

President meets with High Commissioner for Britain

I was delighted to meet with the High Commissioner for Britain, the Rt Hon Baroness Valeria Amos during her recent trip to Western Australia in February. It was the first official visit to Western Australia by her Excellency.

Her Excellency was accompanied by Mr Philip Orchard, Head of Post at the British Consulate in Perth. Baroness Amos commenced her appointment as the British High Commissioner at the end of October 2009.

She met with both myself and the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Michael Sutherland. The Baroness has achieved so much in her career, especially in the areas of equal opportunity and social justice, so it was instructive to listen to what she had to say about a variety of issues. She started her career working in equal opportunities, training and management services in the London local authorities of Lambeth, Camden and Hackney. She took degrees at the Universities of Warwick and Birmingham before pursuing doctoral research at the University of East Anglia.

Previously, Baroness Amos was also Leader of the House of Lords and Lord President of the Council. She was also Government Whip in the House of Lords from 1998 to 2001 and spokesperson on social security, international development and women's issues.

In May 2003, she was appointed Secretary of State for International Development becoming the first black female member of a British Cabinet.

Being an avid cricket fan myself, it was nice to learn that Baroness Amos is also a keen cricket enthusiast. The Third Test of the next Ashes series is scheduled for Perth in December 2010. So I expressed my wish that the Baroness might be able to return for this occasion.

The High Commissioner also brought to my attention that Western Australia is expected to have a significant presence at the second *G'day UK* promotion in London and at "Offshore Europe" in Aberdeen (both in September 2010). Minister Peter Collier MLC is proposing to visit the All-Energy (renewable energy) Conference and Exhibition in Aberdeen in May 2010.

The UK has a long-standing relationship with Western Australia and continues to be the State's largest single market in Europe for merchandise exports and imports.

Key Western Australian sectors with a strong focus on bilateral trade, investment and research partnerships in the UK are oil and gas, renewable energy, radio astronomy (the Square Kilometre Array secretariat is housed in Manchester), marine and defence, tourism and wine.

As the High Commissioner was taking a few days to visit Margaret River in my electorate, I was please to provide her with a detailed map and highlight several plans of interest and significance.



Picture: The President, and the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Michael Sutherland (left) with the British High Commissioner Baroness Valerie Amos.