

Member	Pauline Richards	Electorate	Cranbourne
Period	1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025		

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

Regulation 7 - Motor vehicle allowance	
Total amount paid to member for motor vehicle allowance	-\$1,472.77
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	Yes

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

Regulation 10 - Travel allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Town or city in which accommodation was located	Value of the accommodation
17-Mar-25	21-Mar-25	Parliamentary Sitings	\$1,311.67	Melbourne	\$1,180.00
31-Mar-25	03-Apr-25	Parliamentary Sitings	\$868.92	Melbourne	\$834.30
12-May-25	16-May-25	Parliamentary Sitings	\$1,296.74	Melbourne	\$1,094.40
19-May-25	20-May-25	Parliamentary Sitings	\$283.52	Melbourne	\$278.10
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			12		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$3,760.85		

Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Mode of transport	Value of transport
Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance			\$0.00		

Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims			
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid
29-May-25	12-Jun-25	Flights from Melbourne to India on electorate business - undertaking research, representing the views and interests of constituents. Further this will include participation in official and community activities to which the Member is invited	\$4,417.66
29-May-25	12-Jun-25	This claim is for previously approved Reg12 claim and acquits internal flights, travelling on electorate business - undertaking research, representing the views and interest of constituents, participating in official and community activities to which I was invited as a member of Parliament	\$2,773.50
Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims			14
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance			\$7,191.16

International Travel Report

Pauline Richards, MP

Victorian Members of Parliament Delegation to India

29th May to 9th June 2025

Statement of objectives and reason for travel

From 30th May until 9th June 2025 I was pleased to join colleagues in a multi-member Victorian Member of Parliament Delegation to India. Together with Members of Parliament representing Narre Warren North and Wendouree in the Victorian Legislative Assembly and South East and Northern Metropolitan Regions in the Legislative Council, I was able to visit sites of significance to our multi-faith, culturally diverse Indian community in Cranbourne. Further, this delegation allowed me to engage with Government officials, the Parliament of India, the Legislative Assembly of Kerala State and members of the executive.

Representing Cranbourne

Victoria's relationship with India is of increasing strategic, economic, and cultural importance. From trade and investment to education and cultural exchange, the Victoria–India partnership has become a critical pillar in Victoria's international engagement.

India is one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world, and its expanding middle class offers vast opportunities for Victorian businesses. India is Victoria's third-largest source of international students, second-largest source of skilled migrants, and one of its fastest-growing trading partners.

Education is a particularly strong link between Victoria and India. Melbourne attracts thousands of Indian students each year who in turn contribute significantly to Victoria's economy—through tuition and living expenses—but also serve as cultural ambassadors who strengthen people-to-people ties.

Moreover, India and Victoria share common democratic values, a commitment to pluralism and adherence to the Westminster system of parliament.

Victoria has embraced its Indian community, which is now one of the largest in the state. Indians make up over 9% of Cranbourne's population, and their influence is visible in local businesses, festivals, places of worship, and community organizations. Events such as Diwali and Holi are celebrated widely and supported by our local council and state government, helping to promote multiculturalism and mutual respect. These connections foster social harmony and ensure that the Indian diaspora remains an active and valued part of Victorian society. The City of Casey is home to over 14,000 Indian residents.

According to the 2021 census, there were over six thousand people who self-report having Indian ancestry in Cranbourne, three times the state average and the largest diaspora in the electorate. With the growth in the Cranbourne community, there will be significantly more people who have Indian heritage at the time of undertaking this delegation.

Melbourne's southeastern suburbs are home to a vibrant and active Indian-Australian community, supported by a range of institutions that promote cultural, social, and humanitarian engagement.

The Sikh Volunteers

Founded in 2014, Sikh Volunteers Australia is a Melbourne-based charitable organization dedicated to providing free meals and support to those in need. Operating from a commercial kitchen in Melbourne's southeast, SVA prepares approximately 10,000 meals daily, serving individuals experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, and those affected by natural disasters. Their services extend beyond Melbourne, with volunteers traveling to regions like Taree, New South Wales, to assist flood-affected communities. In recognition of their efforts, SVA was honored with the Premier's Award for Community Harmony at the 2021 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

Gurdwara Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Officer

Gurdwara Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Officer (SGND) is a prominent Sikh place of worship and community hub established to serve the growing Sikh population in Melbourne's southeastern suburbs. SGND is actively involved in community welfare initiatives, particularly in providing food relief. The Gurdwara collaborates with local organizations to distribute food packages and offer outreach services, especially during times of crisis or need. This commitment to service aligns with the Sikh principle of "Seva" (selfless service), reflecting the Gurdwara's dedication to supporting the broader community.

SGND serves as a platform for interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange with participation from individuals of various faiths and backgrounds, promoting mutual respect and understanding.

The Gurdwara offers educational programs aimed at teaching the Sikh faith, language, and cultural practices to both the younger generation and interested members of the wider community. These programs help preserve Sikh traditions and facilitate cultural integration, ensuring that the values of Sikhism are passed down and understood across generations.

Alongside many of the attendees on our delegation, attendance at both the Sikh Volunteers and Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara is an important element of my role as a Member of Parliament representing Cranbourne's strong, vibrant and altruistic Sikh community.

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Cranbourne

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Cranbourne is a Hindu temple located in Cranbourne South. Part of the global BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, the Mandir serves as a spiritual and cultural hub for the Indian community in Melbourne's southeastern suburbs. The Mandir hosts a variety of cultural and community events throughout the year, including: Shri Swaminarayan Jayanti & Shri Ram Navami Celebrations: These events celebrate the birth anniversaries of Lord Swaminarayan and Lord Ram, featuring devotional activities and community participation.

Alongside the Member for Narre Warren North, I have attended many Women's Day Celebrations; events dedicated to honouring women, with over 1,300 attendees participating in activities that highlight the role of women in the community. Other important activities include Diwali-Annakut Celebrations of Diwali, featuring the offering of vegetarian delicacies (Annakut) to the deities, symbolizing gratitude and devotion.

In February 2025, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha conducted the 'Bhumi Pujan' ceremony for the construction of the fifth Akshardham temple in Melbourne's south east. This event was attended by thousands of devotees and marks a significant expansion of the Mandir's facilities.

Our local Malayalee community

The Kerala community in Cranbourne is vibrant and active, with several organizations fostering cultural, social, and educational development among Malayalee families in the region.

Organisations include Casey Malayalee and the Cranbourne Malayalee Community Inc both of which are dedicated to serving the cultural and social needs of Malayalee families in Cranbourne and surrounding areas.

St Thomas the Apostle Parish Clyde North

St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish is a vibrant and growing Catholic community located in Clyde North. Established in 2012 with just 30 founding members, the parish has expanded significantly over the years and now boasts over 1,000 parishioners. Many of the parishioners of St Thomas are from Kerala.

Travel Diary

Pre-departure briefing Monday 19th May

Before leaving the delegation met with Vidyanand Sagaram and Michelle Wade from Global Victoria.

29th May: Flight Melbourne to New Delhi

Accommodation: Le Meridien New Delhi \$211.69

30th May: Visit to significant cultural and religious sites including the Jama Masjid, a 350-year-old holy site with a capacity to host 25,000 worshippers, this is one of the largest Sunni mosques in India.

Visit to Parliament of India: Home to the world's largest democracy and officially opened by Prime Minister Modi in 2020 as the Commonwealth's largest member state Parliament, it was fascinating to learn about the processes and procedures to undertake electronic voting in the chamber. The adaptations highlighted by the attentive secretariat of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were worthwhile to my role as Government Whip in the Parliament of Victoria.

31st May: Travel by train to Agra. Visit to Taj Mahal via Gatimaan Express from New Delhi. The train trip provided an insight into fast-train travel and the importance of this deeply historic monument. I was particularly interested to learn that people who live in Agra are able to access heavily discounted tickets to the site.

The return trip from Agra to Delhi traversed along the Yamuna Expressway where I observed significant smokestacks and poor atmospheric conditions. The presence of these smokestacks is a notable feature of the industrial landscape in this corridor. Brick kilns are prevalent along the route and use traditional methods of brick firing, which involve burning coal or biomass, leading to the release of smoke and particulate matter. The presence of numerous brick kilns contributes to the characteristic smokestacks observed along the highway.

Accommodation: Le Meridien New Delhi \$211.69

1st June: Visit to Swaminarayan Akshardham, the home of Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) a Hindu religious and social organization within the Swaminarayan tradition.

Swaminarayan Akshardham, is a prominent Hindu temple and cultural complex located in Delhi and opened in 2005. Constructed using pink sandstone and white marble, the temple showcases intricate carvings and showcases Hindu heritage.

Travel from Delhi to Amritsar \$135.00

Accommodation: Le Meridien Amritsar \$115.44

2nd June: Visit to Golden Temple, the most sacred shrine in Sikhism. Founded by Guru Ram Das in 1577 and completed in 1604, the temple symbolizes humility, and devotion to God. Its name comes from the gold-plated sanctum that reflects beautifully in the surrounding Amrit Sarovar (Pool of Nectar).

At the heart of the temple lies the holy scripture of the Sikhs and is open to people of all religions, backgrounds, and castes, reinforcing Sikhism's inclusive values.

The Golden Temple is also home to the world's largest free community kitchen, or *Langar*, which serves hot meals to over 100,000 people daily, regardless of their background. Volunteers manage everything—from cooking to cleaning—embodying the Sikh principles of seva (selfless service) and equality.

The Golden Temple is a living symbol of peace, service, and spiritual resilience.

Travel from Amritsar to Trivandrum \$291.00

Accommodation: O' By Tamara \$148.64

3rd June: Rest day.

Accommodation: O' By Tamara \$148.64

4th June: Visit to Kerala Legislative Assembly: Tour and meeting organised by Honourable AN Shamseer, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The key purpose and outcome of this meeting

was an understanding of the rules of procedure and conduct of business in the Kerala Legislative Assembly.

Meeting with Honourable Smt. Veena George, Minister for Health, Women and Child Welfare. During this visit the Minister and her Department Secretary outlined Kerala's success in combating e-cigarette use, increasing access to women's health services and population level cancer screening.

Accommodation: O' By Tamara \$148.64

5th June: Visit to St Thomas Church, Valia Veli, a prominent place of worship located in the coastal village of Veli, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India. Dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle, the church holds significant historical and spiritual importance in the region. It serves as a spiritual centre for the local Catholic community, offering regular Mass services catering to the diverse congregation. The church also hosts various religious and cultural events throughout the year, fostering a sense of community among its members.

St. Thomas is credited with baptizing many Keralites and converting them to Christianity. His teachings emphasized the integration of Christian beliefs with local traditions, making the faith more accessible. This led to a deep-rooted Christian presence in Kerala, uniquely Indian in its cultural expression but still deeply connected to its Apostolic origins.

The community actively participates in various cultural events, including the annual Onam festival, which features traditional music, dance, and community gatherings.

Accommodation: O' By Tamara \$148.64

6th June: Unwell

The delegation moved on to other destinations in India but I was too unwell to travel, hence I made arrangements to return home as quickly as possible – once I was physically able.

Accommodation: O' By Tamara \$131.52

7th June: Unwell

Accommodation: O' By Tamara \$143.01

8th June: Travel from Trivandrum to Melbourne via Bengaluru and Sydney

Results achieved

This delegation strengthened my understanding and facilitated my ability to represent the needs and aspirations of the diverse Indian Australian community. Further, this delegation assured my electorate of my commitment to and respect for the community's social, cultural and religious institutions.