



**THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT**

**REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
DELEGATION TO MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE  
(NOVEMBER 2013)**

Presented by Hon Barry House MLC (President)

December 2013



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**1 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S DRAFT *PARLIAMENTARY PARTNERSHIPS POLICY***

1.1 The Department of the Legislative Council's draft *Parliamentary Partnerships Policy* states, *inter alia*:

*A significant part of the multi-faceted role of the Parliament of Western Australia and its Members is the development and maintenance of relationships with other parliaments, including the other Australian parliaments and the legislatures of our neighbouring countries, particularly those in the Asian region. Two important benefits derived from work undertaken in this area are:*

- *good regional relationships, which are critical for maximising economic opportunities such as tourism and trade; and*
- *the professional development derived by Members, which is invaluable to their duties in the House and its committees.*

*This policy deals with the means by which this work is undertaken – the President's Parliamentary Delegation.*

*Travel under this policy is subject to sufficient funds being available in the Legislative Council's budget.*

***President's Parliamentary Delegations***

*The President of the Legislative Council is an ambassador for the House, the Parliament and the State. To this end, the President regularly hosts meetings with representatives or delegations from other parliaments, governments, organisations and countries.*

*The President's Parliamentary Delegation is an extension of this ambassadorial role. At regular intervals, approximately four times during the life of each Parliament, a reciprocal visit will be scheduled to an international legislature or region, with the aim to:*

- *promote the State of Western Australia;*
- *renew contacts with and explore further avenues for dialogue and co-operation;*

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- *gain an improved understanding of recent political, parliamentary and governance developments;*
  - *provide opportunities for Parliamentarians to compare approaches to public policy issues of mutual interest and concern;*
  - *meet with Presiding Officers, Members and Staff of each Parliament to discuss practical matters pertaining to the operation of parliamentary business, services and buildings;*
  - *meet with a number of parliamentary committees, providing an opportunity to discuss the operation of the committee systems as well as particular policy areas of interest;*
  - *review recent economic developments and assess opportunities for further growth and foreign investment;*
  - *promote cultural exchange between our Parliament and neighbouring Regions;*
  - *establish friendly and co-operative relationships with nations sharing the Indian Ocean Rim with Western Australia; and*
  - *provide professional development for Members of the Legislative Council.*

#### ***Delegation Composition and Arrangements***

*The President's Parliamentary Delegation will comprise the President and up to five other Members, together with a staff member as required, with arrangements being made by the Office of the President regarding:*

- (a) *the Members comprising the Delegation;*
- (b) *the legislature(s) to visit (with reference to those officials/delegations hosted recently by the President); and*
- (c) *the timing of the visit.*

#### ***Report***

*At the conclusion of the travel, the President and Members of the Delegation will compile a report outlining their observations and assessment of the trip against the stated aims of the Delegation, and*

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*lodge this report with the Clerk of the Legislative Council for tabling in the Legislative Council.*

## **2 THE SELECTION OF MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE**

2.1 With reference to the Legislative Council's draft *Parliamentary Partnerships Policy* the President selected Malaysia and Singapore as the most suitable destinations for the delegation to visit.

2.1 Although there have been relatively few overseas delegations of the Legislative Council during the last two Parliaments, since 1997 the following countries have been visited by the President and other Members on behalf of the Legislative Council:

- China (Beijing, Shanghai and other provinces);
- United Kingdom;
- Wales;
- Canada (Ottawa and Vancouver);
- Japan (Hyogo Prefecture);
- Singapore;
- India (New Delhi); and
- Sri Lanka.

2.2 Apart from the other Australian parliaments, the closest parliaments geographically to the Parliament of Western Australia that are also based on the Westminster model are the Malaysian National and State parliaments and the Singapore Parliament.

2.3 The Federation of Malaya was established in 1957 as a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral National Parliament and unicameral State assemblies. The United Malays National Organisation has held government at the federal level since Malaysia's independence in 1957.

2.4 Western Australian Government Department of State Development (**DSD**) briefing notes informed the delegation that Malaysia's economy is the third largest in South East Asia, behind Indonesia and Thailand. Australia is one of the top overseas education and training destinations for Malaysian students, with Victoria and Western Australia being the most popular destination States. Malaysia is Western Australia's seventh largest trading partner, with total trade between the State and Malaysia for 2012-2013 worth A\$4.3 billion. Exports to Malaysia were valued at A\$2.1 billion,

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with the main export items being crude oil, nickel and wheat. In 2012-2013, Malaysia was Western Australia's:

- second largest source country for international student enrolments with a nine *per cent* share;
- fourth largest market for live cattle exports with a nine *per cent* (A13.8 million) share; and
- fifth largest market for forestry exports with a one *per cent* (A\$2.2 million) share.

2.5 In August 2012 the Legislative Council received a large delegation from the Selangor State Assembly of Malaysia, which included their then Speaker, Hon Dato Teng Chang Khim. The President also met with the Consul General of Malaysia, Ms Hafizah Abdullah, on 17 October 2012.

2.6 Both National and State general elections were held in Malaysia earlier this year. Selangor, one of the more populous States of Malaysia surrounds the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. Selangor is one of only four States out of 13 in Malaysia that has a governing political party that is different to Malaysia's governing political party at the National level. Hon Dato Teng Chang Khim has now been made a Senior Minister of the Executive Council that forms the Government of the State of Selangor. The newly elected Speaker is Hon Hannah Yeoh Tseow Suan, the first female to be elected Speaker of a Malaysian State Assembly. Also of interest is the fact that Madam Speaker is only 34 years old and holds a law degree from the University of Tasmania. There are some interesting reforms planned for the State Assembly in Selangor as a result of these two new appointments, as noted in the following June article from *The Star* website:<sup>1</sup>

*Subang Jaya assemblyman Hannah Yeoh hopes to see the Selangor Legislative Assembly Service Commission Enactment (Selesa) bill passed during her tenure as Selangor state assembly speaker.*

*Yeoh was sworn in as speaker on Friday, together with deputy speaker and Seri Setia assemblyman Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad and the other 54 state assemblymen.*

*Yeoh said she hoped to see the Selesa bill passed in the coming months as it would ensure a more independent legislative.*

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<sup>1</sup> "Hannah Yeoh hopes to see Selesa bill passed during her tenure as Speaker", by Teh Eng Hock and A Ruban, The Star Online, 21 June 2013: <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2013/06/21/Hannah-Yeoh-hopes-to-see-Selesa-bill-passed-during-her-tenure-as-Speaker.aspx>



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*The bill defines the function and role of the executive and legislative branches of government in the state, including clearer roles and functions of the legislative assembly through the state assembly, executive council through the Mentri Besar and state exco members and judiciary under the Federal Constitution.*

*"I don't foresee any obstacle in getting the bill passed. It will empower the assemblymen, so I don't see why they will object to it," she told reporters on Friday.*

*Former Speaker Datuk Teng Chang Khim had previously said that the bill, drafted in 2009, was blocked by the then exco.*

*Yeoh said that Teng would help push for the bill as he is in the current exco line-up now.*

*She added that she hoped to hire more researchers to help the assemblymen prepare for their debates during the assembly.*

*Yeoh said she would set up the select committees as required under the standing orders as soon as possible, and also keep the Select Committee on Competency, Accountability and Transparency's (Selcat) going.*

*She added that the position of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman would be offered to the Opposition Leader, and hoped the gesture would be reciprocated in Parliament.*

- 2.7 Another significant recent reform in Selangor has been the introduction of freedom of information laws.
- 2.8 The Parliament of Western Australia therefore had a very recent connection to a State Parliament in Malaysia that was undergoing a period of significant parliamentary and government reform.
- 2.9 Singapore was a natural choice to include on the delegation's itinerary due to the fact that it was for a short time in the 1960s a State of Malaysia, and that it has now developed into a very wealthy and important nation in the region.
- 2.10 The Republic of Singapore has a single house of Parliament and a legal system based on English law. The People's Action Party has held government in Singapore since 1959, and currently holds 81 of the 87 seats in the Parliament.
- 2.11 Singapore is Western Australia's fourth largest trading partner, with total trade valued at A\$7.3 billion in 2012-2013. Western Australia's exports to Singapore totaled A\$3.8 billion. In 2012-2013, Singapore was Western Australia's:

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- largest market for refined petroleum exports with an 83 *per cent* (A\$328 million) share;
  - largest market for dairy exports with a 51 *per cent* (A\$22 million) share;
  - second largest market for crude petroleum exports with a 19 *per cent* (A\$1.8 billion) share; and
  - fifth largest market for non-monetary gold exports with a 6.3 *per cent* (A\$941 million) share.

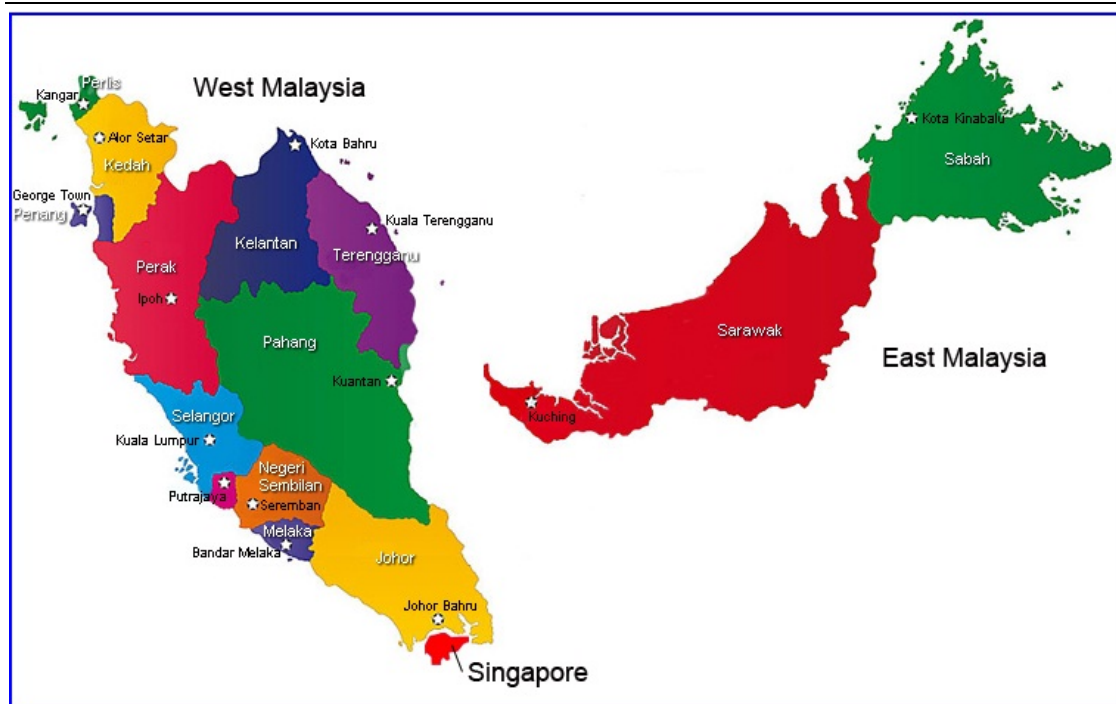
2.12 Singapore is one of the key financial centres of Asia, and its proximity to Perth provides the Western Australian market with ready access to global financial investors and commodities markets. Export opportunities exist mainly in: servicing shipbuilding; oil and gas services' shipping and logistics; integrated hardware and software solutions; and agribusiness activities.

2.13 Also relevant to the decision to send a delegation to Malaysia and Singapore was the fact that the Malaysian, Selangor and Singapore parliaments were all due to be sitting around the two week period at the start of November 2013, when the delegation proposed to visit.



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<sup>2</sup> Courtesy of Google Maps.



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### 3 THE DELEGATION

3.1 The following Members and staff formed the delegation:

- President - Hon Barry House MLC
- Hon Sally Talbot MLC
- Hon Alyssa Hayden MLC
- Hon Samantha Rowe MLC
- Hon Rick Mazza MLC
- Hon Martin Aldridge MLC
- Paul Grant, Clerk Assistant (Procedure).

### 4 ITINERARY

4.1 The following was the itinerary of the delegation:

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<sup>3</sup> Courtesy of <http://nice.easibook.com/Destinations/malaysia.aspx>

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## Legislative Council Delegation 2013 - Malaysia and Singapore

### Itinerary

Wednesday 6 November 2013	Thursday 7 November 2013	Friday 8 November 2013	Saturday 9 November 2013	Sunday 10 November 2013
<p><b>4:30pm to 10:00pm:</b> Fly from Perth to Kuala Lumpur</p>	<p><b>10:00am to 1:00pm:</b> Visit to Malaysian National Parliament to meet with the President of the Malaysian Senate and the Speaker of the Malaysian House of Representatives.</p> <p><b>1:00pm to 2:30pm:</b> Lunch at Malaysian Parliament House with Members and staff hosted by the President of the Senate.</p> <p><b>3:00pm to 5:00pm:</b> Meeting with representatives of Sunway College.</p>	<p><b>10:15am to 1:30pm:</b> Meeting with HE Miles Kupa, Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia and briefing by Austrade representatives in Malaysia.</p> <p><b>2:30pm to 4:30pm:</b> Visit to the Selangor State Assembly to meet with Madam Speaker Hannah Yeoh and Members of the Selangor State Assembly.</p> <p><b>5:30pm to 7:00pm:</b> Meeting with officers of the Sapura Group.</p>		

<b>Monday 11 November 2013</b>	<b>Tuesday 12 November 2013</b>	<b>Wednesday 13 November 2013</b>	<b>Thursday 14 November 2013</b>	<b>Friday 15 November 2013</b>
<p data-bbox="244 454 451 712"><b>10:30am to 3:30pm:</b> Coach ride from Kuala Lumpur to Johor Bahru, on Singapore border.</p> <p data-bbox="244 1402 451 1738"><b>3:30pm to 5:00pm:</b> Meeting with officers at Iskandar Regional Development Authority, Johor Bahru Office.</p>	<p data-bbox="478 454 703 600"><b>10:00am to 11:30am</b> Briefing by Austrade officers.</p> <p data-bbox="478 701 703 958"><b>11:30am to 12:30am:</b> Visit to the WA Government Trade and Investment Office for briefing.</p> <p data-bbox="478 1059 703 1283"><b>1:30pm to 2:45pm:</b> Visit to Singapore Parliament to watch Question Time.</p> <p data-bbox="478 1384 703 1608"><b>3:30pm to 4:15pm:</b> Meeting with the Australian High Commissioner, HE Philip Green.</p> <p data-bbox="478 1709 703 1933"><b>5:00pm to 7:00pm:</b> Attend networking function of business people with WA links.</p>	<p data-bbox="730 454 940 790"><b>10.30am to 12:45pm:</b> Visit to Singapore Parliament House. Call on Speaker and then meet with Singaporean MPs.</p> <p data-bbox="730 958 940 1216"><b>12.45pm to 2:30pm:</b> Lunch at old Parliament House hosted by Singaporean MPs.</p>	<p data-bbox="959 454 1136 678"><b>10:15am to 1:00pm:</b> Briefing and tour of Curtin University Singapore.</p> <p data-bbox="959 1753 1136 1955"><b>6:00pm to 8:00pm:</b> Guests at AustCham Singapore function.</p>	<p data-bbox="1176 1753 1369 1910"><b>6:35pm to 11:50pm:</b> Fly from Singapore to Perth</p>

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## **5 ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

### **Assistance of the DSD**

- 5.1 In creating the itinerary the delegation was assisted greatly by the DSD.
- 5.2 The visits to the parliaments of Malaysia, Selangor and Singapore were co-ordinated by the Department of the Legislative Council directly with the three parliaments concerned.
- 5.3 All of the other meetings, briefings and site visits of the delegation in both Malaysia and Singapore were arranged on the delegation's behalf by DSD. The delegation was greatly assisted by the DSD staff in Perth, led by Mr Stephen Wood, Director General; Mr Stuart Crockett, Director International Trade and Investment; and Ms Amy O'Sullivan, A/Country Manager – Singapore, Indonesia and India, in creating an itinerary and supplying briefing materials. The delegation also received invaluable assistance in finalising the itinerary and in making all of its administrative arrangements and bookings in Malaysia and Singapore of the staff of the Western Australian Trade and Investment Office in Singapore: Mr John Osborn, Regional Director; Mr Melvin Sico, Business Development Executive; and Ms Rosmani (Rose) Rosli, Secretary to the Regional Director. Mr John Osborn also attended most of the non-parliamentary meetings and site visits with the delegation.
- 5.4 The Legislative Council extends its warmest thanks to the staff of DSD in Perth and Singapore, and hopes that we may call on DSD for similar assistance with future delegations.

### **Corporate Credit Card**

- 5.5 The only administrative difficulties of note during the trip were the non-acceptance of Visa credit cards by Singapore taxi drivers. The delegation's use of taxis was, however, minimal and so the inability to use the corporate travel credit cards in those instances was not a major obstacle.

### **Costs**

- 5.6 The cost of the trip as set out in a travel submission approved by the Clerk of the Legislative Council in October 2013 was estimated at \$75,000.

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5.7 The final actual costs were as follows:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Airfares	\$42,189.00
Accommodation	\$19,552.94
Meals	\$5,064.04
Ground transportation	\$2,828.11
Government of Western Australia Trade and Investment Office networking function	\$1,195.02
AustCham function	\$399.00
<b>Total Cost of Delegation</b>	<b>\$71,228.11</b>

## **6 NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF MALAYSIA**

- 6.1 The delegation spent most of its first day in Kuala Lumpur at the National Parliament of Malaysia.
- 6.2 The delegation first met with the President of the Malaysian Senate, His Excellency Tan Sri Abu Zahar Ujang, the Deputy President, Hon Senator Datuk Doris Sophia Ak Brodi, and a number of Senators of the Malaysian Senate. The delegation was then given a tour of the Parliament building and viewed a sitting of the House of Representatives. The delegation later met with the Speaker, His Excellency Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Pandikar Amin Haji Mulia, the Deputy Speaker, Datuk Ronald Kiandee, and a number of Members of the House of Representatives. The delegation then had lunch in the Parliament dining room as guests of the President.
- 6.3 The following impressions of the delegation's visit to the Malaysian National Parliament were provided by Hon Martin Aldridge MLC:

### ***Dewan Negara (Senate of Malaysia)***

*The delegations first official visit was to the Dewan Negara or the Senate of Malaysia. The Dewan Negara is the upper chamber of the bicameral Parliament operating in Malaysia. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with His Majesty the King as Head of State.*

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*The delegation was fortunate to meet with His Excellency Tan Sri Abu Zahar bin Dato' Nika Ujang, the President of the Dewan Negara. He was joined by the Honourable Senator Datuk Doris Sophia Ak Brodi, the Deputy President of the Senate and other Senators.*



*The Dewan Negara consists of 70 Senators. 26 are elected by the 13 State assemblies (2 Senators per State), 4 are appointed by the King to represent the 3 Federal territories (2 for Kuala Lumpur, 1 each for Putrajaya and Labuan). The remaining 40 Senators are appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister. Senators must be 30 years or above and are appointed for a three year term, with a maximum of two terms. Like Australia, the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat does not affect the Dewan Negara.*

*The President advised the delegation that some 129 ethnic groups existed amongst the countries population of 28 million people and all were represented in the Malaysian Parliament. Malaysia shares land borders with Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei and maritime borders with Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines. At some 330,000 square kilometres, its land mass is comparable with Victoria and Tasmania combined.*

*The delegation learnt that the Dewan Negara had some 16 women represented in the Dewan Negara and 26 women in the Dewan Rakyat.*

*The President reflected on the good working relationship the National Government was able to maintain with the few States that had their Governments controlled by opposition parties.*

*Amongst a wide ranging conversation the President also made significant comment on foreign relations, Malaysia's involvement in ASEAN and the National Budget which was currently before the Parliament for approval.*



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### ***Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives of Malaysia)***

*The delegation met with the Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat, His Excellency Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Pandikar Amin Haji Mulia. The Speaker was accompanied by his Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Datuk Ronald Kiandee and Members of the Dewan Rakyat. It is important to note that the Deputy Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat is also the Vice Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.*



*The Dewan Rakyat has a membership of 222 elected from single member constituencies. Elections are held every five years of when Parliament is dissolved by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister. Voting is not compulsory and a person must be registered and be at least 21 years old to exercise a vote. Elections are conducted using the first-past-the-post system.*

*The Government commands a comfortable majority in the Dewan Rakyat of 133 of the 222 MP's. The governing coalition is Barisan Nasional which has been in power since independence in 1957. Barisan Nasional is a coalition of some 13 political parties. The opposition coalition is known as Pakatan Rakyat or the People's Alliance and consists of three political parties. Pakatan Rakyat currently hold Government in three State Governments.*

*The Speaker advised the delegation that the Dewan Rakyat was currently debating legislation to introduce a Goods and Services Tax (GST). Legislation to introduce a GST was tabled in late 2009, however has been significantly delayed due to the controversial nature of the taxation change. During the introduction of the 2015 budget, the Prime Minister announced that the Government intended to have a GST commencing on 1 April, 2015 at a rate of 6%. The GST would replace the Sale and Services Tax.*

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*The Speaker covered a wide range of topics during our discussions including the challenges associated with obtaining suitable appropriations from the Government to adequately maintain and operate the National Parliament.*

*Hon Martin Aldridge MLC*

**7 SUNWAY COLLEGE**

- 7.1 The delegation was given a briefing and tour of Sunway College. The delegation met with: Ms Cheng Mien Wee, Director Pre-University Studies; Ms Ruma Lopes, Assistant Director Pre-University Studies; Ms Vanitha Satchithanadan, Director Australian Matriculation; and other teaching staff.
- 7.2 Sunway College was established in 1987, and is considered a pioneering private higher education institution in Malaysia. It has started twinning and credit transfer programs which have allowed Malaysian and international students to secure recognised academic qualifications from universities in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- 7.3 The following impressions of the briefing and tour at Sunway College were provided by Hon Sally Talbot MLC:

*While education in Malaysia is not compulsory, about ninety per cent of Malaysian children come into contact with the education system and an appreciation of the extent to which education opens up opportunities in such a rapidly developing multi-sector economy was very evident during our visit to Sunway College. There are 12,000 students at the Kuala Lumpur campus, with other Sunway college sites operating in Johor Bahru, Ipoh and Kuching. About 480 students are enrolled in Sunway's pre-University program, which includes Australian Matriculation (AUSMAT) courses with students studying the Year 12 Western Australian curriculum for the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE).*

*Members of the delegation were impressed by the information presented by Cheng Mien Wee, Director Pre-University Studies, Ruma Lopes, Assistant Direct Pre-University Studies and Vanitha Satchithanadan, Director Australian Matriculation. It is clear that Sunway students have a high regard for these Year 12 courses and the WACE qualification they confer, with a high proportion of students completing the courses in just eight months rather than the standard 10. All WACE exams are conducted in English, although parts of the course may be taught in Malay. Several teachers, whose subjects included chemistry, English, maths and English as an Additional*

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*Language or Dialect joined us for part of our briefing and spoke very positively about their experience of teaching at Sunway College.*

*The extensive building work at the campus, which the delegation toured at the conclusion of the briefing, suggests that the Sunway Education Group, which operates on a not-for-profit basis under the auspices of the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation, has a very bright future and that Western Australia's link with Sunway has important benefits for both Western Australia and Sunway's students. While the ambition to study abroad is one of the factors motivating Malaysian students to take WACE courses, there has been a downturn in the number of Sunway students continuing their studies in Western Australia. This, the delegation learned, is largely attributable to recent currency exchange rates putting the cost of study in Australia out of the reach of Malaysian students. The situation has begun to improve during the year leading up to our visit, although there is clearly a wish on Sunway College's part to establish an ongoing dialogue with Western Australian education leaders about ways to sustain the links between our State and the Sunway Education Group. Monash University has a very prominent presence in Kuala Lumpur, operating a full-fledged campus in partnership with Sunway. Melbourne's Victoria University also has a partnership with Sunway, offering a Bachelor of Business course.*

*Hon Sally Talbot MLC*

## **8 MEETING WITH THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO MALAYSIA AND BRIEFING BY AUSTRADE**

- 8.1 On Friday, 8 November 2013, the delegation met with the His Excellency, the Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Mr Miles Kupa, at his residence. The delegation also received a detailed briefing on Australian business interests in Malaysia by Austrade Assistant Trade Commissioner, Mr Joel Backwell, and other Austrade officials.

## **9 SELANGOR STATE ASSEMBLY**

- 9.1 On the afternoon of Friday, 8 November 2013, the delegation visited the Selangor State Assembly, located in the city of Shah Alam, approximately 25 kilometres west of the national capital of Kuala Lumpur.



9.2 The delegation met with the Madam Speaker of the unicameral Selangor Parliament, Ms Hannah Yeoh Tseow Suan, the Deputy Speaker, Mr Nik Nazmi Bin Nik Ahmad, and other Members; including the Chief Minister of Selangor, the Right Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Seri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim, and Senior Minister Dato Teng Chang Khim (who led the August 2012 Selangor delegation to the Parliament of Western Australia). The delegation finished the visit with a tour of the newly refurbished Assembly Chamber.



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- 9.3 The following impressions of the visit to the Selangor State Assembly were provided by the President, Hon Barry House MLC:

*The delegation was warmly welcomed by the Speaker of the Selangor Parliament and the Chief Executive, together with the Deputy Speaker, and other members of the Selangor Government and Parliament. They were especially pleased that we had reciprocated a visit to our Parliament in August, 2012 by Members of their Select Committee on Competency, Accountability and Transparency. They obviously learnt from that visit and have put this knowledge into practice with their own Committee structure and operation.*

*Selangor finds itself in a unique position in Malaysia. The Parliament and Government is controlled by the "Pakatan Rakyat" (Peoples Alliance). It is one of four of the 13 States which have Governments of a different political complexion from the National Government, where the ruling "Barisan National" Party has been in power since Independence in 1957.*

*Selangor is emerging as a trailblazer in Malaysia in terms of transparency and accountability of the Executive through Parliamentary legislation and Committees. As well as the Select Committee on Competency, Accountability and Transparency, they are introducing freedom of information laws and other practices. It will be very interesting to observe how these moves operate and are received by other jurisdictions and the people of Malaysia in the years ahead.*

*In a lengthy, wide-ranging and friendly forum with the Speaker, Chief Executive and other Members, several other issues were discussed which I summarise as follows;*

1. *About 30 per cent of current Malaysian leaders in Parliament, Justice, business and education gained tertiary education qualifications in Australia;*

*For example; the Chief Minister is a product of the Colombo Plan and the Speaker, (a bright, articulate and highly capable young woman who represents the new generation of governing leaders) obtained a law degree in Tasmania. This is an historical and cultural link that gives us an enormous advantage when dealing with this important region, but we have to do our part in the future by fostering this relationship rather than taking it for granted.*

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2. *The ruling Pakatan Alliance are acutely aware of, and representative of, the emerging Malaysian middle class with higher incomes, the modern world of instant communication, expectations as well as changing demographics and cultural awareness in their country and the world.*
  3. *In the education area -*
    - (a) *they are embracing, with Australia, modernisation of approaches and new models of education delivery, e.g. Australian Universities establishing campuses in Malaysia, China and Singapore; adapting short term exchanges; and*
    - (b) *the numbers of Malaysian students studying in Australian Universities have steadily fallen for the last five years (with a slight upturn this year). Two factors at play here are the high cost structure in Perth and Malaysia now offers much better tertiary opportunities at home than before.*
  4. *An explanation of Australia's commitment to and involvement in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, following the Commonwealth Parliamentary Branches withdrawal last year, was sought. As an Australian Regional Representative on the Executive, I was able to assure them that the Western Australian Branch, together with the other eight Australian State and Territory Branches, remained fully committed and involved. Additional to the delegations meetings with Parliaments, I also had useful conversations with their Regional Representatives (Datuk Ronald Kiandee, Malaysia and Dr Lam Pin Min, Singapore).*
  5. *There are six million tourists per annum into Selangor. The major attractions seem to be food, shopping and business. While the air connections between Kuala Lumpur and Perth are good, the rising costs in Western Australia were a significant constraint in a competitive market.*
  6. *Provision of security services was obviously an issue in Kuala Lumpur and we discussed how various tiers of government in Australia provide these services.*

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7. *The Malaysians were impressed by the roles of volunteerism in Australia, particularly in fire fighting, and felt they could learn from us.*
  8. *Many Malaysians already own property in Perth and Western Australia but were concerned about the recent sharp rises in price. Discussion followed about urban infill programmes.*
  9. *The Selangor Parliament was setting up a Select Committee on Eradication of Poverty.*
  10. *A regular exchange of Parliamentary staff was suggested.*
  11. *Promotion of a Western Australian Chapter of the Australian-Malaysia Business Council was urged.*
  12. *A former Australian Governor General, Sir William McKell, played a leading role in setting up Malaysia's constitution and governance in the 1950's so there are similarities to our system and other Commonwealth nations.*

*Overall, this visit to an "equivalent" Parliamentary jurisdiction was extremely worthwhile. It complemented other aspects of our delegations activities and reinforced the importance of visits such as this to maintain and improve the links between Western Australia and South East Asia.*

*Hon Barry House MLC, President*

## **10 SAPURA GROUP**

10.1 On the evening of Friday, 8 November 2013, the delegation received a briefing from Mr Rajan Moses and other officers of the Sapura Group regarding their business activities in Malaysia and Australia. Established in 1975, the Sapura Group is a Malaysian-owned technology-based group with four major business areas:

- Oil and gas;
- Secured technologies (encryption and database security);
- Industrial and automotive manufacturing (such as drone aircraft technology);  
and
- Knowledge and education.

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## 11 ISKANDAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- 11.1 On Monday, 11 November 2013, the delegation travelled by coach from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore. The basis for the decision to travel by coach was to provide the delegation with a greater appreciation of the proximity between the two cities and also to undertake a site visit of the Iskandar development in Johor Bahru, on the border of Malaysia and Singapore.
- 11.2 The Iskandar Regional Development Authority is a Malaysian Federal Government statutory body tasked with driving the development of Iskandar. Iskandar covers 2,217 square kilometres and is promoted as a major economic centre designed to spur growth in both the Malaysian and Singapore economies.
- 11.3 The delegation was provided with a thorough briefing on the Iskandar project by Mr Izhar Hifnei Ismail, Special Officer for Chief Executive and Acting Head of Strategic Communications.
- 11.4 The following impressions of the Iskandar project were provided by Hon Rick Mazza MLC:

*During the most recent parliamentary recess I visited the southernmost tip of Peninsular Malaysia as part of my first parliamentary tour. I, along with my colleagues travelled to Iskandar, Malaysia, which is situated on the world's busiest shipping lane. It has a rich abundance of natural and human resources that underlies Johor's past successes and underscores its' future. The 2,217 square kilometre main southern development corridor is three times the size of Singapore and is the largest development project ever undertaken in the region. It should be noted that Malaysia has undergone significant economic transformation and is now one of the fastest growing economies in the region.*

*Only 2 kilometres from Singapore, Iskandar Malaysia was originally developed in order to protect the country's competitiveness in a quickly changing global economy. The Iskandar Regional Development Authority (the authority) is a Federal Government statutory body that regulates and motivates various stakeholders in both the public and private sector towards achieving the vision of developing Iskandar into a robust and viable metropolis with an international reputation. The authority was established by an Act of Parliament, the Iskandar Regional Development Authority Act 2007 (somewhat akin to Western Australia's Regional Development Authorities). The objective of the authority is to develop the Iskandar Development Region into a strong and sustainable metropolis of international standing. The nine focus economic sectors are*



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*Electrical, Petro Chemicals, Food, Finance, Tourism, Education, Logistics, Healthcare and Creative Arts.*

*The authority acts as the chief coordinating representative on behalf of government agencies with respect to receiving, processing and accelerating the requisite approvals for investors in the Iskandar project. As a trouble shooter the authority aids existing investors to resolve issues affecting their business environment. The vision in terms of facilitation is to create Iskandar as the primary choice to invest, work, live and play. The authority carries out wide reaching promotion of Iskandar to the public and prospective investors, both local and overseas, to drive, bring together and monitor development of economic sectors, required enablers and social infrastructure.*

*It is argued that Iskandar is a project ahead of its time, where living, entertainment and business would effortlessly converge in a lively and viable metropolis of international standing. A great deal of meticulous planning has also gone into ensuring that the development is sustainable, having regard for the direct and indirect needs of its respective stake-holders. Phase I (2006-2010) was completed several years ago with the delivery of major infrastructure and several iconic investment projects which included world's best public housing projects, 16 bus routes (to improve connectivity) and 20,000 job opportunities. The project has now progressed into Phase 2 of the development plan. Projects include Lego-land, a water theme park, a motor sport race track, movie studios and a marina development.*

*The Iskandar Authority claims that it does not want to compete with Singapore and is also trying to ensure socio equity in housing by preventing a middle income trap.*

*Of note, two road projects with a total cost of RM52 million were completed prior to 2010 and another six projects with a total cost of RM1.44 billion scheduled for completion including the construction of the 15 kilometre, six lane coastal highway. Other important projects include river cleaning projects, drainage projects and the public housing project, including initiatives to safeguard the environment on Ramsar Convention listed wetlands.*

*Hon Rick Mazza MLC*

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**12 AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SINGAPORE AND AUSTRADE**

- 12.1 The delegation met with the Australian High Commissioner to Singapore, His Excellency, Mr Philip Green OAM. The delegation also received a thorough briefing on business connections between Singapore and Australia from Mr Christopher Rees, Senior Trade Commissioner for Austrade.

**13 GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA TRADE AND INVESTMENT OFFICE (WATIO)**

- 13.1 The delegation received a briefing from Mr John Osborn, Regional Director, WATIO, on the work that he does to promote and support Western Australian business opportunities in both Malaysia and Singapore out of the WATIO's Singapore office.

**14 PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE**

- 14.1 On Tuesday, 12 November 2013, the delegation was fortunate enough to sit in on Question Time at the Singapore Parliament. The Singapore Parliament generally only sits a few days each month and only around 20 to 30 days per year.
- 14.2 On Wednesday, 13 November 2013, the delegation spent most of the day at the Singapore Parliament. The Singapore Parliament is a unicameral Parliament with 99 Members, including nine Members without a constituency that are nominated to ensure that minority party interests are represented in the strongly Governing Party-controlled Parliament.
- 14.3 The delegation was given a tour of the Parliament building and then met with Madam Speaker, Ms Halimah Yacob, and several Members of the Singapore Parliament.



14.4 The delegation then met separately for detailed discussions with the following Members of the Singapore Parliament: Dr Lam Pin Min, Mr Lim Biow Chuan, Ms Sylvia Lim and Ms Foo Mee Har. The visit concluded following a lunch with the Singaporean Members at old Parliament House.



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14.5 The following impressions of the delegation's visit to the Parliament of Singapore were contributed by Hon Samantha Rowe MLC:

*The Parliamentary Delegation from Western Australia visited the Parliament of Singapore on 13th November 2013. The delegation was given an extensive and comprehensive tour of the Parliament of Singapore before meeting with the Madam Speaker of the House.*

*The Madam Speaker is the first female Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore. The delegation found her to be very generous with her time and engaging.*

*In relation to the participation of women in Parliament, members of the delegation were told that there was only one woman in the Singaporean cabinet in addition to the Speaker. This is despite the Parliament more generally having a makeup of 25 per cent women. Similarly in our Federal Parliament, we have one woman in addition to the Speaker and 31 per cent representation of women in the Parliament more generally.*

*The Speaker informed the delegation that the participation of women on boards and in senior executive level positions is not widely supported in Singapore and as such, numbers tend to be low.*

*Additionally, the Speaker shared many interesting insights and anecdotes on the life of a Parliamentarian in Singapore that members of the delegation were able to compare with their own experiences. Members of the delegation were able to contrast a typical 'day in the life of a Member of Parliament' in both Western Australia and Singapore, enriching our understanding of Singaporean Parliamentary processes.*

*Madam Speaker gave the delegation information on legislation currently being debated in the Singaporean Parliament in relation to two important policy areas -*

- (i) how governments and communities cope with an ageing population; and*
- (ii) how to address issues around fertility rates, which in Singapore are the lowest in the world.*

*Australia is also facing the difficult task of responding to the needs of an ageing population; the demands of the policy area are very pertinent in Australian as well as Singaporean politics. The Members*

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*of the respective parliaments were able to compare approaches across nations and unpack the challenges of the policy area from a regional perspective.*

*The next meeting was with three members of Parliament, Dr Lam Pin Min, Sylvia Lim and Lim Blow Chuan. Of particular note during the meeting were a number of interesting discussions around our respective political parties and the transparency required of parliamentarians. I was somewhat surprised to learn that Members of the Singaporean Parliament are permitted, and often continue to work in paid employment in addition to their Parliamentary duties. A number of questions were raised around the managing of inevitable conflicts of interests arising from the continued employment of Members outside of the Parliament. Of further discussion were differing processes of accountability and transparency between the Parliaments, arising from differences in expectations and limitations on Parliamentarians.*

*The visit concluded with lunch and a continuation of informal discussions with the Members of Parliament which aided in the building of important relationships between Parliamentarians from Singapore and Western Australia.*

*The Parliamentary Delegation to Malaysia and Singapore gave Western Australian Members of Parliament the opportunity to compare and contrast the role of Members of Parliament across the region, and to develop and build on important relationships with our counterparts in South East Asia. Given the close proximity of Western Australia to South East Asia, strong working relationships between national leaders and sound understandings of the roles of Parliamentarians are essential.*

*The White Paper entitled ‘Australia in the Asian Century’ released in 2012 highlights the importance in the development of strong ties with the Asian continent. In releasing the White Paper, then Prime Minister Julia Gillard stated;*

*“Asia will become home to most of the world’s middle class by as early as 2025. Not only becoming the world’s largest producer of goods and services; becoming the largest consumer of them. This is good news for Australia and it should drive a profound change in our thinking about our economic relationship with Asia.”*

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*The delegation allowed me to more fully understand the role of bilateral ties and as such, I feel it vital that communications between Parliamentarians of Australia, Malaysia and Singapore continue in order to build on the important inroads made during the visit.*

*Hon Samantha Rowe MLC*

**15 CURTIN SINGAPORE**

- 15.1 The delegation's final day in Singapore was spent receiving a briefing and tour of the Curtin Singapore university campus. Mr Yu-Gin Teo, Director, and other Curtin Singapore staff kindly conducted the tour.



- 15.2 Western Australia's Curtin University has been delivering its programs in Singapore since 1986. In November 2008 the Curtin Singapore campus was opened – the second offshore campus for Curtin University after its Sarawak, Malaysia, campus. Curtin Singapore currently has 2,000 students.
- 15.3 Curtin Singapore offers courses in:
- Undergraduate Commerce, Science (Nursing) Conversion Program for Registered Nurses, and Arts (Mass Communication);
  - Postgraduate Business, Health Sciences, Humanities (Project Management);
  - English Language; and
  - Curtin College alternative pathways to Curtin University.



15.4 The following observations were made by Hon Alyssa Hayden MLC about the briefing and tour conducted at Curtin Singapore:

*Being the final visit of our trip, the delegation had a great understanding of the role Western Australia has had and continues to play in the educational scene in Malaysia and Singapore.*

*It was not surprising to hear of the strong education connection Curtin has made in the East Asian market even prior to opening its own campus in 2008.*

*Curtin has made it a priority to secure local partnerships to ensure local knowledge and industry requirements are utilised. Finding out what skills are required and filling a gap is the niche market that Curtin Singapore is striving to achieve.*

*Ensuring that students receive the same quality, standards and skills at offshore campuses, in Singapore or Sarawak, is crucial to the branding of Curtin. A student studying at Curtin Singapore, Sarawak, Sydney or Bentley can be guaranteed the same quality degree and skill set to support them entering into a career anywhere in the world.*

*Curtin Singapore is managed by the Curtin Education Centre, which is part of the global educational group Navitas Ltd. Curtin and Navitas have been in partnership for the past 10 years. Navitas is an education organisation, delivering quality services to students globally. All academic matters, responsibility and curriculum are*

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*managed by Curtin through a contractual agreement, overseen by a Curtin appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor.*

*Looking into the future was the interesting part of our briefing. Curtin Singapore is looking at broadcasting live lectures back to Perth with a pilot programme scheduled for 2014. The long term goal behind this venture is to share the knowledge and skills of leading industries to classrooms around the world.*

*For example in Sarawak, hydroelectric power generation is a promising alternative renewable energy source, due to the abundance of water. Where better to learn about hydroelectric power generation than from Sarawak. Singapore is an economic hub with a large focus in logistics. The aim is to be able to share the benefits of learning in a country that offers the knowledge and experience of a specialised industry to students globally.*

*Personally, I am extremely excited about a project delivering this level and style of learning and I am confident it will succeed in becoming an excellent educational tool.*

*Hon Alyssa Hayden MLC*

## **16 NETWORKING EVENTS**

- 16.1 The delegation attended two networking events whilst in Singapore to meet Western Australian business people working in Singapore and Singaporean business people with Western Australian interests. The first event was an evening organised by WATIO to specifically meet with the delegation. The second event was a cocktail function that is organised by AustCham several times a year which, on the evening of the delegation's attendance, was officially recognising James Cook University's 10 years of operation in Singapore.



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**17 CONCLUSION**

- 17.1 The delegation's trip highlighted to each of the members of the delegation the numerous strong links between Western Australia and the nations of South East Asia.
- 17.2 At the parliamentary level, the delegation saw opportunities to further strengthen relationships with fellow Westminster-based parliaments and for the Legislative Council to provide ongoing advice and assistance with respect to procedural and administrative reform.
- 17.3 The knowledge gained of other parliamentary jurisdictions by members of the delegation was valuable professional development which will assist them in their future careers and will benefit the institution generally.



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Hon Barry House MLC  
**President**

**12 December 2013**