

<b>Member</b>	Bridget Vallence	<b>Electorate</b>	Evelyn
<b>Period</b>	1July 2025 to 30 September 2025		

<b>Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance</b>			
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance			\$10,969.59
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance			\$3,051.50

<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
05-Aug-25	06-Aug-25	Shadow Ministerial Meetings 05/08/2025 and 06/08/2025	\$352.38	Melbourne	\$275.00
28-Jul-25	01-Aug-25	Parliamentary Sitings	\$1,712.00	Melbourne	\$1,100.00
16-Jun-25	20-Jun-25	Parliamentary Sitings	\$1,585.56	Melbourne	\$1,100.00
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			9		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$3,649.94		

<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
07-Jul-25	18-Jul-25	Accommodation in Japan for electorate business to explore economic issues, industry innovation and trade opportunities to the state.	\$4,689.71
Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims			11
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance			\$4,689.71

## Travel Report – Bridget Vallence MP, Parliament of Victoria

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Electorate	Evelyn District
Shadow Ministerial Portfolios	Trade and Investment, Finance
Places visited	Japan (Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Yokoyama)
Dates of travel	7 July to 18 July 2025

### **Purpose of travel:**

#### **Explore trade and investment opportunities, industry innovation, and economic issues**

The purpose of this electorate business was to explore economic issues, industry innovation, and trade and investment opportunities in Japan for the economic benefit of the Evelyn electorate and the state of Victoria, enhancing the close economic and cultural ties between Victoria and Japan noting my membership of the Parliament of Victoria's Parliamentary Friends of Japan group.

My visit included engagements with the Vice-Chairperson of the Aichi Prefectural Government, several officials of the Aichi Prefectural and Osaka City governments, diplomatic officials at the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, Global Victoria's Trade Commissioner, and key industry stakeholders, detailed within the report, and were conducted from Tuesday 8 July to Thursday 17 July 2025, excluding the weekend.

Victoria and Japan share a long and mutually beneficial economic partnership with synergies in a number of priority sectors. The Victorian Government has demonstrated its commitment to maintaining this strong relationship through its establishment of the Victorian Government Trade and Investment office in Tokyo. Evelyn electorate businesses have benefited from preferential access to export premium goods to Japan, such as Yarra Valley wines, spirits, cheese, beef and horticultural products. Opportunities exist to develop Japanese investment potential in our region, particularly in advanced manufacturing and eco-tourism.

Japan is Victoria's most mature market in Asia and has been a major source of foreign direct investment for over 40 years. Japan is Victoria's third largest two-way trading partner valued at \$7.2 billion and fourth largest export market. Victoria is home to approximately 200 Japanese companies with offices and operations in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Our strong ties are demonstrated by 'sister' relationships. The Victoria-Aichi sister-state relationship, established in 1980, plays a crucial role in promoting economic and trade exchanges between Victoria and Aichi, facilitating direct business connections, trade delegations, and investment opportunities. The Melbourne-Osaka sister-city relationship, established in 1978, is based on collaboration and cultural exchange, and enriching both cities' innovation ecosystems.

The visit to Japan highlighted opportunities for the Victorian electorate to further enhance economic cooperation in a variety of key sectors including food and fibre, life sciences, climate change and green energy, education, digital and enabling technologies, critical minerals mining and processing, and defence and advanced manufacturing.

## **Overview of engagements and key insights to benefit the Evelyn Electorate and Victoria**

### *Global Victoria Trade and Investment Office, Tokyo*

In Tokyo, I attended the Victorian Government's Trade and Investment Office to meet with and receive a briefing from Adam Cunneen, Victoria's Commissioner to North Asia. The office has the dual purpose of facilitating exports into Japan, including from the Evelyn electorate, and developing and maintaining relationships with current and potential Japanese investors for the Victorian economy.

The briefing covered economic issues relating to both Japan and South Korea, and a discussion about key industries and innovation opportunities that can drive trade and investment to benefit Victoria and the Yarra Ranges region. Global Victoria staff at the Trade and Investment Office enable greater opportunities for Victorian business to export to Japan, connect with investors, and engage with businesses for inputs vital to growth and jobs. Trading opportunities for Evelyn electorate businesses include wine and distilled beverages, table grapes, cheese, premium beef, horticultural products, and eco-tourism.

Global Victoria outlined that the economies of Victoria, Japan and South Korea have similarities. Given there is limited availability and mining of natural resources in these economies, economic benefit must be derived in other ways. Opportunities exist for greater collaboration in industries such as agribusiness, life sciences, food manufacturing, green technologies and renewable energy, and enabling technologies.

To enable this, Global Victoria's Trade and Investment Office offers market assistance and facilitation to Victorian companies looking to grow their footprint in Japan and/or South Korea, including from the Yarra Ranges region. Victoria's Trade Office in Tokyo can assist Victorian businesses with entry strategy, with engagement and facilitation with potential local partners to help navigate the unique due diligence processes, with scale-up strategy, and with relevant trade events.

We discussed Global Victoria's support of the trade mission to FOODEX Japan in March 2025, with over half of Australia's businesses attending being from Victoria. Victorian wine, including from the Yarra Valley, and fruits including grapes remain valuable commodities for export into Japan. It was emphasised that there is greater opportunity for increased export into Japan of wine and distilled spirits from the Yarra Valley, which I will pursue directly with local producers and Wine Yarra Valley.

Further, we discussed the ongoing dialogue between Victoria and Japan regarding bilateral biosecurity agreements to enable more export of Victorian produce including strawberries, cherries and other stone fruit produced in the Yarra Valley.

Energy security and decarbonisation are key issues for both Victoria and Japan. Export of energy to Japan is a key economic driver for Victoria, given Japan only produces around 9 per cent of its own energy from a mix of sources, and both our markets have ambitious decarbonisation targets. We discussed the status of the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain initiative to commercially produce clean liquified hydrogen in Victoria for export with Japanese investment, which has stalled. Global Victoria and Invest Victoria are pursuing potential Japanese investment in the CarbonNet Project to establish a commercial scale Carbon Capture Storage hub in Gippsland.

There are emerging opportunities for economic development in the start-ups. Global Victoria is engaging with Japanese start-ups looking for opportunities to set up and commercialise in Victoria, for example in areas of food manufacturing and life sciences. Japanese investment houses are demonstrating an increasing interest to invest in Victorian start-ups, creating exciting opportunities for entrepreneurs

emerging from the Yarra Ranges region to explore. This is also underpinned by strong ties between Victorian and Japanese universities developing research and innovation in ITC, cyber, engineering and enabling technologies. Victoria is one of the world's leaders in life sciences and there is an emerging opportunity to partner with Japanese pharma – traditionally conservative but increasingly open to trade and investment opportunities.

Defence remains an important opportunity not only because of our shared interest in peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, but for economic growth and jobs in Victoria. Hanwha Defense Australia, a subsidiary of South Korea's Hanwha Aerospace, has established a significant presence in Geelong focusing on advanced manufacturing of armored vehicles for the Australian Army which creates jobs and provides an economic boost for Victoria. During my travel to Japan, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries was in the final stages of its bid to build frigates for the Royal Australian Navy, a contract it was successfully awarded in early August 2025.

Victoria is also exploring opportunities for engagement with Japan in the property development sector, exploring modern methods of construction including prefabrication to expedite medium-rise housing towers in Melbourne, an area that Japan has significant expertise in and that the Victorian Government requires to meet its proposed housing targets.

#### *Australian Embassy in Japan*

I visited the Australian Embassy located in Tokyo, and received a briefing from Stuart Watts, acting Deputy Ambassador on behalf of His Excellency Ambassador Justin Hayhurst who could not make the briefing, and Dan Glover, Counsellor for Industry, Science and Resources.

Since the re-establishment of bilateral relations in 1952, the Australia-Japan relationship has developed into a diverse and rounded partnership that is fundamental to the strategic and economic interests of both countries and the state of Victoria. Since Australia and Japan elevated the bilateral relationship to a Special Strategic Partnership in 2014, a commitment the Australian Government reaffirmed in 2024, Victorians have benefited from a strong and multifaceted relationship with Japan.

A broad range of issues were discussed including the current state of Australia-Japan relations, further strengthening economic and cultural ties, and trade and investment opportunities for Victoria particularly in energy, defence, agriculture, enabling technologies, and in research and education exchanges.

During my visit in July, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries was in the final stages of its bid to construct frigates for the Royal Australian Navy, competing with Germany. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries was successfully awarded the contract to build frigates for Australia in early August 2025. Noting the high-level information I was provided about Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' plan to further explore opportunities for collaboration and investment with Australia, this presents a good opportunity for Victoria's defence supply chain sector. Japan is an important partner in the defence space given our long-term strategic and trusting relationship.

We also discussed how energy production remains an important area for ongoing engagement and economic development, with both Victoria and Japan having interest in energy security, climate change and decarbonisation. Japan imports energy from Australia, in particular gas, and has a heightened concern about Australia's and Victoria's future energy policy, including Victoria's policies relating to gas. Victoria and Japan should continue to explore strategic opportunities in relation to energy, including Japanese investment in green energy production in Victoria, and export of energy generated in Victoria – both gas

and renewables – to derive ongoing and increased economic benefit for Victoria. The Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain initiative was discussed, in relation to the economic viability of the project given prohibitive transportation and shipment costs, and challenges as to pursuing blue or green hydrogen generation. The Embassy believes Japan remains very interested in investing in this project that would create economic benefit and jobs for Victoria and energy supply for export. Further, in relation to energy, traditional Japanese oil and gas businesses are increasingly looking to diversify and invest in renewable energy projects in Australia, including Victoria, such as wind and solar, and renewable energy from gas. An example is INPEX, Japan's largest oil and gas exploration and production company, which now has a significant presence in Darwin, Northern Territory.

We also discussed an emerging opportunity for Victoria to engage with Japanese investors in relation to critical minerals mining and processing, given critical minerals are essential commodities for renewable energy, electric vehicles, computing and electronics, and defence and aerospace.

Another key area of engagement for Australia and Japan is in relation to critical technologies. Critical technologies include artificial intelligence (AI), quantum, photonics, robotics, cyber, RNA biotech and advanced ICT. Victorian business, Quantum Brilliance, which has received investment from the Victorian Government through Breakthrough Victoria, has set up an office in Japan. Victoria has recently invested in mRNA research and production facilities, so there are further opportunities for our biotech industry.

The Embassy informed me about their engagement with Japanese parliamentarians and industry in relation to how to regulate the increasing use of, and reliance on, AI technology. The Victorian Government could gain useful insights from these experiences, specifically in relation to the appropriate security settings required to deliver and protect the economic benefits that can be derived from AI. In the month prior to my visit, the Japanese Parliament enacted the AI Promotion Act in June 2025, officially titled the *Act on the Promotion of Research and Development and the Utilization of AI-Related Technologies*. This is a landmark piece of legislation focused on fostering the development and responsible use of AI in Japan in a promotional, rather than restrictive way. The Embassy informed me that Australia had joined the Hiroshima AI Process Friends Group in 2024 which is a collaboration between many nations towards the safe and responsible use of AI.

Additionally, agricultural trade remains a strong opportunity for Australia and Victoria, including the Evelyn electorate. Interestingly, around 12 per cent of calories consumed in Japan are comprised of imported goods from Australia such as wheat, rice and grains. Export opportunities for Victorian wines and distilled spirits remain strong, as well as table grapes, presenting growing export potential for Yarra Valley grape growers and beverage producers.

### *The National Diet*

I visited the National Diet, the national Parliament of Japan, and met with the former Secretary of the House of Representatives for International Relations and Policy Analysis, Hayashiyama Yasuhiko. As a lower house MP, it was a privilege to enter the lower house, the House of Representatives, of Japan's national parliament. During the time of my visit, an election campaign was underway for a portion of the seats in the upper house, the House of Councillors. Women only make up around 15 per cent of the elected members of the House of Representatives, but it was expected the upcoming election would see more women elected to the House of Councillors. Voter turnout in Japan is relatively low, dropping to

around 54 per cent of eligible voters turning out at the last election. Of those voters, the proportion of young people voting is even lower, with only around 35 per cent of young people voting.

I was also interested to learn about the role of the Emperor and Imperial family in the political landscape of Japan. While the Imperial family continues to enjoy strong support across the Japanese population, there are continued calls for the Imperial family to modernise and become more relatable. Despite the UN recommending the Japanese government alter the rules of the line of royal succession to permit a female Emperor to sit on the Chrysanthemum Throne, the relatively conservative government has so far refused to change the rules despite this only being a legislative change and not requiring any constitutional change. This is presenting a real challenge for the Imperial family as there are fewer children in the family and the Emperor's daughter is currently not permitted to take on the role, despite her popularity with the Japanese people.

### *Tokyo Innovation Base*

I visited Tokyo Innovation Base which has multiple floors offering collaborative spaces for entrepreneurs to workshop and develop ideas and technologies and engage with business and investors, with Community Manager, Maki Ozura, regularly hosting engagement activities and meetups for students interested in startups and entrepreneurship to meet businesses, investors, and university affiliates.

The objective of the Tokyo Innovation Base is to be a global node of innovation where individuals can collaborate to advance society with breakthrough ideas. Some of the meetups that are hosted at Tokyo Innovation Base encourage English speaking only, as it has been identified for Japanese startups and Japanese business that this is a barrier for engaging with international investors or international startups.

Tokyo Innovation Base is supported by the Tokyo Metropolitan government as part of economic development in Tokyo, which is noted as the centre of the Japanese innovation ecosystem and is attracting significant Japanese venture capital funding. This creates a great opportunity for young Victorians interested in startups and entrepreneurship, especially those seeking investment capital.

For Victorian startups looking for VC investment, Japan is an attractive market for these opportunities. Not only do Victoria and Japan have strong economic ties and shared values, there is also minimal time zone difference between the economies, which enables easy communication and the efficient exchange of information.

Interest by Japanese investors is growing, which presents major opportunities for Victoria. It is important to note that Japanese VCs are increasingly looking abroad for investment opportunities, particularly in healthtech, life sciences, Fintech and artificial intelligence (AI).

### *Osaka City Government*

At my meeting with the Osaka City Government, I met with the Director General for Economic Strategy and International Relations, Wada Aya, the Manager for International Relations and Business Promotion, Oono Masafumi, and assistant managers Kimishima Masanori and Hyun Soo Park, for a briefing in relation to the current state of economic activity in Osaka and further developing and strengthening economic ties.

I also received a tour of the Council Chamber from Secretariat Officials to the Osaka City Council, Akiko Kojima and Yasaki Kuwahara.

During the briefing, we discussed the importance of the sister city relationship between Osaka and Melbourne which was established in 1978. Mayor Yokoyama had the opportunity to visit Melbourne in 2023 for the celebration of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this sister city relationship that fosters economic collaboration, innovation, and cultural exchange. Oono-san also took me to visit the river and bridge that is reminiscent of the Yarra River. Oono-san showed me the plaque near the bridge that described Midosuji Avenue as the sister street of Swanston Street in Melbourne's CBD.

Osaka city is the second largest business hub in Japan. Osaka is currently hosting the World Expo. Its other priority focus is the urban revitalisation project, called the Grand Green Osaka Project, which is a major innovation hub surrounded by large open green spaces in the Umekita district. The development is a joint venture of nine companies led by Mitsubishi Estate Co. Ltd. The area was formerly a shipyard and train depot and has been repurposed and revitalised to enhance the innovation ecosystem in Osaka and attract international investment and trade. Fisherman's Bend in Melbourne could benefit from a similar renewal experience, which has the potential to attract new investment and employment opportunities.

Osaka has identified its priority areas for future economic development in life sciences and new energy. Given the synergies with Victoria's emerging strengths in medicine and biotechnology, this presents a strategic opportunity to further develop economic ties with Osaka. Victorian business, MedTech Actuator, which has received funding from the Victorian Government's LaunchVic in 2018, 2021 and 2025, has set up an office in Osaka, and supports Victorian MedTech, HealthTech and BioTech startups through intensive mentorship, industry collaboration, and capital raising support. By taking advantage of the innovation push and incentives offered by Osaka, they can assist Victorian healthcare startups to initiate their global business strategy.

It was noted that the 50-year anniversary of the Osaka-Melbourne sister city relationship will occur in 2028, and it is proposed that a delegation from the Osaka City Government will visit Melbourne to mark the occasion.

#### *World Expo 2025 – Osaka*

Osaka is host to the 2025 World Expo located at Yumeshima for 6 months, from April to October. The theme 'Designing Future Society for our Lives' is focused on sustainable development that supports social challenges with innovations in science and technology. The Australian Government has an exhibition pavilion with the Victorian Government as a minor partner.

I met Sheridan Piltz, Protocol and Visit Officer for the Australia Pavilion, and received a briefing and tour of the Australia Pavilion, including behind-the-scenes. The Australia Pavilion theme is 'Chasing the Sun' which provides an immersive experience demonstrating our diversity, stunning natural environment, international cooperation, and creative solutions to solve critical global challenges, and showcases innovation and tourism opportunities in Australia. The Australia Pavilion is providing a platform to highlight Australia's – including Victoria's – strengths across a range of priority sectors such as tourism, agriculture, premium foods, education, space, health, sciences, the arts and clean energy production.

The Expo venue is presented on a massive scale and has been constructed with materials repurposed from the Tokyo Olympics held in 2021, demonstrating sustainability, recycling and innovation. I also gained

insights with tours of the France Pavilion (as co-convener of Parliamentary Friends of France), the South Korea pavilion, the Women's Pavilion, the Healthcare Pavilion, and the Gas Pavilion.

### *STATION Ai – Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture*

I visited STATION Ai in Nagoya and met with representatives from the Aichi Prefectural Government who work there, including the Deputy Director of Economy and Industry Overseas Collaboration, Isshi Asai, the Assistant Director of Economy and Industry Overseas Collaboration, Tomotaka Sakai, and the Coordinator for International Relations in the Innovative Business Creation Department, Louis Anglionin.

STATION Ai is Japan's largest innovation base enabling collaboration between education institutions, entrepreneurs, business, and VCs, including international startups. It is an initiative of the Aichi Prefectural Government and investment company, SoftBank Group. Aichi was selected for this major innovation hub because of its strategic position in the centre of Japan, between the two economic centres of Tokyo and Osaka and being near to air and sea transportation.

Aichi is Japan's third largest economy behind Tokyo and Osaka and is Japan's manufacturing powerhouse, with the automotive industry being a dominant sector. To revitalise the local and national economy, Aichi Prefecture Government, with the support of the Japanese government, is implementing a startup and innovation strategy that enables collaboration with Japan's original equipment manufacturers, and research institutes and entrepreneurs. While Japan's automotive industry is holding up, Japan has lost its former competitive advantages in computing, camera, digital, and home appliances, hence the need for a strong innovation strategy and the STATION Ai initiative.

Given the Aichi Prefecture's existing industries with high technological capabilities, and academic institutions such as Nagoya University (which partners with the University of Melbourne) with its strong research seeds, STATION Ai is harnessing the high potential startup ecosystem. Innovation hubs are emerging in major cities, and the interesting approach of STATION Ai is a focus of engaging original equipment automotive manufacturers with startups to innovate the mobility technologies of the future.

The advantage I see for Victorian startups is this industry-led approach. Since its launch in late 2024, STATION Ai has supported around 300 startups and aims to attract around 1000 startups with a target of 20 per cent from overseas. Victorian startups, including from the Yarra Ranges region, should look to STATION Ai for opportunities. It offers collaborative workspaces, tech labs and 3D printers available for product development and testing, and access to Japanese venture capital investors eager to identify overseas investment, and legal and media services.

The Aichi Prefectural Government is also progressing an 'Aichi Startup Visa', essentially a foreign entrepreneur support program, to create a business incentive for young entrepreneurs. This is an opportunity that could be explored by young Victorians, including from the Yarra Ranges region.

The Aichi Startup Strategy involves university and research institute partnerships with France, Germany, Singapore, Israel, China, USA, Spain, Korea and Portugal, and is seeking to broaden its reach. This presents an opportunity for the Victorian Government, Victorian education and research institutes and startups.



### *Aichi Prefectural Government*

I was privileged to have the opportunity to meet the Vice-Chairperson and Deputy Speaker, Fumihiro Nambu, along with the Assistant Director of International Affairs, Masayuki Tsuboi, and the Assistant Director of Policy Planning, Yoko Ogawa. Vice-Chairperson Nambu represents the constituency of Moriyama-ku Nagoya for the Liberal Democratic Party.

The discussions focused on enhancing the economic and cultural ties between our two states, and the importance of continuing the Victoria-Aichi sister-state relationship. We discussed the importance of trade delegations to each state, and how Yarra Valley businesses have benefited from these engagements in particular with tourism, agribusiness, food manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing.

It was noted that Nagoya, Aichi, is a leading industrial hub, with many global corporations, such as Toyota, headquartered there. We discussed the automotive industry generally and noted that Toyota continues to invest significantly in Victoria and has employed thousands of Victorians. We also discussed enhancing education exchanges and research ties. There is currently a partnership between Nagoya University and the University of Melbourne developing collaborations through joint research such as in food tech, biotech, and life sciences.

I look forward to hosting Vice-Chairperson Nambu at the Victorian Parliament when he leads a delegation of representatives from the Aichi Prefectural Government to Victoria in late October 2025 and encouraged him to lead the delegation on a tour of the Yarra Valley region.

### *Toyota Headquarters, Nagoya*

In Nagoya, I visited Toyota's headquarters and met with the General Manager Sales and Marketing of East Asia and Oceania, Yanaga Shinsuke, the Group Manager Sales and Marketing, Masaki Hotta, and the Group Manager Innovation and New Business Group, Maki Kinoshita.

The briefing covered technological advancements in the automotive industry from both manufacturing and product development perspectives, and how Toyota is approaching decarbonisation and the impact of artificial intelligence in production processes and new vehicles.

Victoria has a strong and long-running relationship with Toyota, and despite no longer manufacturing vehicles in Victoria, Toyota continues to invest in Victoria and employs hundreds of Victorians at its Altona facility. For over two decades, Toyota has been Australia's number one automotive car brand and has over a 20 per cent share of the automotive market, with around 300 dealers Australia-wide, including a large dealership in Lilydale in the Evelyn electorate.

Toyota has invested around \$530 million in Australia since 2018, which includes nearly \$3.5 million contribution to social initiatives such as grassroots sports. In 2024, Australians bought nearly 255,000 Toyota vehicles, a record, and Toyota paid \$287 million in tax to state and federal governments.

It was noted that while carbon emissions reduction targets are important, they do present challenges for automotive manufacturers. Each country has different consumer demands and different energy systems. Japan, for example, is lagging other nation states in producing all electric vehicles because it does not suit domestic consumption. Electricity in Japan is expensive and there is very limited charging station infrastructure. Toyota noted that while the Australian Government and Victorian Government have

emission reduction targets and are pushing for electric vehicle uptake, there is a significant lack of charging infrastructure to support this policy.

This is a key learning for the Victorian Government regarding the availability of charging infrastructure and potential investment or incentives to industry. In addition, key issues the Victoria Government will need to carefully consider, as vehicle technologies develop, is other fuel options including hydrogen and biofuels to assist Victorians with the automotive transition. Further, Toyota is pursuing a number of innovations including carbon neutral vehicles and software defined vehicles connected to the cloud in smart cities.

### *Kyoto Impact Hub*

It was interesting to visit Kyoto Impact Hub in the Nishijin Business Incubation Centre, which is part of the developing innovation ecosystem in Kyoto with Toshikiko Asai. Kyoto Impact Hub has a particular focus on social innovation and ethics at its core. It is a consultancy and creative space supporting entrepreneurs to develop businesses that have a social impact. It brings together academia, the public sector, business, artists, and social enterprise investors. Kyoto Impact Hub has collaborative working spaces and budget-friendly options which could be accessed by travelling Victorian startups seeking to collaborate with other entrepreneurs or meet academics and industry with 24-hour access and free WiFi. While Melbourne has some emerging innovation hubs, the Victorian government could consider incentives for a similar model in outer suburban areas like Lilydale and regional Victoria. The disused train station in Lilydale could present a good opportunity for such an innovation hub.

Asai is also involved in Kyoto's AI Compassion Alliance which facilitates discussion around artificial intelligence with a team of professionals in the fields of science, AI, psychology and mindfulness. With the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence Kyoto Impact Hub encourages ethical considerations with the use of AI to solve social challenges. This was particularly interesting and provides an opportunity for Victorian entrepreneurs exploring or prioritising ethical approaches.

### *Kyoto University Museum*

I took the opportunity to visit the Kyoto University Museum which manages Kyoto University's valuable museum collection and research resource archives, with exhibitions in the fields of natural sciences, engineering and humanities. As a valuable research and educational resource, collections are frequently used by researchers both at the museum and from around the world. Being part of Kyoto University, the museum functions as a unique centre for the exchange of academic ideas. Importantly there is a focus on access to the public, enabling greater opportunities for the local and international community to engage with the museum's permanent and temporary exhibitions, public lectures and events. The Technological History exhibition with its vast array of mechanical models was fascinating. It gives insights into how Victoria's university and TAFE institutions could more actively be accessible to our local primary and secondary school students. For example, Kyoto University graduate students run tours for school students showing interesting specimens in the museum and using these to encourage learning. The Children's Museum initiative has become a popular outreach program for Kyoto's school-aged students.

### *Commonwealth War Cemetery, Yokohama*

I attended the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery located in Yokohama Japan, to pay my respects and commemorate the Australian and New Zealand service men and women who died in Japan as prisoners of war or with the occupying forces after the war. Many young men from the Yarra Ranges fought the Japanese in the Second World War, including those taken as prisoners of war, that we commemorate each ANZAC Day at the Lilydale dawn service. Japan is now an extremely peaceful nation, and I was grateful to have the privilege of visiting this war cemetery in Yokohama to honour our local heroes who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms and democracy.

The cemetery was peaceful and memorials beautifully maintained. More than 2000 Allied service personnel of the Second World War are buried or commemorated at the Yokohama War Cemetery, with most having served with the Commonwealth forces of Australia, Canada, Undivided India, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, and 80 are of American and Dutch forces.

Accommodation in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Yokoyama cost AUD\$3371.05. Trains, taxis and airport transfers cost AUD\$1617.80.

Sincere thanks to the Consul-General of Japan in Melbourne, Furuya Tokuro, for the assistance with facilitating various meetings.

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### **Bridget Vallence MP**

Member for Evelyn, Parliament of Victoria

Manager of Opposition Business

Shadow Minister for Finance

Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment