

Member	Gary Maas	Electorate	Narre Warren South
Period	01 April 2023 to 30 June 2023		

Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$11,310.60
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$0.00

Regulation 7 - Motor vehicle allowance	
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

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
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$0.00		

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	
11-Jul-23	22-Jul-23	Attendance at Netroots Nation Conference in Chicago, USA on Electorate Business	\$3,804.78	
Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims			11	
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance			\$3,804.78	
See attached travel report for further details				

Report to Parliament of Victoria

Gary Maas MP – State Member for Narre Warren South

(a) the dates in respect of which the allowance is claimed;

11 - 24 July 2023 – specific claims on specific dates in this period and as detailed in spreadsheet

(b) the reason for the travel;

Conference Attendance – Netroots Nation 2023. 13 July – 15 July 2023. Chicago, IL. USA.

(c) an indication of whether the travel relates to parliamentary business or electorate business;

Travel related to electorate business

(d) if there was accommodation used in respect of the claim— (i) the town, city or suburb in which the accommodation was located; and (ii) the value of the accommodation;

AirBNB – shared accom– 1853 North Kimball Avenue, Chicago, Illinois as per receipts

(e) if there was commercial transport used in respect of the claim, the mode and value of the transport;

Uber and Taxi – as per receipts

(f) a statement of the Member's objectives;

Communication techniques and platforms are evolving and changing quickly. What was once engaging, is no longer. I want to research the latest platforms and techniques from progressive parties and organisations to be able to provide information and receive feedback from constituents via different platforms.

(g) a brief description of the Parliaments and other organisations visited (if any);

None. Engagement with elected officials of the United States Democratic Party at conference

(h) a list of those persons met in relation to the reason for the travel and the assistance or information obtained from such persons;

Jess Kutch – Action Network, Dan Schlademan – O20 Strategy Group, Paul Hogarth – Daily Kos.

James Slezak – Swayable, Jess Matthews – Backbone Digital Leaders, Beth Becker – Becker Digital Strategies, Stephanie Thomas – Connecticut Secretary of State, Lexi Ginsberg – Media Matters for America

(i) reference to any documents or publications obtained or considered to be of interest in a Parliamentary sense;

please see following pages

(j) brief summaries of the study areas pursued in the countries visited;

please see following pages

(k) a summary of the results achieved and any recommendations arising;

please see following pages

Netroots Nation is an annual conference that is held in a different US state each year. They are a not-for-profit organisation that aim to connect progressives globally, while also demonstrating training resources on how to best connect with people within their audience.

It is a large conference, with over one thousand delegates attending. Most delegates are from the US, but this year's conference saw delegates from Australia, New Zealand, England, Canada, Germany and France too. Delegates are from a variety of backgrounds but all seeking a just and civil society. Delegates came from political parties, Labour unions, Political Action Committees, Climate Action Groups, LGBTIQ+, and Women's groups to name a few. There were also several trade representatives – digital agencies, messaging specialists, software companies, campaign groups, CRM companies, digital organising companies and research and data companies. An exhibitor trade floor meant that delegates could come and converse to different interest groups and organisations about products and services that they were promoting.

The conference was similar to many in that there were Keynote (plenary) sessions that all delegates could attend as well as smaller practical training and professional development sessions. Keynote speakers this year included the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson, Tennessee State Representative Justin Jones and Black Lives Matter Co-Creator Alicia Garza, as well as recently elected 'Latino' Democrat Congress officials Rep. Greg Casar and Rep. Delia Ramirez. I enjoyed the keynote sessions – they gave me interesting comparator views to what is happening in our Victorian parliament and indeed to that in a multi-cultural Narre Warren South.

I could not help but think, how successful government policies – over several decades in this state – have been to ensure that mass racial hatred is something that is hopefully confined to the past. I also saw the benefits that compulsory voting in this state (and in Australia) has delivered in helping to curb threats such as gun violence. Lobbying and campaign donation laws are much tighter in Victoria, than in all US states. This has also acted as a sop to powerful interests, when compared to the US.

There were over 160 other sessions to attend throughout the conference's 3 days so one had to select areas of interest carefully. One training and professional development session which was useful was called 2023 Social Media News You Can Use. An imperative for modern day communication into electorates, the session showed how the social media universe has undergone more significant changes than ever before. From the sale of Twitter and its further descent into chaos to the rise of recommendation engines and Artificial Intelligence. Social Media in 2023 remains an ever-evolving space that is critical to the work we do in trying to make the world a better place for all. The training took me through all of the changes to social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and new ones that have emerged in the past year including Threads. The session also shared strategies and tactics to help adjust to these changes.

Another interesting session was entitled: Big Democracy Energy. The USA states have their Chief Electoral Officers – those who run elections are elected officials. So when democracy was at stake in 2022 mid-term elections (on the back of the 2021 Federal insurrection on Capitol Hill), Secretaries of State and pro-democracy candidates ran for election. Across the country though, election deniers also ran for the role of chief election officers in their respective states. Their platforms ranged from overturning the 2020 election result to ensuring victory for their chosen candidates in 2024. Creating the contrast between this and the competence of more progressive candidates led to resounding victories in key battleground states – Arizona, Nevada, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico and beyond. This, it is said stopped insurrectionists on their path to oversee elections. The session provided a panel of a diverse group of Democratic Secretaries of State - they discussed how they won, their communication methods, and how they outperformed expectations in this past cycle; answering

why they believe their fight for democracy and a fair America is far from over. Their united interest was in working to stop the spread of election disinformation. Something I was conscious of in my recent submission to our Electoral Matters Committee in Victoria on behaviour at the Narre Warren South Booth. It was interesting hearing the proactive measures they are taking in their states to ensure free and fair elections for every eligible American. Again, many of the strategies discussed are already operational throughout each state and federal jurisdiction in Australia. However, positive use of AI and new communication platforms helped. Having appointed Electoral Commissioners in Australia, appears to have taken out the political nature of these Election Officer elections that are occurring in the USA.

In the US, more than 60% of political office campaign budgets are spent on advertising. While this figure differs to what is spent in informing voters in my electorate, it is still a struggle to know whether the messages I create 'actually' have an impact on constituents. Attending the training session on 'Crafting a Persuasive Message' was of great benefit to me. Many messages created, rely on social media metrics to get feedback, but these only measure clicks and shares, which is not the same as making sure people understand the message. In this training, I learnt about the differences between pre/post-testing, A/B testing and RCT (Randomised Control Trial) testing. I then got hands-on RCT rapid pre-testing experience to develop a message that connects with constituents: We broke into small groups to craft messages that we thought would resonate with voters. We then launched a rapid pre-test of the messages (over a 24-hour period) where we then received results by email. The scale in the USA means that approximately 10,000 people saw the message that I created on Climate Change. I am happy to say that out of the 36 messages tested that day, my message came in a very respectable 7th in connecting with registered Democrat and Republican voters to inform that Joe Biden can be trusted in delivering Climate Change policy in the USA. Not bad for an Aussie in the US! This sort of testing of connection would be on a much smaller audience in Australia, should something like this be attempted on home soil. It was an informative exercise.

I attended all 3 plenary sessions and 9 different training/professional development/panel sessions over the three days of the conference. I also spent a few hours at the numerous stalls at the trade show too. A very impressive conference app details the sessions I attended and the people I also met and exchanged details with. It automatically updates as you meet new people – quite futuristic really!

Finally, the conference also provided the opportunity to network with elected officials, democratic party officials, Labour Union officials and the many professionals who work in the progressive organising and political spaces. I returned knowing that the information that I have gained will assist me in my parliamentary duties but particularly in better multi - communication methods with constituents in my electorate of Narre Warren South.

While policy issues differ markedly in the USA, I would thoroughly recommend this conference to other members of parliament who are interested in improving and keeping up with the latest communication strategies and organising tools for their electorates. The USA are still at the forefront in developing and investing in these technologies.



State Member for Narre Warren South

Dated: 21.08.2023