

President meets with the Danish Ambassador

The Danish Ambassador, Her Excellency Mrs Susanne Shine came to visit the Parliament of Western Australia as part of her first official visit to Western Australia. It was a pleasure to host Mrs Shine's first visit, who was also accompanied by Mr Henning Jacobsen, Honorary Consul for Denmark in Perth.

Mrs Shine commenced her appointment in August 2007. She is also Ambassador of Denmark to New Zealand and Fiji. She previously held positions as Head of Department of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Head of Mission in Dublin and Ottawa, as well as an earlier career with the United Nations.

It was interesting to learn that Mrs Shine is also a Knight of the Order of the Dannebrog (Denmark 2006). Mrs Shine explained what this Order was - it's an Order of Denmark and was instituted in 1671 by Christian V. Today, the Order of Dannebrog honours and rewards 'faithful servants of the modern Danish state' for meritorious civil or military service, for a particular contribution to the arts, sciences or business life, or for those working for Danish interests.

The Kingdom of Denmark is a constitutional monarchy, with the reigning monarch Queen Margrethe II. Heir to the throne, Crown Prince Frederik is married to Australian-born Crown Princess Mary. Legislative Powers are vested in a unicameral parliament. Western Australia, like the rest of Australia, has a bicameral system of parliament. It was a great opportunity to discuss the two systems of parliament with Mrs Shine, who gave an insightful description of the parliamentary system in Denmark.

Denmark is also one of Australia's most important wine markets. This is very relevant for Western Australia, which contain many excellent wine-growing Regions. Mrs Shine was aware of the high quality of wines produced in the Margaret River region and expressed a desire to visit the area. I happily provided her with a map of Margaret River and a few suggestions for a future visit to the area.

Business between Australia and Denmark is strong, with 85 Danish companies present in Australia. Recently, the Resources and Industry Department coordinated a visit for Danish company Knud E Hansen which operates in the global maritime industry, to establish a formal presence in Western Australia in late 2010. Western Australia is the home to the Australian Marine Complex and global shipbuilders. The State Government's European Trade and Investment Office has actively targeted key Danish companies in the oil and gas services sector (Maersk Oil and Gas) and energy sector (Dong Energy), both of which have visited Western Australia to identify long-term opportunities.



Picture: The President, the Hon. Barry House with the Danish Ambassador, Her Excellency Mrs Susanne Shine.