

President attends National Conference of State Legislatures Summit

Over the Winter Recess, together with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the Clerks of both Houses of Parliament in Western Australia, I attended the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Summit. The week long Summit was held at the Pennsylvania Convention Centre in Philadelphia and is an annual event for Members of America's legislatures.



The NCSL is a bipartisan organisation that provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most serious state and international issues. The NCSL also has a long standing tradition with international colleagues, with delegates coming from all over the world, such as: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, China, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Namibia, Nigeria, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Sudan and the United Kingdom.

The NCSL put together an exciting program, which covered topics such as media relations, the international economic downturn, providing expert advice on the economy and budgets, climate change and ethics. It was great to hear some of my international colleague's opinion on issues affecting everyone.

The NCSL Summit was an invaluable experience for me. I was able to meet and network with my fellow international colleagues and discuss issues that were significant on an international and domestic level. One of the most interesting sessions was on 'Ethics: Train the Trainer'. Legislators discussed the pressures, responsibilities and consequences of being a MP and making ethical choices. As part of the session, we listened to four members of Parliament speak about real situations in which a conflict arose. 'Ethics Training' occurs in more than 40 States and includes this type of training in their new Member orientation programs, with at least 10 States making it mandatory for all new Members.

For many years, I have been a Committee Chair. So I felt it was important for me to attend 'Legislative Training: How to be an effective Committee Chair'. The session focused on the skills required to plan and run an effective committee meeting. Veteran legislative committee chairs walked participants through a series of case studies designed to highlight best practices and 'tricks of the trade'.



Australia has modelled its own parliamentary event, the Australian Parliamentary Conference, on the NCSL. While the scale is obviously much smaller, the principles are similar, providing a valuable opportunity for the Professional Development of Parliamentarians. This year's Australian Parliamentary Conference is being held at the Western Australian Parliament on November 4 - 6.