

International Travel Report

24 September – 8 October 2025

Finland, Singapore

Electorate Business

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Reason for travel

As Shadow Assistant Minister, I have been investigating opportunities to learn from countries that have specialised in educational strategies with high learning outcomes and focused learning cultures.

Finland is well known for its inclusive learning ideology, reflected in an understanding that every child should have the right to an education, which encourages individual student learning focuses and an opportunity for all children to be literate and enjoy reading. It is famous for its high learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and science and its broad education which includes all students having the opportunity to develop physical resiliency skills in areas like woodwork and sewing, and couples this with an appreciation for nature and the outdoors. Singapore is well known for its rigorous academic outcomes, and consistent testing and standardisation.

Successful schools in both countries enjoy excellent learning outcomes, high teacher retention and job satisfaction.

School Principals and Educational Leaders from Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia came together for an education tour of Finland's schools for a week in late September to early October, and my trip was primarily centred around this learning opportunity and enhanced by the networking and reflective discussions with a variety of local international school leaders.

After visiting Finland, I went to Singapore to visit several early childhood centres, and attended meetings with educational leaders to compare, contrast and learn from the Singaporean education system and programs.

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

Dates of travel – 24 September to 08 October 2025

- Finland Tour for Principals and Educational Leaders started Saturday 27 September and finished Saturday 04 October 2025.
- I travelled to Singapore on Monday 06 October and left Wednesday 08 October 2025, arriving in Melbourne Thursday 09 October 2025.

Finland: Events included networking dinners with school Deputies and School Principals; Lectures and visits to various locations to first understand Finnish lifestyle and how this impacts the educational experience. In addition, I attended numerous comprehensive learning workshops and lectures with Finnish School Leaders, Principals, teachers and Education Department staff (former leading teachers) and Educational University Lecturers.

Singapore: included a lesson on the Singapore educational system from early learning (infants) to final vocational and university training. Early learning opportunities, strategies and differences were also identified and explored.

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

London (Airport Hotel) – Holiday Inn Express Heathrow - €126.23

Helsinki Hotel Haven - €200.00

Tampere Lapland Hotel – (additional nights included in costs for tours for teachers)

Helsinki (Airport Hotel) – Hilton - €226.46

Singapore The Carlton Ritz – €983.18

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

Other than airlines, and a couple of ferries and taxis, most transport in Finland was on a bus and provided by the Finnish education program for School Leaders.

Other than a taxi to the hotel from the airport, most Singapore transport was provided courtesy of the educational leaders who hosted me.

Member's objectives

To gain a greater understanding of:

- Finland's globally admired education system (noting it does not include national assessment until Year 10).
- the pedagogical leadership, and the learner-centred approach that underpins Finnish education and schooling.
- Finnish Curriculum, assessment practices, basic educational praxis, use of explicit instruction and their collaborative learning community and shared leadership.
- The differences in teaching, daily tasks of school leaders, the home / school partnership compared to Victorian schools,
- The role of inclusive educational ideology and praxis, multi-professional engagement, autonomy and resilience of students, school support systems and frameworks
- the "less is more" and "no dead ends" philosophy.
- The role of early learning and the Finnish approach to starting school, literacy, and developing the love of learning.

Networking with principals and leaders from other schools in Australia and New Zealand provided an additional rich framework for reflective learning discussions on the types of changes that are possible and would be helpful in our schools, if supported by legislation and shifts in cultural and educational focus.

- Singapore provided an intensive meeting and education in its educational system, current trends and changes in focus in education, and the role of Singapore's rigorous assessment and the role of early learning centres.
- Singapore educational leaders also provided several visits to several learning centres with the opportunity to particularly focus on the role of early learning and educational focuses, and the incorporation of other teaching methods, including Reggio Emilia, (a teaching philosophy that views children as competent, curious and full of potential).

Parliaments and other organisations visited (if any)

School visits in Finland were often based around the Tampere area. Educational learning in Finland included but was not limited to: Harjuniity School, Kurikankulma Day Care and Forest Group Luhtarollit, Lastausten, Pitkajarvi Schools.

School visits were based around early learning in Singapore and included but were not limited to: Global EduHub HQ, Mulberry Learning East Coast, Mulberry Learning Cairnhill Community and Mulberry Learning Fusionpolis Chinese Immersion Preschool.

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

Tours For Teachers – Christine Lass (Finland)
Peh Yi Han Geh – Singapore

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

Walker, T.D. *Teach like Finland*

(Ed.) Jarvinen-Tailbert, J & Chukhlandtseva E. *Finnish Education in Practice: What, Why and How*

Roos, P. Mikkonen, S., Rantavuori, L., Kinossalo, M. *The Success Story of Finnish Basic Education*

Sahlberg, P. *Finnish Lessons – What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?*

Summaries of the study areas pursued in the countries visited

- Early Childhood education – approaches to language learning, literacy, numeracy, resiliency, autonomy and educational sensory and learning experiences
- Comparing methods in Finland and Singapore and identifying what could work in Victorian schools, what is working in Victorian schools and what changes or improvements could be made.
- Understanding the importance of early childhood education and cultural nuances and the role they place in educational focus.
- The role and impact of legislative decisions and political ideologies on educational outcomes and cultural derivatives that become normative
- The productive meaning of being ‘inclusive’ in education (Finland)
- The power of autonomy and resilience, and motivations to learn (Finland vs Singapore)
- Structural support systems and the value and role of the teacher in a sustainable learning and school environment.
- The effect of the joy of learning and teaching, with work-life-balance (Finland)
- The impact of early learning strategies and targeted learning pedagogy in early learners (Singapore)

Summary of the results achieved and any recommendations arising

The trip not only provided valuable networks in educational learning spheres around the globe but also provided me with an extensive understanding of potential strategies for change to create sustainable, productive learning spaces for staff and students, with support services, fresh approaches to resiliency learning, teacher training, and early learning stimulation that could impact policy and legislation.

I was exposed to a variety of educational opportunities and gained a greater understanding of learning mindsets and learning preparedness, which has helped me to gain a greater understanding of potential improvements that could be made to teaching, literacy and numeracy learning.

Finland's educational system is known for its teacher autonomy and emphasis on student learning equity with extensive support for students with learning needs. Its approach to learning includes play-based learning and holistic development. "School" learning effectively starts at age 7 but early learning exists and promotes independence and strategies to facilitate knowledge and learning.

Singapore is competitive and focuses on standardized testing, and high-stake entrance exams - even at the Primary School level. Learning includes memory, knowledge and academic rigour. Structured learning starts at a very young age.