



PARLIAMENT
OF AUSTRALIA

Australian Parliamentary Delegation

Belgium and Norway
1 – 6 December 2024

REPORT | February 2025



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ISBN 978-1-76093-580-1

Printed by The Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra

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Members of the Delegation

Leader of the Delegation

- Ms Anne Stanley MP
Member for Werriwa, New South Wales
Australian Labor Party

Delegates

- Senator Helen Polley
Senator for Tasmania
Australian Labor Party
- The Hon Michelle Landry MP
Member for Capricornia, Queensland
Liberal National Party of Queensland
- The Hon Warren Entsch MP
Member for Leichardt, Queensland
Liberal National Party of Queensland
- Senator Tammy Tyrrell
Senator for Tasmania
Independent

Officials

- Ms Charlotte Fletcher
Delegation Secretary

Introduction

This report gives an account of the bilateral Parliamentary Delegation to Belgium and Norway from 1 – 6 December 2024.

With respect to Belgium, the delegation's aims and objectives were to:

- visit the European Parliament and institutions as part of Australia's biennial commitment;
- attend the 43rd Australia-EU Inter-Parliamentary Committee Meeting at the European Parliament; and
- continue to strengthen Australia's connections with the European Union.

With respect to Norway, the delegation's aims and objectives were to continue to strengthen Australia's connections with Norway.

Acknowledgements

Prior to departure, the delegation received a helpful and informative briefing from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

In Belgium, the delegation was accompanied by officers located with the Australian Embassy, led by Her Excellency Caroline Millar, Australian Ambassador to the EU, NATO, Belgium and Luxembourg. In Norway, the delegation was accompanied by officers located with the Australian Embassy in Copenhagen (accredited to Denmark, Norway and Iceland), led by Her Excellency Kerin Ayyalaraju, Australian Ambassador to Denmark, Norway and Iceland. In both locations, the Ambassadors and their staff provided comprehensive briefings and excellent logistical assistance throughout the visit. The delegation is greatly appreciative of the support provided to ensure a successful visit.

The delegation particularly wishes to thank:

- Mr David Brightling, Deputy Australian Ambassador
- Ms Angela McGrath, Counsellor (Australian Embassy);
- Mr Jurre van Dijk, Protocol Officer (European Parliament);
- Lieutenant Colonel Carney Elias, Australian Defence Attaché to Belgium and The Netherlands;
- Mr Pierre Bougeois, Policy and Research Officer, Australian Embassy in Copenhagen;
- Mr Steven Gardner, Consul, Australian Embassy in Copenhagen;

- Ms Ariana Carvalho, Defence Administrative Officer;
- Colonel Lisa Weston, Defence Attache, Northern Europe; and
- Ms Catherine Hill, Austrade Trade and Investment Commissioner for the Netherlands, Nordics and Baltics.

Finally, the delegation thanks all the individuals and organisations that graciously gave time to meet with the delegation and expresses appreciation for the warm welcomes and hospitality received.

Anne Stanley MP

Delegation Leader

Report of Activities

Sunday, 1 December 2024

The delegation travelled to Brussels from Saturday 31 November, arriving on Sunday 1 December 2024.

Monday 2 December 2024

In the morning, the delegation met with the Australian Ambassador to the EU, NATO, Belgium and Luxembourg, Her Excellency Caroline Millar. Ms Millar gave the delegation a briefing on Australia's bilateral relationship with Belgium and outlined current events that were likely to be raised with the delegation during its visit, including free trade negotiations, challenges being faced by farmers in Europe, and the conflict in Ukraine.

Visit to the European Parliament

The delegation travelled to the European Parliament where it received a private tour of the facility.

The delegation then attended an official lunch hosted by Vice President Sophie Wilmès on behalf of the President of the European Parliament, Mr Roberta Metsola. Also in attendance were Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), Ms Gabriele Bischoff MEP, Mr Kris Van Dijck MEP and Mr Charlie Weimers MEP.



The delegation with Vice President Wilmès and Members of the European Parliament

Guided visit of the House of European History

The delegation travelled to The House of European History, a history museum and cultural institution, where delegates received a guided tour.

43rd Australia-EU Inter-Parliamentary Committee Meeting

The delegation then returned to the European Parliament to attend the 43rd Australia-EU Inter-Parliamentary Committee Meeting. This meeting was led by Mr Seán Kelly MEP, Chair of the Delegation for Relations with Australia and New Zealand (DANZ). Also in attendance were Ms Gabrielle Bischoff MEP, Mr Jaroslav Bžoch MEP, Ms Christine Singer EP, and Ms Thomas Geisel MEP.



The delegation during the European Parliament DANZ meeting

At the meeting, members discussed a range of current issues relating to Australia and EU cooperation, including:

- EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement negotiations and economic relations;
- climate change and impact in Europe, Australia and Pacific nations; and
- opportunities regarding renewable energy and critical minerals.

Delegation leader Ms Stanley MP noted that Australia seeks to continue progressing free trade negotiations and is committed to an agreement which is mutually beneficial.

The members also discussed political and security developments, including: the 2024 elections in the European Parliament; Russian war against Ukraine; conflict in the Middle East; and the situation in the Korean peninsula and across the Taiwan Strait.

Mr Kelly MEP thanked Australia for its solidarity and support in protecting Ukraine and imposing sanctions on Russia in the context of the current conflict. He also noted the support which is being provided to Ukrainian refugees throughout Europe, particularly in terms of housing and healthcare support.

In relation to the conflict in the Middle East, Mr Kelly highlighted the importance of international and humanitarian law, and noted Australia's calls for a ceasefire and two state solution in the context of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Delegation leader Ms Stanley MP noted that this conflict has affected Australians deeply. She highlighted the availability of social cohesion grants in Australia, including for mental health support, and the availability of permanent visas in response.



Delegation leader Ms Stanley MP addressing the meeting



The delegation with participants from the European Parliament

Official dinner hosted by Mr Séan Kelly MEP, Chair of DANZ

The delegation then attended an official dinner hosted by Mr Kelly MEP at a nearby restaurant.

Tuesday, 3 December 2024

Meeting with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

In the morning, the delegation travelled to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Parliamentary Assembly. This organisation was created in 1955 and provides a specialised forum for members of parliament from across the Atlantic Alliance to discuss and influence decisions on Alliance security.

The delegation met with: President Marcos Perestrello de Vasconcellos, Secretary General Ruxandra Popa and Mr Paul Cook (Assistant Secretary General, Director, Economics and Security Committee, Director, Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group). Also in attendance was Ms Sophie Briquetti, Officer responsible for NATO-Australia relations, Political Affairs and Security Policy Division of NATO.

President Perestrello de Vasconcellos emphasised the intention to produce more frequent regular reports on strategic developments in the Indo-Pacific region. Attendees noted tensions in the South China Sea and China's efforts to build influence in the region. The delegation discussed Australia's provision of support to Ukraine and noted the existence of large defence training facilities in Australia. The

delegation also noted the importance of listening to Australia's Pacific neighbours on issues of importance to them, including issues relating to climate change.



The delegation with NATO Parliamentary Assembly President Marcos Perestrello de Vasconcellos



The delegation in Brussels

Official lunch hosted by Parliamentarians for Belgian foreign trade

The delegation then travelled to the Australian Embassy to host a working lunch with representatives from the Belgian trade sector, moderated by Deputy Ambassador David Brightling.

The delegation received briefings from the following senior representatives: Ms Rosemary Donck (Director, Head of Department State Visits – Belgian Economic Missions, Belgian Foreign Trade Agency); Mr Laurent Verbiest (Head of International Network MENA & Asia, Brussels Hub); Mr Alphi Cartuyvels (Senior Executive Public and Corporate Affairs, Wallonia Export and Investment Agency); and Ms Michèle Surinx (Director Asia Pacific, Flanders Investment and Trade).



The delegation with representatives of the Belgian trade sector

The delegation heard that the International Network MENA & Asia, Brussels Hub is a foreign trade agency which assists people to build companies and provides support for their international expansion. Ms Donck explained that the agency serves as an information centre for regions, economic studies and statistics, and helps to arrange state visits and economic missions at which companies can register to participate.

Mr Alphi Cartuyvels outlined the role of the Wallonia Export and Investment Agency in supporting exports from the region and attracting foreign investors, as well as a program for sending young people to work for international companies to increase their cultural awareness. He noted that the agency provides free support to companies, which can include financial and non-financial support, including taxation and legal assistance, recruitment support and searches for real estate.

Visit to the Belgian Parliament

The delegation then visited the Belgian Parliament where it received a private tour.



The delegation touring the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate

The delegation then met with two Belgian Parliamentarians, Senator Marie-Claire Mvumbi and Ms Darya Safai MP. The delegation heard that both Senator Mvumbi and Ms Safai MP moved to Belgium having been born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Islamic Republic of Iran, respectively. The delegation discussed issues relating to migration and the provision of supports for women.



The delegation with Senator Marie-Claire Mvumbi and Ms Darya Safai MP

Visit to Ieper and Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate

The delegation then travelled to the nearby town of Ieper (Ypres). The delegation enjoyed dinner with Lieutenant Colonel Carney Elias, Australian Defence Attaché to Belgium and The Netherlands.

This was followed by attendance at the daily Last Post Ceremony held at the Menin Gate. The Last Post is played by buglers in honour of the memory of the soldiers of the former British Empire and its allies, who died in Ypres during the First World War. This daily ceremony, which has taken place since 1928, is facilitated by local volunteers with the Last Post Association. Ms Stanley MP laid a wreath on behalf of the delegation and recited The Last Post.



Members of the delegation with local volunteers from the Last Post Association in Ieper

Wednesday, 4 December 2024

On Wednesday, 4 December 2024 the delegation departed Belgium and travelled to Oslo, Norway.

The Salmon Dining Experience

The delegation visited 'The Salmon', an education centre and restaurant dedicated to Norway's farmed salmon industry. The delegation received a brief educational overview of Norway's farmed salmon industry.

The delegation then enjoyed dinner together with Mr Gard Madsen (Director of Invest in Norway), Mr Martin Carolan (Managing Director and CEO of Provaris), Ms Hedvig Moe (a partner with law firm Thomessen), Mr Håkon Haugli (CEO of Innovation Norway), and Ms Herborg Fiskaa Alvsaker (section leader for human rights, democracy and equality in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Thursday, 5 December 2024

Visit to Bastøy prison

In the morning, the delegation travelled from Oslo to Horten, to take a short ferry to Bastøy prison.



The delegation at the entrance to Bastøy prison

Bastøy prison is a public sector, open (unwalled) prison for adult male sentenced prisoners on a small island close to Horten. It is for prisoners who have completed part of their sentences and are nearing the end of longer sentences. With a capacity of 115 prisoners living in small dormitory houses across the island, it is Norway's largest low-security prison.

The delegation enjoyed a tour of the facility, and visited the island's small supermarket at which inmates could purchase their own food to cook their own meals (using an allowance provided to them). The facility includes a small house on the island which inmates may request to use for visits with their family. The delegation visited the horse stables, and heard that inmates were supported to complete training and studies during their time at Bastøy, noting that this had

previously included studying to be a farrier (an expert in the care of horses' hooves). The delegation received a detailed overview of the prison and Norway's criminal law system more generally from staff, and noted that Norway has one of the lowest recidivism rates in world, and has a restorative justice system that is often referenced as a model for other countries. The delegation noted in particular the very low rates of incarceration of children aged under 18 years across the whole of Norway.

The delegation was then pleased to enjoy a delicious lunch with Bastøy staff, which had been prepared by Bastøy prisoners.

Visit to Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace

The delegation then travelled to the town of Kongsberg to visit Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace, a company producing products and supplying services in the defence, energy, maritime, fisheries, renewable and aerospace sectors.

The delegation met with Mr Kyrre Lohne (Vice President Government Relations and Business Development, Executive Vice President Marketing and Sales), Ms Pamela Willgoth (Executive Vice President Marketing and Sales), and Mr Ragnar Løkka (Vice President of Operations). The delegation received an extensive briefing on the breadth of Kongsberg's work, and then took a tour of the facility including the large production warehouse area.

Friday, 6 December 2024

Meeting with Norwegian Cybersecurity agencies

In the morning, the delegation travelled to the National Security Authority (NSM), Norwegian National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) & National Cybercrime Centre (NC3). The delegation met with Mr Martin Albert-Hoff (NCSC Director), Mr Øystein Andreassen (Police inspector, NC3), and Ms Gunn Pettersen (Ministerial Adviser at Ministry of Justice, Department of Public Security). It also briefly visited the Joint Operational Security Centre at the NSM.

The National Security Authority is a cross-sectoral professional and supervisory authority which counters security threats, including from espionage, sabotage, terrorism or hybrid attacks. The NCSC seeks to strengthen digital resilience in Norway through a holistic approach of mitigating, detection and responding to cyber threats. The NCSC seeks raise awareness among the public about security risks and defence measures. It also manages a quality scheme for incident management,

which can support companies which have experienced and reported a cyber security incident.

Meeting with the National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime (ØKOKRIM)

The delegation then travelled to the National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime (ØKOKRIM). It met with National Police Commissioner Marie Benedicte Bjørnland, Mr Anders Schiøtz Worren (Deputy Director), Mr Pål Lønseth, (Director of Økokrim / Senior public prosecutor), and Mr Inge Svae-Grotli (Deputy Director of Økokrim / Senior public prosecutor).

Commissioner Benedicte Bjørnland noted a significant risk of organised crime in Europe, including activities involving complex cross-border business models involving new technologies and sometimes run from countries without an extradition agreement. The delegation heard that ØKOKRIM aims to protect society from economic exploitation and corruption, and safeguard trust in financial markets. Its remit includes aquaculture crime, animal welfare, taxation, fishing, bankruptcy, art and cultural heritage crime, and fraud. The delegation noted Australia's strong biosecurity laws, and measures taken to prevent the unlawful smuggling of flora and fauna to and from Australia.

Meetings at the Norwegian Parliament

The delegation then travelled to the Norwegian Parliament where it attended a working lunch with representatives of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence hosted by the Committee Chair Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide MP. Also in attendance were Deputy Chair Mr Åsmund Aukrust MP (Labour), Mr Christian Tybring-Gjedde MP (Independent), and Ms Erna Solberg MP.



The delegation meeting with members of the Norwegian Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

The delegation and Norwegian parliamentarians discussed a range of matters including trade, regional security, international relations, and renewable energy transitions.

The delegation then received a guided tour of the Parliament.



The delegation in the Norwegian Parliamentary Chamber

The delegation then met with the Head of the Norwegian Asia Delegation Ms Åslaug Sem-Jacobsen. The Asia Delegation is the Norwegian Parliament's delegation to the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Inter-Parliamentary Meeting.



The delegation meeting with Ms Sem-Jacobsen

Meeting at Equinor

The delegation then travelled to meet with senior staff from Equinor, the largest supplier of energy to Europe and the largest oil and gas operator in Norway, which also undertakes projects in renewable energy and low-carbon solutions.



The delegation with Equinor representatives

The delegation met with Ms Trude Maseide (Vice President Global Politics and Public Affairs), Ms Hannah Mary Goodlad (Business Strategist, Renewables), Mr Fredrick Støa (Business Developer, Ventures), and Ms Christine Magadan Dela Cruz Spilling (Strategist, Renewables – Asia Pacific). The delegation received a comprehensive overview of Equinor's wide-reaching operations, including its investment in renewable energy projects in Australia. The delegation noted parallels between Equinor's offshore wind power projects in Europe and current discussions regarding offshore wind energy generation in Tasmania.

Saturday, 7 December 2024

The delegates departed Oslo for Australia.

Delegation Program

Sunday, 1 December 2024

- 12.45 Delegates and Ms Charlotte Fletcher arrive at Brussels Airport
- Check in to hotel, Stanhope Thon Hotel Brussels

Monday, 2 December 2024

- 9.00 Briefing with H.E. Ms Caroline Millar, Australian Ambassador to the EU, NATO, Belgium and Luxembourg
- 10.00 Transfer to European Parliament
- 10.20 Visit to the European Parliament Plenary Chamber and Buildings
- 12.00 Official lunch hosted by Vice President Sophie Wilmès, European Parliament
- 14.00 Transfer to House of European History
- 14:30 Guided visit of the House of European History
- 15:30 Transfer to hotel
- 16:30 Transfer to European Parliament
- 17:00 Official photo of the European Parliament and Australia Delegation and 43rd Australia-EU Inter-Parliamentary Committee Meeting
- 19:00 Dinner hosted by Mr Séan Kelly, Chair of DANZ
- 21.00 Transfer to hotel

Tuesday, 3 December 2024

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| 9.00 | Transfer to NATO Parliamentary Assembly |
| 9.30 | Meeting with NATO Parliamentary Assembly |
| 10:30 | Transfer to La Fabrique en Ville in Park Egmont |
| 10.45 | Coffee at La Fabrique en Ville |
| 11.45 | Transfer to Australian Embassy |
| 12.30 | Official Lunch hosted by Parliamentarians for Belgian Foreign Trade Agencies |
| 14.00 | Transfer to Belgian Parliament |
| 14.15 | Tour of Belgian Parliament and meeting with Parliamentarians |
| 16.00 | Transfer to Ieper |
| 18.00 | Dinner with Lieutenant Colonel Carney Elias, Australian Defence Attaché |
| 19.20 | Transfer to Menin Gate |
| 20.00 | Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate |
| 20.45 | Transfer to hotel in Brussels |

Wednesday, 4 December 2024

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|-------|------------------------------|
| 9.30 | Check out of hotel |
| | Transfer to Brussels Airport |
| 12.45 | Depart for Oslo |

14.40	Arrive in Oslo
15:30	Transfer to hotel, Grand Hotel
17.00	Briefing from HE Kerin Ayyalaraju, Australian Ambassador to Denmark, Norway and Iceland
18.45	Transfer to The Salmon Restaurant
19.00	The Salmon – guided tour and meeting with business personnel
21.00	Transfer to hotel

Thursday, 5 December 2024

8.00	Transfer to Horten Ferry Terminal
10.00	Ferry to Bastøy prison
10.30	Guided tour of prison, meetings with staff and lunch
12.25	Ferry to Horten
12.45	Transfer to Kongsberg
14.00	Meeting with Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace
16.00	Transfer to hotel

Friday, 6 December 2024

8.00	Transfer to Norwegian National Security Authority
8.30	Meeting with the National Security Authority (NSM), Norwegian National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) & National Cybercrime Centre (NC3)

- 9.30 Visit to the Joint Operational security Centre at the NSM
- 10.00 Transfer to the National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime (ØKOKRIM)
- 10.30 Meeting with ØKOKRIM, the National Police Commissioner and the MOJ's Police Department
- 11.45 Transfer to Norwegian Parliament
- 12.00 Working lunch with Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence
- 12.45 Guided tour of the Parliament
- 13.30 Meeting with the Asia Delegation of the Norwegian Parliament
- 14.15 Transfer to Equinor
- 14.30 Meeting with Equinor
- 17.00 Transfer to hotel

Saturday, 7 December 2024

- 5.30 Delegates depart Oslo