

<b>Member</b>	Sarah Connolly	<b>Electorate</b>	Laverton
<b>Period</b>	1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025		

<b>Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance</b>	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$12,514.74
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$0.00

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

<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
16/04/2025	29/04/2025	Travelling to Turkiye. Visit to Turkiye as part of ANZAC Gallipoli Delegation in my capacity as Member for Laverton. Electorate office business.	\$967.31

Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims 13

Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance \$967.31

## **Members of Parliament Anzac Delegation 2025**

### **Travel Report**

**17 April 2025 – 29 April 2025**



#### **Report by Sarah Connolly MP, State Member for Laverton**

##### **Other attendees:**

Natalie Suleyman MP, Member for St Albans  
Kathleen Matthews-Ward MP, Member for Broadmeadows  
Wendy Lovell MP, Member for Northern Victoria  
Melina Bath MP, Member for Eastern Victoria  
Kim O'Keefe MP, Member for Shepparton

##### **Statement of Objectives:**

In April 2025, I was honoured to embark on a cross-party Victorian Delegation to Türkiye. The purpose of this Delegation was to attend ANZAC Memorial Services, including the Dawn Service held at ANZAC Cove, visit places of cultural significance, and engage with the Turkish Government and Parliament.

The Victorian MP's ANZAC Delegation is an annual tradition for State Members of Parliament. Despite a pause on travel due to the pandemic, this tradition returned in 2025.

Türkiye and Australia undoubtedly share a unique bond – through the shared experience that began on the battlefields of Çanakkale (Gallipoli). This year marks the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, in which the spirit of the ANZACs of mateship, camaraderie and mutual respect was forged. These values now form part of the national identity of Australia, New Zealand and Türkiye.

Since the end of World War I, the two nations of Australia and Türkiye have become developed a strong friendship and continue to share in commemorations on ANZAC Day and throughout the year, as thousands of Australians make the pilgrimage to Gallipoli to pay their respects and honour the fallen. By continuing to foster economic and cultural ties between Victoria and Türkiye, we can develop further economic opportunities for both communities.

Victoria is proudly home to the largest Turkish community in Australia. The Electorate of Laverton and Melbourne's Western suburbs more broadly is home to a large and well-established Turkish community. It has been a privilege for me to develop strong ties with my local Turkish community, with many community groups hosting numerous cultural festivals and events throughout the Laverton Electorate and Melbourne's West on an annual basis. With large attendees of Turkish diaspora at these events, it is a wonderful display of Victoria's multiculturalism at its very best.

On the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli, it was heartening to see the continued support and relevance of this annual commemoration – whether it was on the shores of ANZAC Cove or at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, Victorians and Australians recognise those soldiers who sacrificed their lives and the values that were forged on the shores of Gallipoli.

To mark this special occasion, the service at Gallipoli was attended by dignitaries such as Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, Chair of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Governor-General of Australia and many other international dignitaries.

It was inspiring to see the international aspect of WWI is acknowledged by a range of commemorative services from the different nations represented on the day. It reminds us of the lives lost on all sides and the international cooperation that has since emerged from the battles on the shores of Gallipoli. In relation to our ANZACs who lie buried at Gallipoli, it is a fitting tribute that is still so relevant today as much as it was in 1934 when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk famously said to our grieving mothers:

*Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore, rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours ... You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.*

## **Summary of meetings and visits:**

### **16 April 2025**

- Boarded flight from Melbourne to Istanbul.

### **17 April 2025**

- Arrived in Istanbul.
- Victorian Delegation briefed on the Delegation's itinerary and days ahead.

### **18 April 2025**

- Attended a very special Good Friday Service at the Church of Saint Antony of Padua in Istanbul. This famous Catholic Church is the largest that is located in Istiklal Caddesi in Istanbul and was built by the Istanbul Italian community in 1725. The service was very well attended by locals and the Delegation was warmly welcomed by all.

Significantly, masses at this Church are delivered in Italian, Polish, Turkish and English, which is reflective of the congregation and the flourishing multicultural community that now lives in Istanbul. A notable point of interest was that Pope XXIII had preached at the Church of Saint Antony of Padua for 10 years and spoke fluent Turkish.



**19 April 2025**

- The Victorian Delegation took a guided tour of the culturally significant site of Ayasofya Mosque. This culturally significant Mosque was built between 532 and 537BC and as we learned on the tour, it was the principal church of the Byzantine Empire in its capital, Constantinople (later Istanbul), and a mosque after the Ottoman Empire conquered the city in 1453. This visit gave me a deeper understanding of the Islamic religion and its history, which is particularly important as I have a very large Muslim community in my Electorate of Laverton and across Victoria more broadly.
- The Delegation also undertook a guided tour of Istanbul's Topkapı Palace. The Palace complex is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is famous for its rich history and architecture. It once served as the administrative centre and main residence of the Ottoman sultans from the 1460s, until the completion of Dolmabahçe Palace in 1856. Today, the Palace has been transformed into a large museum and library.



## **20 April 2025**

- The Delegation, participated in a guided tour of Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul. Dolmabahçe Palace holds great historical significance, as it served as the official residence for six Ottoman Sultans from the time of its completion in 1856 until the dissolution of the Caliphate in 1924. It was also an opportunity to further understand Türkiye's history and transition into the twentieth century with Caliph Abdülmecid Efendi being the last royal occupant of the Palace. A further point of interest was that the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk, stayed in the Dolmabahçe Palace when he visited Istanbul, and later died there on 10 November 1938.
- Travelled from Istanbul to Ankara (domestic flight).

## **21 April 2025**

- Depart Ankara travel to Cappadocia (by bus).
- The Delegation met with Mayor Ali Ertugrul Bul and the Deputy Mayor of Municipality of Ürgüp. We talked about agriculture, tourism,
- We visited Kaymakli Underground City, the three beauties (Uc Guzzeller) and Goreme Open Museum. Not only is this a significant historical site but has, through the efforts of the local Municipality, become a tourism and sporting hub.



**22 April 2025**

- Depart Cappadocia for Ankara (by bus)
- Attended Anitkabir – Mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the founder of the Republic of Türkiye and served as its first President from 1923 until his death in 1938. During the ANZAC campaign, Atatürk was the commander in charge of the Turkish forces. This site is significant as it houses the final resting place of the Founder of the Republic of Türkiye.

The Delegation was taken on a guided tour of the Mausoleum and a great deal of Atatürk's history and personal belongings explained to along the tour. We were able to better understand the profound impact he had on the Turkish nation and the importance his legacy continues to have in modern day Türkiye.

As part of this official visit, a wreath laying service and signing of official memorial book was also performed. It was a special ceremony and an honour to pay our respects on behalf of our community to a leader who ultimately modernised and brought peace to the region.



**23 April 2025**

- The Delegation visited the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA). The TGNA has 600 members and is located in Ankara, the capital city of Türkiye.

I was honoured to attend the TGNA General Assembly Special Session for the Anniversary of Foundation of the TGNA and have a guided tour of the TGNA. This coincided with National Sovereignty and Children's Day in Türkiye – a very significant day in Türkiye that celebrates democracy and the importance of young people.

- As part of this visit we were able to participate in a Q and A style meeting with other Parliamentarians. We spoke at length about public housing, population growth, farming and other economic activities. It was interesting to learn about their housing policy and reducing homelessness in the major cities and compare them to Victorian policy.
- The Delegation joined a reception hosted by HE Halil Eldemir, the President of the Türkiye-Australia Interparliamentary Friendship Group. Other Parliamentarians also joined this reception. We had the opportunity to discuss the relationship between Türkiye and Victoria. Many shared topics of interest were discussed including: public transport, tourism, traffic management, public housing, homelessness, population growth and public safety.

We also took the opportunity to thank the Turkish Government for their ongoing support in maintaining the war graves and memories of Australian's who died at Gallipoli, reflecting on what a significant place of remembrance it is for many nations, Australia included and indeed Türkiye.

- The Delegation departed Ankara to Çanakkale (domestic flight).

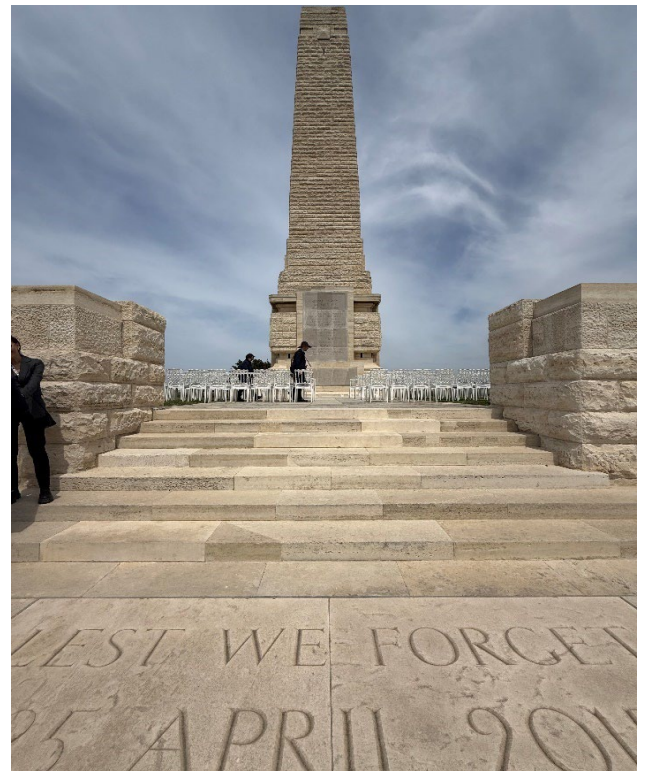




## 24 April 2025

- The Delegation attended the Ceremony for the 110th Anniversary of the Land Wars of Çanakkale. The service was delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture Gokhan Yazgi. A speech was also made by the Director of Gallpolli Historic Site, Mr Ismail Kasdemir. HRH Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, also made a speech on behalf of the Allies.
- This was followed with a military parade by Armed Forces and Veterans including Turkish, and Commonwealth Countries service members. It was special to join the dignataries and pay my respects to the fallen Turkish soldiers. I had the opportunity to walk amongst the many graves and place flowers as a mark of respect.
- We then joined other dignataries to watch the impressive Soloturk Turkish Airforce Aerobatics Team, which included the formal proceeding for the Turkish commeration.
- The Delegation also attended the Commemoration of France at the French Military Cemetery followed by the Commemoration of the United Kingdom, at the Commonwealth and Ireland Memorial. It was an honour to pay my resepects to the resting place of so many brave soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.





## **25 April 2025**

- The Delegation travelled by ferry to attend the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at Anzac Cove. The Australian and New Zealand Governments jointly conduct the ANZAC Day Gallipoli Dawn Service on 25 April each year at the ANZAC Commemorative Site, Gallipoli, Türkiye.

The Dawn Service is an important time for reflection on the service and sacrifice of our state's veterans. The Minister for Veterans, The Hon. Natalie Suleyman lay a wreath on behalf of our Delegation and the Victorian Government. Also in attendance was the New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon MP, and Ambassador of India and Consul of France, Britain, Governor General of Australia and Ambassador of Australia.

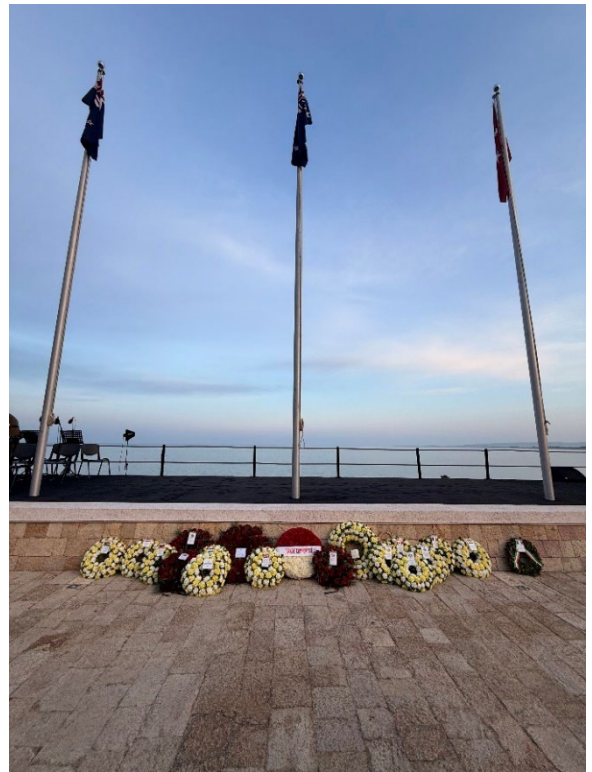
Victoria raised the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Battalions, which landed in the second wave on April 25. The first wave—comprising the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Battalions—came from Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia, with the 12th being a composite unit. The third wave included the 1st to 4th Battalions from New South Wales.

It was heartening to also know that there was a record number of Australians in attendance this year, including Victorians from Melbourne's West.

- Upon conclusion of the ANZAC Day Dawn service, our Delegation attended a very moving service at Lone Pine Cemetery and Chunuk Bair. It was at Lone Pine that I was able to lay a wreath as the Member for Laverton on behalf of my local community. The Lone Pine Monument commemorates the 3,268 Australians and 456 New Zealanders who died in the campaign and have no known grave, and the 960 Australians and 252 New Zealanders who were buried at sea.

We should always continue to support Australians to attend these services, particularly the dawn service at ANZAC Cove. It is an integral part of the great Australian spirit and our history.





**26 April 2025**

- The Delegation visited the Troy Museum and then the Troy Archaeological Site before departing by bus for Istanbul. The Museum, through artifacts unearthed by local excavations, document the life of Troy and its cultures, which left their mark in the Troas Region, which went down in history with Homer's Iliad Epic.
- The Museum visit was followed by walk around the actual archaeological site of Troy. After a visit to the Museum and learning about the life during that period it was great to be able to walk around this site first hand.



**27 April 2025**

- The Delegation attended Istanbul's Sultan Ahmet Mosque (Blue Mosque), which is a place of tremendous cultural significance and place of worship. This gave me a deeper understanding of the Islamic faith.
- We also attended in a guided tour or Basilica Cistern, a famous ancient Byzantine underground reservoir and has multiple heads of Medusa.
- The Delegation then embarked on a tour of the busy Bosphorus.



## 28 April 2025

- The Delegation visited the Grand Bazaar and met with businesses representatives, including CEO Mr Enver Cetin, who explained the history and significance of the Grand Bazaar and the trade that occurs there on a daily basis.
- We met with the chair of the Council of Foreign Economic Relations of the Türkiye-Australia Business Council. Mr Steven Young is an Australian of Turkish heritage based in Istanbul and we spoke about growing business ties between Australia and Türkiye. He noted the opportunities of Türkiye sending a delegation to the World Chamber's Conference in Melbourne 2025.



**29 April 2025**

- The Delegation met with the Maarif Vakfi Dr Murtaza Yetis and members from the Turkish Education Foundation. The foundation currently has a number of schools in Australia, including in Kilmore, Victoria.

We spoke about education in Victoria, and the commitment of the Victorian Government towards education. Maarif Vakfi, spoke to how the Government's commitments, provides confidence for their current schools to operate and grow within Victoria. It was insightful to hear about the tremendous work they do in providing education via schools across the world.

- Depart Istanbul for Melbourne.



### **Concluding remarks:**

The visit to Türkiye as part of the Victorian Parliament's cross-party delegation was an opportunity to represent the Laverton community at commemoration services held across several days around ANZAC Day. The services that I attended over a number of days were filled with reflection on so many young lives lost on shores that, for the ANZACs are so far from their homeland. I was also filled with gratitude on the compassion and care of the Turkish people for the preservation of the marked and unmarked graves, the memorials and landmarks in Gallipoli. It truly is a sacred place that every Australian should have the opportunity to visit and reflect upon.

Victoria and Türkiye have long had strong cultural, historical, social and economic ties. The beginning of which were forged on the shores of Gallipoli with the loss of so many lives in such tragic circumstances during wartime. However, these ties have continued to be strengthened for over a century and to this day are strengthened and nurtured between our communities and Governments.

I strongly believe that it is so important that Australians continue to make the journey and pilgrimage to Gallipoli, to pay their respects to our ANZACs. As the Member for Laverton, I am in a unique position to represent our communities and, on returning from such commemorations, share my experiences and insights with schools, service clubs, and community groups.

Today, Victoria is home to largest Turkish community in Australia and many successful Turkish migrants. Opportunities can continue to grow in this area with further investment, trade and tourism. This delegation has enhanced my understanding of these opportunities and helped strengthen my relationship with business, consular and parliamentary colleagues in Türkiye. I look forward to continuing this very important relationship between our two countries.

I would like to thank the Turkish Parliament for their tremendous hospitality and assistance to enable this trip to be undertaken by Victorian MPs on an annual basis. It is an experience that I continue to regularly share with my Turkish community. I have a richer understanding of their history, their language, their faith and important the economic opportunities that exist between Türkiye and Victoria. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Australian Embassy for their assistance with logistics on ANZAC Day.

Lest We Forget



**List of travel expenses to be claimed**

Date	Reason	Cost (AUD)
17,18,19 April 2025	3 nights accommodation in Istanbul	\$1,241.82
20 April 2025	Domestic flight from Istanbul to Ankara	\$122.70
20 April 2025	1 night accommodation in Ankara	\$275.78
21 April 2025	1 night in Cappadocia	\$442.94
22 April 2025	1 night accommodation in Ankara	\$282.77
23 April 2025	Domestic flight to Cannakale Airport	\$201.06
23,24,25 April 2025	3 nights accommodation in Cannakale	\$737.85
26,27,28 April 2025	3 nights accommodation Istanbul	\$1,246.73
18,28,29 April 2025	3 days mini bus taxi transportation for travel to and from cultural tours, Turkish Business Council dinner and Turkish school visit and Istanbul airport.	\$162.80