has growing Nigerian diaspora numbering about 50,000 people. The community itself is also highly educated and contributes greatly to various sectors of the Australian economy including but not limited to health care, academia and engineering. Nigerian students study in large numbers in Australian universities. From observation they are often well connected and respected in Nigeria with high level political and business contacts. Victoria should be working with diaspora members to strengthen relationships for the mutual benefit of Victoria and Nigeria.

The African continent has enormous potential for trade, investment and meaningful connections. Victorians with Nigerian heritage and strong connection could assist however this potential is not prioritised and opportunities missed.

### c. Educational relationship

Universities in Melbourne are home to international students from Nigeria and I also met with a number of former students who studied in Australia through the Australia Awards program. Many return to Nigeria and secure very senior positions in government departments, business and health. However there is no evidence that Australia/Victoria leverage from such relationships or continue such relationships to explore opportunities of mutual benefit.

International students are seen as the business but fostering and developing those relationships could provide so much more.

This study trip centred on Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. Similar to Canberra, Australia; Abuja is a city that was developed to be the capital of Nigeria. Abuja is considered the city of politics, government and administration whereas cities that are much larger and older such as Lagos are considered the cities of business and trade,

## 3. Meeting in Parliament House with MP Hon. Aminu Jamo Daura, Vice Chair of Parliamentary Friendship Group (NAPFG) and Clerk of NAPFG Mr. Udo Ogbu Umekwe

### A. Meeting Overview

The meeting focused on fostering parliamentary collaboration, strengthening ties between Nigeria and Victoria, and pursuing shared interests in investment, education, and cultural exchange. NAPFG's goals were outlined in regards to promoting closer ties and plan dialogue between Nigeria and Australia. Recent accomplishments include exchange programs, roundtables, and plan briefings.

## B. Strengthening the Nigeria-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group (NAPFG)

The discussion focused on strengthening the Nigeria-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group's (NAPFG) role in fostering deeper ties between both nations. Key activities noted included exchange programs, plan roundtables, and collaborative briefings that have advanced shared understanding and engagement. The meeting reaffirmed the NAPFG's goals of promoting sustained parliamentary dialogue, bilateral partnership, and shared growth through targeted projects in governance, education, and trade.

## C. Bilateral Collaboration

Bilateral collaboration opportunities were found in several key areas. Education was emphasized as a pathway for student and faculty exchanges, joint research, and the establishment of scholarship programs. Investment discussions centered on mobilizing parliamentary and business networks to support engagement in agribusiness, technology, and public works. Cultural exchange was also underscored as a vital tool for fostering shared respect and multicultural understanding through arts, festivals, and heritage events. The Clerk's role was recognized as essential in sustaining plan dialogue, supporting research projects, and coordinating knowledge-sharing on governance, youth engagement, and gender equality.

## D. Multilateral Coordination

In terms of multilateral coordination, participants proposed expanding NAPFG partnerships beyond the federal level to include other Australian states, particularly Victoria, known for its strengths in multiculturalism and new ideas. Recommendations included forming a formal working group to develop a roadmap for multisectoral engagement, organizing webinars on legislative leadership, and facilitating reciprocal delegation visits to enhance cultural and educational collaboration. These steps were seen as vital to transforming dialogue into tangible outcomes.

## E. Supplementary Discussions

Supplementary discussions acknowledged the importance of sports diplomacy and diaspora engagement. Commendations were given to the Nigerian Women's Football Team for their achievements. Furthermore, the Nigerian diaspora in Victoria was found as a critical

bridge for bilateral relations—through cultural events, academic collaboration, business creation, and advocacy. Their role in promoting Nigerian culture, fostering academic partnerships, and supporting business new ideas provides a powerful means of strengthening ties between Nigeria and Australia.

## F. Recommendations

- Report to be shared with State, Territories and Federal Parliaments for their consideration.

## 4. Arios Meeting — “She the People” Building a Case for the Reserved Seat Bill

### A. Meeting Overview

The Arios Meeting brought together stakeholders committed to advancing women’s representation in parliament. This event was one of the ‘Women’s Dialogue Series’ The central focus was the Reserved Seat Bill, which proposes designated seats for women to bolster their presence and influence in Legislative bodies.

### B. Current State of Women’s Representation

Participants noted the underrepresentation of women in both national and regional parliaments. Data and personal testimonies were shared, illustrating barriers to women’s political involvement, including social norms, limited networks, and resource constraints.

### C. The Reserved Seat Bill

The bill was introduced as a proactive legislative measure to ensure a minimum quota for women in parliament. Attendees discussed its structure, potential impact, and international examples where similar quotas have successfully elevated women’s political roles.

### D. Strategic Advocacy Campaign

“She the People” outlined its multi-pronged strategy to build public and political support for the bill: Media Engagement: Launching awareness campaigns showcasing stories of women leaders; Community Outreach: Mobilising grassroots support, especially among young

women; Stakeholder Collaboration and partnering with civil society organisations, academics, and business leaders to amplify the bill’s message.

## E. Challenges and Concerns

Criticisms and possible resistance to the bill were acknowledged (e.g., the risk of women being relegated to reserved seats only, rather than contesting general seats). Suggestions were made to ensure reserved seats complement—rather than limit—women’s broader involvement. Next steps moving forward are formal submission of plan recommendations to parliament, continued consultations to refine bill provisions. Regular stakeholder meetings to monitor progress and adapt strategies.

## F. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Arios Meeting underscored unified support for the Reserved Seat Bill, positioning “She the People” as a leading advocate for women’s political support. The plan is on track to galvanise wider backing and work collaboratively with parliament to realise a more inclusive legislative landscape.

# 5. Meeting with Ms. Weyinmi Eribo, Former DG, Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Mines and Agriculture

## A. Meeting Overview

The meeting with Ms. Weyinmi Eribo, an accomplished entrepreneur and former Director-General of the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mines and Agriculture (WCCIMA), provided valuable insights into business-led women’s support. Ms. Eribo’s pragmatic approach and large experience make her a strong reference point for programs aimed at fostering women’s economic agency—particularly in multicultural communities such as those in Victoria.

## B. Entrepreneurship and Business Creation

Ms. Eribo has successfully established and managed several businesses, demonstrating expertise in opportunity identification, market strategy, operations, and scaling. Her

business journey offers real-world lessons in overcoming entry barriers for women such as access to finance, networks, and market knowledge.

### C. Mentorship and Skilling in Financial Literacy

Ms. Eribo's mentorship programs equip women with essential financial skills: budgeting, business planning, accessing credit, and investment decision-making. Rather than passive instruction, her methods build confidence and independence in financial management, setting the groundwork for long-term business sustainability.

### D. Turning Ideas into Marketable Ventures

Ms. Eribo emphasises practical support at all stages—from ideation to market entry. She connects women with professional networks, buyers, and investors, ensuring ideas translate into registered businesses with growth prospects. The focus is always on real market opportunities.

### E. Business-Driven Empowerment, Not Welfare

A key takeaway is Ms. Eribo's rejection of charity-based models. Her approach is entirely business-oriented, aimed at equipping women to be economic actors who create jobs, generate revenue, and make a sustainable impact. This philosophy resonates especially in thriving, multicultural environments that value agency and self-sufficiency.

### F. Relevance for Victoria's Multicultural Communities

Many multicultural communities in Victoria have a strong interest in establishing small businesses. However small business can be a difficult career. Ms. Eribo notes that her methods—mentorship, skill growth, and business incubation—translate well to Victoria. Adopting her business-driven support model can boost involvement and success for women seeking to build enterprises and integrate economically.

### G. Conclusions and Recommendations

Ms. Weyinmi Eribo's extensive experience in founding businesses, mentoring women, and promoting money management through a business-first lens offers a transformative template for Victoria's multicultural communities. Her evidence-driven approach fosters

genuine agency, sustainable growth, and vibrant women-led enterprises—a promising direction for future collaboration and programme growth.

### Recommendations

- Promote pilot multicultural women’s enterprise programs and Tailor incubator and mentoring projects for Victoria’s multicultural settings, informed by Ms. Eribo’s business-led approach.
- Strengthen community and business networks; collaborate with local chambers of commerce and community organisations to identify and support women ready to translate ideas into marketable businesses.
- Policy and programme design for agency. Favour policies and programs that support women as business owners and innovators, rather than as welfare recipients, aligning with Ms. Eribo’s proven strategy for lasting impact.

## 6. Meeting with Nigeria Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC)-Ms. Aisha Rimi CEO of NIPC)

### A. Meeting Overview

The meeting was convened to explore collaboration opportunities between the State of Victoria, Australia, and the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), focusing on shared investment, trade, and growth interests.

### B. Overview of NIPC’s Mandate

Ms. Rimi provided an overview of NIPC’s primary functions, emphasising their role in attracting foreign direct investment, supporting investors, and advocating regulatory improvements to make Nigeria a competitive investment destination.

### C. Sectoral Collaboration Opportunities

Priority sectors found for collaboration included agribusiness, education, technology and new ideas, and healthcare. Ms. Rimi noted Nigeria’s large and youthful population, ongoing economic reforms, and significant market potential for foreign investment.

## D. Victorian Capacity and Expertise

The Victorian MP outlined strengths and Government priority areas for industry advanced manufacturing, health technologies and medical research, circular economy, digital technologies and agribusiness. The ability for Victorian universities and businesses to foster partnerships, provide training, and facilitate technology transfer was noted.

## E. Facilitation and Support Mechanisms

Both sides discussed methods for supporting investors, including market intelligence, regulatory guidance, business matchmaking, and targeted trade missions. The possibility of establishing bilateral forums and investment roundtables was raised.

## F. Challenges and Risk Mitigation

Discussion included the need for greater market familiarity, risk review support for investors, and improving investor confidence in regulatory and security environments. Lack of knowledge leading to scepticism that may be overcome if further work done on introducing opportunities and cultivating an understanding of both countries, their processes and capabilities.

## G. Conclusions and Recommendations

The meeting reinforced strong shared interest in expanding commercial, educational, and organizational ties between Victoria and Nigeria. Both parties affirmed the value of continued engagement and practical partnership, with the NIPC offering dedicated support for Victorian partners seeking opportunities in Nigeria

### Recommendations

- Explore specific pilot projects in agribusiness, education, and digital services.
- Consider the establishment of a joint working group for ongoing dialogue and partnership growth.
- Plans for follow-up virtual meetings, webinars, and potential trade/investment delegations
- Report to be referred to Global Victoria for consideration.

## 7. Museum of Discovery, Abuja

### A. Background and Cultural Significance

—The Discovery Museum in the Art Tech District is a modern interactive museum that displays some of the modern-day history of Nigeria. It showcases Nigerian artists and musicians as well as the political history and tribal groupings. An immersive ‘slave tunnel’ reminds patrons of the injustices and horrors committed against people.

### B. Recommendations

- Report to be shared Immigration Museum for its consideration.

Note: For sections pertaining to demographic and historical information as submitted by the museum, please refer to point 1a and 1c respectively.

## 8. Meeting with Dr. Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi Secretary of Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA)

### A. Dr. Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi and the FCTA

Dr. Adedayo Benjamins-Mandate serves as Secretary of the FCTA and Renewed Hope Initiatives and Mandate Secretary Women Affairs’ has a track record in public service and advocacy. She has previously run for preselection in the Federal Parliament and initiated programs supporting “Girl Child” movement

### B. Federal Capital Territory Administration

The FCTA oversees administration and growth in Abuja, Nigeria’s federal capital. Responsible for city planning, public works delivery, housing schemes, health, education, and environmental management.

### C. Renewed Hope Reform Agenda

Following a productive meeting with the Federal Capital Territory Administration, a unified approach to public works growth under the Renewed Hope Initiative was outlined, focusing

on both road and housing projects. The FCTA emphasised their commitment to advancing the Renewed Hope Agenda by coordinating the expansion of road networks alongside the provision of affordable housing across the Federal Capital Territory. The integration aims to create sustainable communities where improved accessibility, economic opportunity, and quality living conditions go together.

Dr Benjamins-Laniyi arranged for a tour of the Renewed Hope Cities project in West Kasana District and an inspection of homes under construction. It was explained that home mortgage rates were over 20% interest but the Government was providing housing loans at 6% interest and providing the land without charge on which homes were built. Construction partners and Government negotiated the fixed price for the homes.

Major road projects such as the Abuja–Kaduna–Kano Expressway and expanded arterial roads in Abuja, are deliberately positioned to support new and ongoing housing developments, including the Renewed Hope Cities and Estates. This ensures residents have reliable access to essential services, workplaces, and markets.

#### D. Synergistic Development

Construction of feeder and link roads to new housing estates is underway, facilitating ease of movement and reducing congestion. These efforts are intended to enhance overall community welfare and open areas for future growth.

#### E. Inclusive Urbanisation

The FCTA underscored that both housing and road projects target not only urban centres but also satellite towns and rural communities, promoting balanced growth and bridging inequality.

#### F. Stakeholder Collaboration

Collaboration: Private sector involvement is supported in both sectors, with incentives for developers and contractors contributing to quality and timely delivery.

#### G. Socio-economic Impact

These integrated projects are expected to create construction and service-related jobs for local populations, stimulate trade, and improve standards of living.

## H. Commitment to Safety

Road and housing public works upgrades also contribute to improved safety and resilience against environmental challenges.

## I. Conclusions and Recommendations

Dr Benjamins-Laniyi noted ongoing and planned projects to address housing deficits in Abuja through affordable housing schemes and urban renewal projects. She also emphasised the importance of upgrading road public works to support economic growth and improve connectivity within the FCT.

Both parties stressed a commitment to clear project delivery, high-quality standards, and ensuring equitable access for citizens. Shared progress on reforms aimed at accelerating environmental approvals and streamlining building permits.

### Recommendations

- Encourage greater collaboration with stakeholders, including the private sector and international partners, to ensure sustainability and new ideas in housing and public works.
- Outline opportunities for knowledge exchange, particularly with counterparts in other regions implementing similar urban growth strategies.
- Reinforce the role of Renewed Hope Initiatives in supporting Nigeria's broader goals of inclusive growth, efficient urban management, and sustainable growth.
- Refer report to Infrastructure Victoria and Infrastructure Australia for their information and potential consideration to liaise with Federal Capital Territory Administration.

## 9. Solar Smart Microgrid System: Meeting with Markus Okra Founder of Solar Smart

### A. Meeting Overview: Solar Smart Microgrid system

Solar Smart is an Australian-owned and operated start-up focusing on new smart metre microgrid systems designed to integrate and optimise multiple solar energy generation sources. Their technology delivers reliable, decentralised electricity to communities, with a particular target market in Nigeria, where sustainable electrification is critical.

## B. Technology Overview

The Smart Metre System enables real-time monitoring, management, and improvement of diverse solar energy sources within microgrids. The Microgrid Platform supports decentralised and community-level power generation and sharing, improving energy access and grid stability in off-grid and under-served rural regions. Scalability is an important aspect as the flexible architecture of the platform allows for adaptation to local needs and integration with existing public works, facilitating rapid deployment in diverse environments.

## C. Engagement with Nigerian Government

Recent reports and market signals suggest that the Nigerian government recognises the value of smart metre microgrid solutions and, as part of its Renewed Hope Reforms agenda, is actively exploring new technologies that can expedite rural electrification and green energy transitions. Solar Smart's system aligns closely with the government's targets for increased renewable ability and expanding access in remote communities.

## D. Government Agenda and Targets

The Nigerian government, through its Renewed Hope Reforms agenda, is undertaking a major plan to bring reliable electricity to 17.5 million people currently without power. The primary strategy is developing mini grid systems in remote and rural regions, specifically targeting communities far from the reach of the national power grid. This ambitious plan aims close the energy access gap and speed up socio-economic growth.

## E. Mini Grids: Technology and Impact

Mini grids are decentralised electrical networks powered by local energy sources (primarily solar), serving communities or clusters of villages where extending the central grid is technically or financially unfeasible. These grids enable scalable, sustainable electrification and foster local renewable energy markets, reducing reliance on diesel generators and solid fuels.

## F. Solar Smart and Marcus Okra's Contribution

Smart Metre Technology: Solar Smart, led by Marcus Okra, provides new smart metres designed to manage, monitor, and optimise multiple solar generation sources in real time.

The technology empowers electricity distributors to offer clear billing, efficient energy sharing, and performance tracking—key to the viability and trustworthiness of mini grids.

## G. Subsidy Schemes and Supply Chain

The government delivers targeted subsidies to licensed electricity distribution companies (DisCos) tasked with building, operating, and maintaining mini grids in designated off-grid areas. Engagement Model: DisCos—benefiting from these subsidies—partner with Solar Smart to procure and deploy advanced smart metre systems, ensuring that newly electrified communities receive reliable, affordable, and accountable solar power. The smart meters serve not only as a technical backbone for power management but also facilitate government oversight, ensuring subsidies reach their intended beneficiaries and system performance meets plan targets.

## H. Conclusion

Millions of Nigerians in remote areas now have a pathway out of energy poverty, experiencing improvements in safety, education, business opportunities, and quality of life. Solar Smart's smart metre solution is increasingly recognised as a catalyst for scalable, clear mini grid operations. The partnership strengthens government goals around renewable energy, climate adaptation, and inclusive growth.

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10. Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria with its President Dr. Bridget Nwagbara, Mr. Aibi Jatua Senior Public Servant in the Ministry of Mining and Mrs Kate Uwangué, Assistant Director of the Department of Senior Secondary Education in the Federal Ministry of Education.

#### A. Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria

The Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria consists of Nigerian professionals who have completed studies at Australian universities and colleges. Many now have senior roles across government agencies and industries such as health, mining, education, and public administration. The association regularly facilitates networking, professional growth, and knowledge-sharing events for alumni and partners.

The group promotes strong professional and personal networks among alumni, fostering ongoing relationships with Australia; Organises seminars, workshops, and forums on contemporary issues relevant to Nigeria and Australia, especially in their areas of expertise Support ability building by sharing best practices, technical expertise, and innovations learned in Australia and Engages with the Australian High Commission and local Australian entities to strengthen bilateral relationships at the individual and organisational level.

#### B. Strengthening Relationships between the Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria and Victoria

Arising from discussions with the association, the relationship between Victoria and the Australian Alumni Association of Nigeria can be strengthened by:

- Knowledge Transfer Alumni in health and mining can share Australian practices and standards, supporting improvements in the public sector and industries.
- Capacity Building: Members can facilitate targeted training, technical exchanges, and professional growth for government agencies and institutions.

- **Networking Opportunities:** Provides access to a network of experienced professionals, opening doors for collaboration, investment, and joint ventures, especially in health and mining and education.
- **Policy Advice:** Alumni with experience in Australian governance and plan can advise on reforms and new ideas that may benefit the bilateral relationship.
- **Facilitating Partnerships:** The association can be a bridge for partnership projects between Victoria and Nigerian agencies in areas like education, public health, and resource management.

### c. Outcome of Alumni Mining Governance, Regulation and Certification Discussions

Several pathways for partnership between Nigeria and Victoria in the mining sector were discussed. The focus was on leveraging Victoria's expertise to strengthen governance, regulatory standards, and certification processes in Nigeria.

### D. Technical Assistance and Knowledge Sharing

Participants recognised the value of Victoria's strong mining oversight and stakeholder engagement. Exchange of knowledge and experience from agencies such as the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and Earth Resources Regulation were discussed.

### E. Policy Support and Collaborative Review

Best practice in mining regulations and compliance was explored, including digital change of licensing and reviewing laws to align with international best practices.

### F. Sector Partnerships and Industry Linkages

Opportunities through joint investment forums, technology transfer, and business partnerships, bringing together Victoria's governance and technical expertise with Nigeria's market and resource potential.

## G. Certification Challenges and Solutions

A key issue raised was Nigeria's fragmented certification processes for mining professionals, operations, and mineral products, which impact credibility and international recognition. Suggested collaboration:

- Accreditation systems for training and certifying bodies.
- Implementing digital certification record-keeping solutions.
- Facilitating workshops and regulatory training.
- Aligning Nigeria's certification processes with international benchmarks.

## H. Complementarity and Framework for Collaboration

The group discussed the potential growth of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalise collaboration in regulatory reform, certification, research, and exchange projects.

## I. Educational Cooperation-Meeting with Mrs. Kate Uwangue

Kate Uwangue serves as Assistant Director at the Department of Senior Secondary Education within Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education. Her role focuses on overseeing plan growth, curriculum improvement, teacher training, and quality assurance for senior secondary schools across Nigeria. The meeting aimed to discuss ways to strengthen educational systems, share best practices, and explore opportunities for collaboration. The discussion yielded the following points of partnership.

## J. Curriculum Development

Exchange of expertise in designing, updating, and modernising senior secondary curricula. Also discussed was sharing resources and case studies.

## K. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Joint workshops, webinars, or reciprocal visits for teachers and education administrators and Victorian programs in continuous professional growth could inform Nigerian plan reforms and vice versa.

## L. Quality Assurance and School Management

Collaboration on standards and frameworks for school inspection, review, and improvement. Mutual support in developing robust models for monitoring and evaluating school performance.

## M. Educational Technology Integration

Sharing Victoria's experiences with integrating educational technology in classrooms. Joint pilot programs to trial EdTech tools and platforms in Nigerian senior secondary schools.

## N. Leadership and Capacity Building

Leadership exchange programs for school principals and education officials. Opportunities for mentoring, peer learning, and cross-cultural engagement.

## o. Benefits of Cooperation

Builds stronger organizational links and supports the professional growth of education staff in both locations. Enhances teaching and learning outcomes through shared solutions to common challenges. Fosters cultural understanding and friendships between Nigeria and Victoria's

## Conclusions

The visit to the Federal Republic of Nigeria reaffirmed the strong potential for collaboration between Nigeria, Australia, and the State of Victoria. Across government, business, education, and culture, the State of Victoria and Nigeria share complementary strengths that can drive inclusive growth, new ideas, and shared understanding.

The mission demonstrated that Victoria could play a leadership role in advancing subnational diplomacy, opening pathways for partnership in investment, women's support, and education. Taking advantage and formalising the informal connections such as former students and the diaspora for the purpose of industry and Government engagements and increasing knowledge of Nigeria. It is hoped this visit will lay a solid foundation for sustained engagement, ensuring that the State of Victoria remains a key partner in strengthening the enduring relationship between Nigeria and Australia.

## 1.1 Appendix: Abuja Chamber of Commerce

Meetings with representatives and members of the Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry were hosted by Director General Mr. Agabaidu Chukwuemeka Jideani. The visit was brief. It is recommended that further online meetings/presentations with relevant organisations in Victoria to further explore opportunities are organized. This meeting identified numerous businesses interested in connecting and working with Victoria.

Businesses represented:

- Zencoop Network for trading ecosystem actions  
Weyinmi Eribo Chief Cooperative Officer
- Kings Empire and Web Limited  
Daniel Eromosele Enabulu CEO
- Morvick Travels and Tours Ltd  
Iyke Marius Obinali Managing Director
- Connectronics  
Okpia W Akhator-Eneka Director: Execution Excellence
- Ubacle Group  
Michael Ubacle



# Report of Visit to Republic of Ghana

Report by Bronwyn  
Halfpenny MP for  
Thomastown

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## Executive Summary

This report outlines the key insights from the visit to the Republic of Ghana, focusing on strengthening ties between Ghana, Australia, and the State of Victoria. Ghana is a growing and vibrant country in West Africa, known for its political stability, rich culture, and commitment to education and development. Australia and Ghana share long-standing relations through the Commonwealth of Nations, with co-operation across mining, agriculture, governance, and education.

Meetings with local leaders, universities, and research institutions explored opportunities for partnerships. Meetings with Tamale Technical University (TTU) and Dr. Hawaawu, a public health researcher, highlighted Ghana's challenges with environmental impacts from mining—particularly water contamination—and the need for stronger local expertise. Victoria's experience in sustainable mining and environmental management offers valuable models for collaboration and training.

The visit to Yemaachi BioTech, a Ghanaian company using advanced genetic research addressed global health gaps, including cancer treatment. Their "African Atlas" project ensures African genetic data is properly represented in medical research—helping make future treatments more effective worldwide. Yemaachi's commitment to data sharing and scientific transparency demonstrates the strong potential for global partnerships in health innovation.

Another important visit was to the Girls Industrial School correctional facility, which provides education, skills training, and counselling for young women in need of rehabilitation. The school has achieved remarkable results in reintegration and community outreach, despite facing ongoing resource challenges. Greater international collaboration and support could help strengthen these vital programs.

Meetings took place with key members of Ghana's Parliament to discuss governance, women's participation, and collaboration through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). Both Ghanaian and Victorian MPs could benefit from mutual visits to share experiences in democratic practice and gender inclusion.

Finally, at the West Africa Agri Bio Show and Livestock Day, the impressive work of the University of Ghana and its Post-Harvest Innovation Hub was observed, which supports local entrepreneurs and develops new agricultural technologies. The event showcased strong opportunities for Victorian institutions—particularly LaTrobe University's AgriBio Centre—to partner with Ghanaian researchers through formal agreements, joint projects, and training exchanges.

# 1. Country Profile: Republic of Ghana

## A. Demographic Profile

The Republic of Ghana (Ghana) is in West Africa and borders Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. Its capital city is Accra, and the country has a population of 34,589,092(2024 est). Ghana is multiethnic state with its biggest ethnic groups being the Akan (45.7%), Mole-Dagbani (18.5%), Ewe (12.8), Ga-Dangme (7.1%), Gurma (6.4%), Guan (3.2%), Grusi (2.7%), Mande (2%) and other groups make up the other 1.6% of the population (2021 est). Ghana is a highly urbanized country with 59.2% living in urban areas (2023 est.) Major urban centres include Kumasi, Accra and Sekondi Takorida.

The official language in Ghana is English although several local languages are spoken. Chief among them is Asante, Ewe, Fante, Boron (Brong), Dagomba, Dangme, Dagarte (Dagaba), Kokomba, Akyem and Ga. The population is predominantly Christian with Pentecostal, Protestant, catholic and other denominations making up 71% of the population. Muslims make up 19.9% of the population, Traditionalist 3.2% and others and atheist making up the rest of the population (2021 est.).

16, 902,073 people in Ghana are male and 17,687,019 are female. 58% of both populations are 15 to 64 years old. Divided by sex 9,690,498 and 10,444,197 are females. The next largest cohort is people who are 0-14 years old with 37.4%. By sex 6,527,386 are males and 6,400,245 are females. People 65 older are the smallest cohort making up 4.4%. By sex are male and 684,189 and 842, 577 are female (2024 est.)

## B. Economic Profile

Ghana has a lower-middle income economy with a real GDP of \$243.124 billion (2024 est.) Its GDP is comprised by an agricultural sector (20.7%), Industrial sector (28.8%) and a large service sector 43.9%) (2024 est.) Its main industries are mining, lumbering, light manufacturing, aluminium smelting, food processing, cement, small commercial ship building and petroleum. Its main agricultural exports are cassava, yams, plantains, maize, oil palm fruit, taro, rice, oranges, pineapples and cocoa beans. Its largest challenges are an IMF backed debt restructuring, fiscal reforms, financial stability and containing growing inflation.

## c. Political Profile

Ghana is divided into 16 administrative regions and organized presidential republic system of government. The executive branch is led by recently elected President John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress Party (NDC). He is both the head of government and head of state and leads a cabinet called the Council of Ministers which is nominated by the president and approved by Ghana's parliament.

The legislative branch is a unicameral parliament of 276 representatives. In decreasing order of seats held the political parties elected to parliament are National Democratic Congress (NDC) with 183 seats, New Patriotic Party (NPP) with 88 seats and the remaining 4 seats are distributed among smaller parties.

## 2. Ghana-Australia Relationship

### A. Diplomatic Relationship

Australia and Ghana have a significant bilateral relationship. Both countries are part of the Commonwealth of Nations, and both are stable democracies. The relationship is further strengthened by Australia being one of the first countries to recognise 1957 after its independence. Areas of collaboration include governance and capacity building, security and Internal affairs and multilateral collaboration.

In the area of governance and capacity building, Australia is supporting Ghana's officials via training and scholarships in sectors such as economic development, security, agriculture, mining governance and community engagement. In the area of security and internal affairs issues such as law enforcement co-operation and border and disaster management. A significant area of collaboration is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2025 with the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat (AfCFTA) (its seat in Accra) to support continental trade and linkages between Africa and Australia.

Recent diplomatic engagement includes a 2025 visit of Australian High Commissioner H.E. Berenice Owen-Jones to Ghanaian Minister of Interior Hon. Muntaka Mohammed-Mubarak to discuss issues relating to security, governance and economic development.

### B. Economic Relationship

Ghana and Australia share a moderate trade volume. Ghana's largest export to Australia is gold and Cocoa. Australian companies physically operate in Ghana and have investments in

the countries mining and resource sector. In 2024 the Australian Ghanaian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AGCCI) was launched to deepen and diversify the trade relationship between both countries. Agricultural collaboration has intensified. The purpose of this collaboration is boosting food security and leverage Australia's expertise drought-prone/tropical agriculture to Ghana's advantage.

Trade facilitation is also a relevant aspect of the bilateral relationship, in which the MoU with AfCFTA) provides a framework for future multilateral ties between Australia and Western Africa.

### 3. Ghana-Victoria Relationship

#### A. Economic Relationship

The relationship between the State of Victoria (Victoria) and Ghana is modest but with potential for deeper engagement. Global Victoria has identified Ghana an emerging market for sectors including but not limited to mining equipment, technology services, education, ag-tech, premium food and beverage.

Trade and business relationships are led mostly by the Victorian business community and organizations that convene them, like the Victorian Chamber of Commerce. Events supported by the chamber of commerce such as the Australia Africa Business Summit hosted in Melbourne are important in bringing relevant actors together.

Potential points of co-operation between Victoria and Ghana include.

- Mining & METS (Mining Equipment, Technology and Services): Ghana is open to mining services partnerships; Victorian companies have expertise in mining and resource services.
- Agriculture & agritech: Ghana's smallholder farmers stand to benefit from Victorian agritech solutions (irrigation, drought-resilient cropping, climate-smart agriculture) and Victoria has food & agriculture expertise.
- Education & scholarships: As Ghanaian students study in Australia and engage with Victorian universities, education becomes both a people-to-people and economic (services export) dimension.
- Diaspora commerce and trade linkages: The Ghanaian community in Victoria helps build informal trade and cultural-trade linkages, which can support business between Victoria and Ghana.

- Events and forums: The hosting in Melbourne of Africa-focused business summits provides a platform for Ghanaian Victorian business linkages.

## B. Cultural Relationship

The Ghana-born community in Victoria is broadly distributed in the Melbourne metropolitan area and is active within the state with organizations such as Ghana Association of Victoria and Voice of Ghana Community Victoria being relevant actors within the diaspora. These communities help bring Ghanaian culture into via festivals, cultural exhibitions, educational events, food, music, dance, language workshops and community networks. They also serve to facilitate visits, alumni linkages (Ghanaian students who studied in Australia) and potential return-visits to Ghana, strengthening transnational ties.

The diaspora networks create bridges. Victorian-based Ghanaian individuals may invest in or initiate projects linking back to Ghana (remittances, community development projects, cultural tourism linkages). These multicultural bridges could allow for

- Cultural festivals and events
- Education and cultural exchange: Promote Alumni networks to contribute to longer-term relationships between Victoria and Ghana
- Community development and diaspora engagement: Victorian-based Ghanaian organizations often support both local community integration and overseas development in Ghana. This cross-border community engagement fosters twin-city possibilities or community co-operation.
- Promoting Ghana-Victoria tourism & cultural tourism.
- Inter-cultural collaboration: Partnerships between Victorian arts institutions/universities and Ghanaian cultural institutions.

## 4. Ghana Mausoleum Visit on Founders Day

### A. Visit Overview

It was an honour to attend the celebrations at the mausoleum and memorial park of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's founding president and a visionary leader in the country's quest for independence. The event took place on Founders' Day, a national holiday introduced in 2019 to commemorate the birth of Dr. Nkrumah and to celebrate Ghana's attainment of independence from Britain.

It was privilege to join fellow dignitaries, government officials, community leaders, and citizens in paying tribute to the enduring legacy of Dr. Nkrumah. The atmosphere was one of reverence and pride, as attendees reflected on the sacrifices and achievements that paved the way for Ghana's sovereignty. Ceremonial activities included laying of wreaths at the mausoleum, cultural performances, speeches highlighting the values of unity, self-determination, and progress, and guided tours of the memorial park that recounted the historical milestones of the independence movement.

Founders' Day serves as a reminder of the collective responsibility to uphold the principles of freedom and national development championed by Dr. Nkrumah and his contemporaries. These celebrations were an opportunity to reaffirm commitment to honouring Ghana's heritage and to working towards a future defined by inclusivity, resilience, and prosperity.

## 5. Meeting At Tamale Technical University with Dr. Hawaawu, Epidemiologist, Researcher and lecturer, Tamale Technical University

### A. Meeting Overview and Background of Dr. Hawaawu and Tamale Technical University

Dr. Hawaawu is a passionate and dedicated epidemiologist working at Tamale Technical University in Ghana. She spends her days teaching students, researching public health issues, and looking for ways to make Ghana's communities safer and healthier—especially when it comes to protecting water from the effects of local mining. Dr. Hawaawu loves collaborating with fellow researchers, sharing her knowledge, and working alongside community members to help everyone understand how science can improve lives.

Tamale Technical University is a leading tertiary institution located in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana. The university offers practical-oriented education and training in engineering, applied sciences, business, and technology, with a strong emphasis on research and community development. Known for fostering innovation and industry partnerships, TTU equips students with the skills needed to contribute to Ghana's socio-economic growth.

Through in-depth discussions with Dr. Hawaawu, an epidemiologist, researcher and lecturer at Tamale Technical University of Ghana, and consultation with staff at the university, several pressing challenges facing Ghana's mining sector were identified. Chief among these is the

insufficient capacity of local mining firms to adequately mitigate environmental impacts, particularly water contamination—a concern that poses risks to public health and undermines community wellbeing.

Dr. Hawaawu and her colleagues highlighted that the rapid increase of new entrants in the mining sector has outpaced the existing regulatory and technical expertise needed to enforce environmental safeguards. The university's research reflects growing evidence that water bodies in mining communities are increasingly exposed to contamination, threatening both ecosystem integrity and the availability of safe public water supplies.

These discussions emphasised the urgent need for knowledge transfer, advanced technological solutions, and improvements in local capacity to address the environmental and health risks associated with mining activities.

## B. Potential for Collaboration Victoria and Tamale Technical University

Both Victoria and Ghana have a strong reputation for sustainable mining practices, effective regulatory frameworks, advanced environmental monitoring, and community engagement centred around minimising mining's impact on water and ecosystems (Earth Resources Victoria). The following avenues present tangible opportunities for collaboration with Tamale Technical University. Building such partnerships offers mutual benefit: Tamale Technical University gains access to global expertise and technology, while Victorian institutions foster international ties and advance best practice in global sustainability.

An overview of Victoria's experience and expertise in sustainable mining and environmental protection was provided where Victoria's advanced regulatory frameworks, environmental monitoring systems were highlighted and community engagement strategies, were shared, with emphasis on how these could offer valuable lessons and technologies for Ghana.

During the meeting, both the Australian delegation and the Ghanaian representatives, led by Dr. Hawaawu and university colleagues, engaged in discussions about potential avenues for collaboration. These included knowledge exchange, capacity building, sharing intellectual property, joint research initiatives, and the adaptation of regulatory best practice. It was agreed that these ideas should be further explored and considered by the relevant government agencies and academic institutions in both countries, with a view to developing meaningful partnerships tailored to Ghana's local needs and priorities.

## c. Recommendations

- explore avenues for collaboration identified during these discussions.
- Key opportunities include establishing knowledge exchange programmes, joint research initiatives, sharing intellectual property related to sustainable mining practices, and adapting regulatory frameworks to Ghanaian conditions. Pursuing these partnerships will support capacity building at Tamale Technical University and strengthen environmental safeguards within Ghana’s mining sector, contributing to improved outcomes for local communities and public health.

## 6. Visit to Yemaachi Biotech

### A. Meeting Overview

Yemaachi BioTech is a privately held biotechnology company with a strong social commitment to the African continent. Present in the meeting was Dr. Hawaawu, Joyce Ngoi, MSc, Co-founder and Director of Technical Services, and Aida Manu, Director of Operations and Regulatory Affairs. Yemaachi’s mission is to address inequities in global cancer research and drug development, specifically by creating the “African Atlas”—a uniquely comprehensive cancer biodata repository that harnesses genetic diversity to advance next-generation therapies.

Yemaachi BioTech distinguishes itself by prioritising diversity and access. The company collects, sequences, studies, and stores clinical trial samples from African populations, ensuring that genetic data from people of African descent are robustly represented. This effort responds to critical feedback from the Northern Hospital, which emphasised the limitations of current cancer treatments tailored predominantly to European populations. By expanding the clinical trial sample base to include patients from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other regions, Yemaachi aims to increase both the relevance and efficacy of cancer drugs worldwide.

Yemaachi has secured agreements from investors and pharmaceutical partners that all data and research findings will be made freely available to universities and researchers across Africa, supporting broad access and scientific equity.

## B. Ongoing Research Initiatives

Yemaachi is also investigating acute healthcare disparities, including the survival rates of children with leukaemia—a disturbing gap exists, with a 20% survival rate among African children compared to 80% for others receiving comparable treatment. Additionally, the company is leading research into the elevated incidence of oesophageal cancer in specific regions of Ghana.

## c. Data Reliability and Governance

The issue of data reliability and third-party validation, especially scepticism from Western institutions regarding governance and temperature-controlled storage, was discussed in detail. Yemaachi acknowledges this perception and has invested substantially in robust quality assurance systems, including third-party oversight and real-time monitoring of temperature and storage conditions, thereby upholding the highest standards in research protocols.

Concerns raised by some Western countries regarding the reliability of research outcomes from the region, particularly in relation to governance and the maintenance of appropriate temperature controls for biological samples were addressed. Yemaachi BioTech acknowledged these perceptions and responded by making significant investments in third-party oversight. This includes the implementation of advanced systems that provide real-time monitoring of storage conditions and temperature parameters to uphold international research standards.

An online meeting between representatives of the Northern Hospital and Dr. Bediako of Yemaachi BioTech was facilitated. This meeting established an initial platform for future collaboration in clinical trials and genome research, further reinforcing the commitment of all parties to advancing health innovation across diverse populations.

The visit underscored the significant potential for collaboration between Ghanaian institutions and international partners in addressing urgent healthcare and research challenges. Yemaachi BioTech exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to biotechnology on the continent and demonstrates how targeted investments in research infrastructure and open data can transform global healthcare outcomes.

## D. Conclusion and Recommendation

the visit to Tamale Technical University and Yemaachi BioTech highlighted valuable opportunities for advancing health equity, scientific collaboration, and innovative cancer research in Ghana

- It is recommended that these insights be referred to relevant government agencies and counterparts for consideration and potential action to strengthen partnerships and integrate research outcomes into national health strategies.

## 7. Visit to Girls Industrial School Correctional Facility

### A. Overview

This report outlines the Girls Industrial School correctional facility's mandate, notable achievements, key discussion points from the visit, and concludes with recommendations for future collaboration and support. The Girls Industrial School is a specialised correctional and rehabilitation institution in Ghana dedicated to the care and advancement of young females—primarily juveniles—who conflict with the law or are in need of social intervention. Established in the mid-20th century, the school forms an integral part of Ghana's modernisation of its juvenile justice system and operates under the Ghana Prisons Service and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

### B. Mandate and Activities

The chief mandate of the Girls Industrial School is the rehabilitation and reintegration of its residents into society. To achieve this, the facility offers:

**Formal Education:** Basic and secondary academic programmes to ensure continued educational development.

- **Vocational Training:** Skills development in tailoring, hairdressing, catering, and other technical trades to provide practical employment opportunities upon release.
- **Counselling and Support:** Psychological counselling, mentorship, and character development for emotional and social growth.
- **Community Outreach:** Preventive and support programmes, often in partnership with NGOs, to reach at-risk girls beyond the facility.

## c. Achievements

The Girls Industrial School has made important contributions to juvenile justice and rehabilitation in Ghana, notably successful

- **Rehabilitation and Reintegration:** Numerous girls have rejoined their communities and pursued education or employment following tailored training and support interventions,
- **Reducing Recidivism:** The facility's holistic approach has helped lower recidivism rates among its residents.
- **Partnerships and International Connections:** The school collaborates with NGOs, government agencies, and benefits from international links, including connections with Ghanaian Australians such as Mr. Francis Acquah. Mr. Acquah has established charities and actively advocates for strengthening Australian ties to Ghana, further enhancing the facility's outreach and support network.
- **Recognition:** Local authorities and international partners have cited the facility as an exemplary model for child protection, rehabilitation, and inclusive education.

## d. Discussion Points and Observations

During the visit, several key issues and opportunities were raised. The facility faces ongoing challenges relating to resource constraints and social stigma encountered by former residents. There is also a continued need for support in counselling services and for expanding vocational training programmes. Opportunities for enhanced international co-operation, technical expertise, and research into rehabilitation outcomes were also identified.

## e. Conclusion and Recommendations

the Girls Industrial School correctional facility plays a vital role in rehabilitating and empowering young girls in Ghana. Its achievements in education, vocational training, and reintegration demonstrate its value to the juvenile justice sector.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that these insights and opportunities be referred to relevant government agencies and international counterparts for consideration.

- Strengthened collaboration, increased funding, and knowledge exchange will further support the facility’s mission, benefit child welfare and advancing justice reform in Ghana.

## 8. Visit to Parliament of Ghana

### A. Background

The Parliament of Ghana is the country’s unicameral legislative body, responsible for creating and enacting laws, representing the interests of citizens, and holding the executive to account. Founded in 1950, the institution has evolved significantly since Ghana’s independence in 1957. The Parliament comprises 275 Members of Parliament (MPs) who are elected every four years. The Speaker of Parliament presides, supported by the Majority and Minority Leadership. Ghana’s Parliament demonstrates increasing efforts to promote transparency, public engagement, and inclusivity, including women’s participation and youth representation.

Private member bill’s—proposed by MPs who are not ministers—have become more prominent in the legislative process, reflecting the Parliament’s commitment to broad participation beyond executive-initiated legislation. Furthermore, the Parliament participates in international parliamentary forums, notably the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), providing opportunities for Ghanaian MPs to collaborate, share best practice, and address global legislative issues.

Women’s representation in Parliament, though gradually increasing, remains a focus for advocacy and reform, with several policies and programs aimed at enhancing gender equity in political leadership.

### B. Visit and Meetings in the Parliament of Ghana

After observing parliamentary proceedings, meetings with key members with Hon. Patricia Appiagyei, the Deputy Minority Leader, and Mr. Camillo Pwamang, Deputy Clerk of Parliament were held. Our discussion focused on several aspects of parliamentary operation:

- Makeup of the Parliament: explored the Parliament’s structure, noting its unicameral format, leadership roles, and committee system. There was a particular emphasis on the mix of seasoned legislators and new members, reflecting Ghana’s dynamic political landscape.

- Private Members' Bills: Hon. Appiagyei and Mr. Pwamang detailed the process and recent trends regarding private member's bills, emphasizing that greater use of these bills has enabled more diverse, grassroots-led policy initiatives. MPs are increasingly empowered to provide legislative solutions for their constituents' concerns.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Participation: discussed Ghana's active role in the CPA, including training, conferences, and collaborative sessions that strengthen parliamentary practice and networks across Commonwealth countries.
- Women's Representation: The low, but improving, number of female MPs was raised as a topic of priority. Both Hon. Appiagyei and Mr. Pwamang highlighted ongoing efforts to address obstacles to women's parliamentary participation, citing mentoring programs, advocacy by civil society groups, and proposed legislative reforms to enhance representation.

### c. Recommendations

- Strengthening Ghanaian Victorian Parliamentary Exchange through the CPA To further enhance parliamentary practice and collaboration, both Ghanaian and Victorian Members of Parliament (MPs) should advantage of opportunities provided by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) to participate in reciprocal study visits.
- Explore organizing visits for Ghanaian MPs to Victoria: By visiting the Parliament of Victoria, Ghanaian MPs could observe different legislative processes, committee operations, and approaches to public engagement. Exposure to Victoria's initiatives for women's representation and inclusive governance would offer valuable insights and best practices to bring back to Ghana.
- Victorian MPs to Ghana: Conversely, Victorian MPs should consider visiting the Parliament of Ghana to deepen their understanding of parliamentary systems in West Africa, experience Ghana's unique legislative dynamics, and share perspectives on strengthening democracy and representation
- Such two-way exchanges would foster mutual learning, encourage the sharing of innovative solutions, and strengthen the professional relationships between the two parliaments. Both Ghanaian and Victorian MPs will benefit from expanded
- perspectives and collaborative opportunities, ultimately enriching parliamentary operations in their respective jurisdictions.

## 9. West Africa Agri Bio Show & 2nd Annual Livestock Day, Ghana 2025

### A. Overview

The West Africa Agri Bio Show, held in Accra in conjunction with the 2nd Annual Livestock Day, is recognised as the premier platform for agricultural innovation and collaboration across West Africa. Sponsored by Interplast and the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the event brought together a diverse range of stakeholders, including government representatives, private sector leaders, universities, and emerging entrepreneurs.

A major highlight of the exhibition was the active participation of the University of Ghana. The University showcased a variety of research-based innovations with an emphasis on supporting small-scale entrepreneurship. A standout feature was the Post Harvest Innovation Hub, which not only provides specialised business support services to agrifood enterprises, but also develops and offers its own commercial products. The Hub's demonstration of advanced dehydration technologies attracted significant interest, with processed produce available for purchase.

This highlights the region's growing capacity for value addition and post-harvest loss reduction—key issues for food security and export potential. The event also facilitated high-level engagement and networking, both with local stakeholders and representatives from international organisations. Discussions centred around strengthening the agricultural sector through technology adoption, knowledge exchange, and collaboration on sustainable practices. The active involvement of government agencies contributed to lively conversations about policy support and the enabling environment needed for innovation and entrepreneurship to thrive.

### B. Recommendations

- Given the depth and variety of opportunities presented, it is recommended that Victorian government agencies—including Global Victoria—be made aware of the strategic value of attending future editions of the West Africa Agri Bio Show. Participation would offer unparalleled access to emerging markets, new agritech innovations, and partnership possibilities across government, academia, and industry. This could foster greater commercial engagement, promote Victorian

expertise, and enhance bilateral relationships in the rapidly developing West African agrifood sector.

- Recommend a potential MOU with Latrobe University Agri Bio Centre. It is recommended that initial discussions be pursued regarding a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between La Trobe University's AgriBio Centre and relevant West African partners—such as the University of Ghana's Post Harvest Innovation Hub.
- This MOU could set the framework for Joint Research Endeavours:
  - Facilitating collaborative research projects focused on post-harvest technology, crop science, and sustainable agricultural practices.
  - Knowledge Exchange: Organising reciprocal visits, workshops, and seminars for researchers, students, and industry professionals, enabling mutual learning and capacity building.
  - Innovation and Commercialisation: Supporting the development, adaptation, and transfer of agri-food innovations—including dehydration technologies—with potential market applications in both regions.
  - Capacity Building and Training: Promoting educational programs and technical training to strengthen entrepreneurship and innovation in the agri-food sector.
  - Formalising this partnership through an MOU would enhance international engagement, drive tangible outcomes for food security and agribusiness, and position both institutions as leaders in agricultural innovation.

## 10. University of Ghana's Contributions and Initiatives

### A. Overview

At the West Africa Agri Bio Show and 2nd Annual Livestock Day, the University of Ghana played a pivotal role in promoting research-led agricultural innovation and facilitating real world impact. Their exhibition showcased a broad spectrum of activities detailed below.

### B. Post Harvest Innovation Hub

The Hub is a centrepiece for commercialising university-developed technologies. It provides consultancy, business development services, and access to innovative products. The dehydration process technology, which was demonstrated and offered for sale, highlights

solutions for tackling post-harvest losses, extending shelf-life, and creating new markets for local produce. Hub acts as an incubator for small-scale entrepreneurs, supports product development, and bridges the gap between academic research and industry.

### **C. Entrepreneurship Support**

The University actively fosters entrepreneurship by collaborating with emerging agribusinesses and offering mentorship, technical support, and opportunities for young innovators and students to pilot their ideas.

### **D. Collaborative Research**

Ongoing partnerships with national and international institutes ensure continuous advancements in crop science, agritech, and food systems sustainability.

### **E. Discussions on Exchange of Experience**

During meetings and networking sessions at the show, there was recognition of the mutual benefits that come from academic and industrial exchanges between Ghana and global counterparts, including Australian institutions like La Trobe University's AgriBio Centre. Key points of discussion included:

- **Researcher and Student Exchange:** Establishing short-term and long-term exchanges to provide hands-on experience in different settings, share best practices in research methodology, and foster intercultural understanding.
- **Joint Workshops and Seminars:** Proposals for collaborative events—focusing on topics such as post-harvest technology, sustainable agriculture, and business development—were explored, with the aim to encourage knowledge transfer and strengthen professional links.
- **Collaborative Pilot Projects:** The possibility of launching joint projects that leverage strengths from both institutions, particularly in technological innovation and commercialisation, was discussed. Such projects would create scalable solutions for both Africa and Australia, expanding research reach and real-world impact.

## 11. Professor Eric Danquah's Work

### A. Overview

Professor Eric Danquah, a globally respected crop scientist and founding director of the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI) at the University of Ghana, was mentioned as a driving force behind many of the university's advancements. His work includes:

- **Crop Improvement:** Leading pioneering research in breeding improved crop varieties that address food security challenges in Africa. His efforts have resulted in the introduction of resilient and high-yield crops, which are now cultivated across several countries.
- **Capacity Building:** Professor Danquah champions human resource development through MPhil and PhD programs, training the next generation of African plant breeders and scientists.
- **International Collaboration:** He has built extensive international networks, partnering with universities, research institutes, and funding bodies worldwide. These collaborations have accelerated technology transfer, enabled joint research, and facilitated student mobility.
- **Advocacy and Policy:** Through his leadership, Professor Danquah has influenced national and continental policies on crop science, innovation, and sustainable development, which continue to shape the trajectory of African agriculture.

### B. Recommendations

- Expanding collaborative ties—especially through formal partnerships and exchange programs—would greatly benefit both the University of Ghana and its international partners, amplifying their ability to innovate, educate, and transform agriculture on a global scale.

## 12. Visit to the Australian High Commission in Ghana, Meetings with Ms. Penny Dennis, Deputy High Commissioner at the Australian High Commission in Accra and Jemima Schilling, Trade Commissioner Africa (Austrade)

### A. Overview

The meeting with Ms Penny Dennis, provided valuable insights into Australia’s strategic engagement in West Africa, with a particular focus on growing sectoral collaboration. In addition, A meeting with Jemima Schilling was also arranged. This was Ms Schilling’s first official visit to Ghana, undertaken to attend the Mining Conference and facilitate introductions with Australian mining companies operating locally. Our discussion centred on expanding Australian business footprints in the region, enhancing bilateral trade, and identifying emerging partnership opportunities.

Ms Schilling also highlighted the activities of an innovative company located in Epping, Victoria—Global (Wine in a Glass). This enterprise specialises in producing pre-packaged individual servings of wine and has recently secured significant business supplying safari companies with their unique, travel-friendly product. This success serves as an example of Victorian innovation making inroads in African markets through adaptable and high-value offerings.

### B. Key Outcomes and Opportunities

- Strengthened connections with Australian diplomatic and trade representatives in West Africa.
- Identification of sectors—mining, agribusiness, and packaged food and beverage—where Australian companies are actively expanding.
- Recognition of Victorian business opportunities in Africa, illustrated by Global (Wine in a Glass)’s new partnership with the safari tourism sector.
- Further prospect of facilitating business introductions and supporting market entry strategies for Victorian innovators seeking African partners.

## c. Recommendations

- ongoing engagement with the Australian High Commission, Austrade and Global Victoria to support Australian and Victorian businesses in pursuing growth across Africa’s rapidly evolving markets.

## Conclusion

This visit clearly showed Ghana’s energy, innovation, and strong desire for partnership. From sustainable mining and biotechnology to education and agriculture, there are many meaningful ways for Victoria and Ghana to work together.

Key recommendations include:

- Encouraging collaboration between Victorian institutions and Ghanaian universities, such as TTU and the University of Ghana.
- Supporting joint research in environmental protection, health innovation, and sustainable agriculture. Promoting exchange programs between parliaments, researchers, and students to share knowledge and build lasting relationships.
- Providing targeted support to programs like the Girls Industrial School to strengthen youth rehabilitation and education.

These partnerships can deliver shared benefits—boosting local capacity in Ghana, opening new opportunities for Victorian expertise, and deepening the friendship between the two regions. The spirit of co-operation and mutual respect shown throughout the visit is a promising foundation for ongoing collaboration and shared progress.

## Appendix: Summary of Ghana Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

### Overview

The Ghana Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) serves as a branch of the international CPA network, committed to advancing democratic governance, parliamentary best practices, and inter-Commonwealth co-operation. Through capacity-building initiatives, workshops, seminars, and exchange programmes, the Ghana CPA enhances the effectiveness and skills of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff.

It also facilitates dialogue at both regional and international levels, supporting legislative development, gender equality, youth engagement, and transparency in parliamentary processes. The Ghana CPA branch plays a key role in raising parliamentary standards and strengthening collaboration within Africa and the global Commonwealth community.

### Gender Mainstreaming in the Parliament of Ghana

The Ghana CPA has been instrumental in promoting gender mainstreaming within the Parliament of Ghana, championing policies and programmes that support women's meaningful participation in legislative processes. This includes hosting awareness programmes, training sessions, and leadership workshops for female parliamentarians and staff, as well as advocating for increased representation of women in parliamentary committees and decision-making roles. The Association's commitment to gender equality helps foster an inclusive, representative, and effective legislative environment, serving as a model for other Commonwealth parliaments.