STUDY TOUR REPORT

Joan Hall, MP
Member for Morialta

Visit to Germany (Berlin, Dresden), United Kingdom (London), United States (New York, New Orleans, Las Vegas, Hoover Dam and Yucca Mountain, Los Angeles, San Francisco)

July 19—14 August 2003
OBJECTIVES

The principal purpose of travel was to investigate policy, practice and issues involving

a) water - conservation, future and existing use, tourism and leisure activities related to river use, management programs and legislative provisions

b) radioactive waste facilities - transportation of nuclear waste, environmental protection and monitoring, communication and consultation programs with local communities

c) child protection - child sexual abuse, legislative provisions

d) immigration policy - detention centres and border protection

e) tourism industry links - wine and food, cultural and built heritage, water based leisure activities, investment, employment and security issues

f) gambling industry - problem gambling, tourism benefits, responsibility of stakeholders and investors

g) women in politics
DOCUMENTS & PUBLICATIONS (a selection of)

From Germany -

Policy and law concerning foreigners in Germany — The Federal Ministry of the Interior
Saxony and Saxons, the free State of Saxony — Civic Information
Department, Saxon State Chancellery
Dresden’s miracle in stone
Saxony, the facts, State Chancellery
A report on the 2002 floods of Dresden

From the United Kingdom -

Planet water— liquid thinking, practical solutions Thames Water
Searching the Thames - a journey from the source to the sea Aurum Press
Water partner to the world — package of material published by Thames Water, featuring Adelaide, United Water - Australia’s largest private water company; Bangkok the first ever water BOOT project in Thailand; Jakarta, the first major water concession in Indonesia; Izmit, the largest privately financed water supply project in the world; Shanghai, the first private sector funded water treatment project in China; Environment and Conservation Review 2002 - care, respect and performance and, Thames Water Annual Report 2002, Environmental Review 2002

A selection of publications from the Environment Agency Thames Region, covering Wildlife and Fishing activities, guidelines and bylaws, controls on keeping and the release of non-native fish, freshwater fisheries and wildlife conservation guidelines

From the United States

Day of tragedy— 11 September 2001

A selection of water and tourism related material on the Mississippi, the River Road, Historic New Orleans

Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam the story behind the scenery

Yucca Mountain Project a selection of material published by the US Department of Energy Office of Public Affairs
Overview;
Repository licensing;
Managing nuclear waste;
Studying the movement of rock and earthquakes
Nature and engineering working together for a radioactive waste — an
international concern;
Spent nuclear fuel transportation;
safe repository,

Why Yucca Mountain frequently asked questions

‘The money and the power’, Sally Denton and Roger Morris
NAMES OF ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH WHICH (AND WHOM) MEETINGS WERE HELD –

Australian Ambassador in Germany, H E Pamela Fayle
First Secretary Australian Embassy, Mr Bruce Soar
Second Secretary, Cultural Attache, Australian Embassy Mr Nigel Stanier
Federal Ministry of the Interior, Director-General, Directorate-General for Migration, Refugees, Integration, European Harmonisation, Dr Lehngut
Federal Ministry of the Interior, Maik Pawlowsky
Head of Flood protection and water management division, State Ministry of Environment and Agriculture of Saxony-Anhalt, Dr Martin Socher
Disaster Protection unit of the Elbe River, State Ministry of the Interior, Ms Karin Brink
Home Office, UK Immigration Service, HM Inspector, Border Control, Mr Nigel Stockdale
Home Office, UK Immigration Service Croydon Office, Immigration and Nationality Policy Directorate, Ms Linda Stowe, Illegal Working Policy Unit, Mr Edmond Mackie, Assistant Director Enforcement Unit (Croydon) Ms Maria-Elena Cavilla
London Water Control Centre Head of Environment Quality and Sustainability, Mr Peter Spillett
Corporate Social Responsibilities Strategy and Programmes Manager, Mr Ed Mitchell
External Affairs, Client Relations Manager, Mr Paul Lloyd
Founder of London’s first women’s shelters, Ms Erin Pizzey
Senator Anne C Cools, Senator for Ottawa, Canada
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Biologist Supervisor, Inland Fisheries Division (Davis Pond area of the Mississippi) Mr Mark Lawson
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Senior Environmental Scientist, Surveillance Division Environmental Quality Unit, Mr Chris Piehler
United States Department of Energy, Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, Office of Repository Development, Yucca Mountain project Dr William J Boyle; Division Director OLAS Post closure and License Acquisition Division, Allen B Benson; Director, Institutional Affairs, Ms Jean Younker
Los Alamos, National Laboratory, Geotechnical Engineering and Research, Bruce D Reined,
Field Test Representative Bechtel SAIC, Communications Department, Ms Karen Threlkeld
G G S International Quality Management System, President and Chief Executive Officer, Steve Toneguzzo
Nevada Gaming Commission, Chairman, Mr Peter Bernhard
Nevada Council on Problem Gambling, Executive Director Ms Carol O’Hare
SRD, Director of Gaming and Hospitality Programs, Mark Wayman
MGM Mirage, Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, Mr Gary N Jacobs
MGM Mirage, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, Alan Feldman
Australian Consul-General, Hon John Olsen
Austrade, Los Angeles, Senior Trade Commissioner, Ms Kylie Hargreave
Representatives from Qantas
Representative from the Australian Tourism Commission (ATC)
SUMMARIES OF STUDY AREAS PURSUED

(a) Water issues

A visit to Dresden, and a site visit to the Elbe River to discuss with officials involved with the management of the Elbe, was most instructive and importantly it provided the opportunity to observe first hand the work, lessons learned and achievements following the devastating flood of the Dresden River.

The organisation of the Elbe River now in place is most impressive and clearly demonstrates the need for a cooperative approach of stakeholders in such an important River system in this case the cooperation involved a multi-country management approach.

The River Elbe region and River Dresden major clean up followed the flood that involved the evacuation of 70,000 Saxon people and the death of 22 people due to polluted water flowing from the Czech Republic.

The practice of extensive use of chemicals and pesticides on rural properties prior to the flood has dramatically changed there is now regular soil analysis conducted on land holdings fronting the river to monitor the water quality, which is funded by the European Union Commission.

Germany and the Dresden region (of Saxony) is a direct beneficiary of legislative change and funding where more than 4 million people from Germany, and more than 600,000 from the Czech Republic and Slovakia are playing a significant role in rebuilding the health of the River.

The water quality in Dresden’s section of the River Elbe has so dramatically changed that fish now breed in the River and can be and are eaten without any health or quality concerns.

As in Australia, and particularly South Australia, water is now a high priority community and political issue.

This example of political will and determination, multi-country cooperation, industry stakeholders plus the legislative and funding resources of the European Union can, in a policy sense be translated to what can and must be achieved with our River system.

The issue of water quality in the River Thames is an another excellent example of what can be achieved with impressive management practices, education, private sector investment, legislative framework and political will.

The transformation of the Thames water quality over the past 30 years has been achieved by a combination of these factors but specifically through modifying and upgrading sewerage treatment plants, by convincing laundry and cleaning product manufacturers to change their chemical content, the use of purpose-built boats that travel the river pumping air into the ‘black spots’
following rain and by specially targeted education campaigns, with community and industry stakeholder consultation programs.

Monitoring stations have been set up along the River (322km) to take samples every 15 minutes thereby identifying water quality problems immediately.

The Thames Water Authority involves more than 30 organisations in management, conservation and river use; it is the world’s third largest water corporation and services more than 72 million people.

The Thames is now home to more than 100 species of fish and approximately 350 species of invertebrates, including the ‘indicator’ species Mayfly nymph which is extremely sensitive to difficult environmental conditions.

United Water, Australia’s largest private water company is proud of its involvement and achievements here in South Australia, and has produced material outlining their role in our State.

This ‘SA specific’ material, titled ‘Adelaide, United Water — Australia’s largest private water company’ is contained in an impressive publication, Water partner to the world’, published by United Waters parent company, Thames Water.

The visit and meeting with the Thames Water Authority was arranged by the Management of the London Water Control Centre.

As a member of our State Parliament, I was impressed with the determination and commitment of Thames Water, and what can be achieved with cooperation, communication, an appropriate legislative framework, and of course, financial resources and investment.

The need for a significant ‘cooperation factor’ was again demonstrated by a visit to the Mississippi delta in New Orleans, where managing water quality involved 7 American States.

The population of the Mississippi corridor encompasses more than 12 million people and the river flows more than 3000 kilometres.

The focus on water quality and management practices of the Mississippi, like the Thames, the Elbe, and the Dresden clearly demonstrate the political importance and priority given to water.

Public debate (and controversy) on sustainable water use, entitlements, the number of dams, funding responsibility, how these issues should be managed, and by whom, provided a number of parallels to the current political debate taking place in Australia.

The ‘3 River’ examples of achievement and change - of an appropriate legislative framework based on Federal State cooperation, of the necessity of community and industry stakeholder consultation and the inevitability of
appropiate levels of funding having to be agreed, provided me with an optimistic outlook for the future of the Murray.

(b) Radioactive waste facilities, transportation, environmental protection and monitoring issues, community consultation issues and education programs

A site visit to the Yucca Mountain project, a remote location in the Nevada Desert and the site chosen for the storage of medium and high level nuclear waste provided an insight into the international difficulties and similarities encountered in deciding where to store nuclear waste.

The political debate, controversy and frustration of reality and fact versus fiction, was as evident in Nevada as here in our own State.

The Yucca Mountain project, located on Federal land, has been studied for more than 20 years.

It has been scrutinised by scientific inquiries, political enquiries, been the subject of more than 65 public hearings and has undergone a significant number of environmental impact studies and still the controversy exists.

The US Department of Energy is confident that Yucca Mountain is a suitable site for a repository where nuclear waste can be safely stored.

The information available on the Yucca Mountain project is immense, covering the issues of how the repository would work, climate, geological features, groundwater, proximity to population centres, public health and safety, transportation, cost, sabotage potential, alternative site comparisons, timelines and the challenge of delays.

This list covers a small selection of material available for study.

The Yucca Mountain site is more than 150 kilometres from a major city. No one lives on Yucca Mountain as the area has an extremely dry climate and is located adjacent to the Nevada Test Site area used for nuclear testing until the early 1990's.

The waste from 131 ‘temporary’ sites in 39 States would be stored underground in tunnels 1,000 feet beneath the desert surface and 1,000 feet above the water table. An estimated 175 shipments would be transported to the site via train or truck each year.

It was significant to learn that more than 2700 shipments of nuclear waste have occurred during the last 30 years in the United States and there has never been an ‘incident’ during transportation.

The issues of community consultation and reaction, the issues of State and Federal powers, and the political debate (disturbingly) contained many
similarities to the current political argument taking place here between the State and Federal Governments.

The well known and used ‘NIMBY syndrome’ - not in my backyard - argument has been joined by another argument over the Yucca Mountain project, and that is the ‘NOPE factor’ - not on planet earth. To date that argument has not been used in relation to the proposed South Australian low level repository but predictions were that it would soon ‘arrive’ and be used here by the opponents of ‘safe storage’.

Following a visit to the waste repository at Centre de L’Aube in prime farming land in the centre of the Champagne district of France last year, I recommended that a delegation of Government, media and other stakeholders visit that facility to hopefully provide an informed debate on the issue.

After my visit to the Yucca Mountain project site in the Nevada Desert I am more convinced than ever that the opponents of a South Australian low level waste facility should see for themselves and meet and talk with the scientists on why leaving nuclear waste in ‘temporary’ sites scattered across our State, not monitored and unprotected, is not an option in a democratic and civilised society.

(c) Child protection

Meetings with Ms Erin Pizzey in London, and Senator Anne Cools (from the Canadian Parliament) in New York involved detailed discussions on a range of issues related to child protection - shared child custody and the complexities of fairer access for both parents, trauma of men wrongly accused of physical or sexual abuse to prevent access visits, domestic violence, the necessity of targeted education programs and issues involving abused children when-in-the care of religious and/or Government institutions.

The need to assist children to learn to trust and establish meaningful relationships with adults again, having been victims of abuse was considered to be a top priority.

Evidence suggests that a number of the women who finally leave abusive relationships become perpetrators of violence themselves, and how imperative it is for these women to be reeducated about the need and how to establish and maintain an appropriate relationship with both their children and other adults in a non-violent environment.

Ms Pizzey, one of the early (and successful) campaigners for women’s shelters in London strongly believes the issue and importance of shared custody is one of the most crucial factors in moving forward.

She has championed the cause of appropriate and balanced education
programs, with better access for both parents, for more than two decades. Currently, this particular issue is the subject of much research, interest, strongly held views and controversy in the United Kingdom.

The dilemma of children abused - both or either violent or sexual - while in the care of Government or religious institutions continues to cause concern in the most appropriate solutions — to enable the victims to move on and learn to live a normal life.

Senator Cools has worked closely with Ms Pizzey over a number of years on the wider issues of child protection, community responsibility, legislative requirements and the urgent need for education programs.

Discussions about the Layton Report and its many recommendations were instructive, and sadly there were many examples of similar issues and challenges across international borders.

Senator Cools has provided reference material on a range of Canadian legislative measures and reports which will prove valuable when decisions are finally made by the South Australian Parliament on how to address and resource the complex and numerous issues of child protection.

The issue of rhetoric and reality, versus policy implementation appears to be a universal problem.

(d) Immigration policy – detention centres and border protection

Although the responsibility of the Federal Government, the level of interest in our immigration policy, the controversy and political debate on detention centres and border protection, in my view, is an issue of concern for all Parliamentarians.

I was fortunate to receive detailed briefings on a number of immigration issues specific to Europe — in particular Germany and the United Kingdom.

These informative meetings included how technology is assisting in the fight against people smuggling how European countries have established a fingerprinting system called Eurodac, used when ‘suspicious persons’ are detected at borders; the use of acoustic heartbeat sensors that pick up human pulses, used extensively in locations of entry by shipping containers or lorries; the installation of x-ray machines at key entry points; the use of heat detectors installed where trucks regularly pass; and gamma ray screeners installed on trains.

In Britain, estimates are that 3,500 people will arrive illegally in 2003, which is 6,000 less than 2002, and of these illegal immigrants more than 60% are expected to arrive in shipping containers or lorries.
(e) tourism industry links – wine and food, cultural and built heritage, water based leisure activities, investment, employment and security issues

In discussions about the future of the tourism industry, and opportunities to increase visitor numbers to South Australia the profile of our State was always an issue.

The impressive efforts of the South Australian Tourism Commission and its professional approach to ‘positioning’ South Australia were widely acknowledged within the tourism industry. However, unfortunately our profile with the consumer or traveler needs further promotion.

The focus of wine and food was considered to be a most import aspect of our future growth. The American interest in Australia as a ‘long haul’ destination demonstrated the opportunities and indeed challenges we have in the future. Australia was recognized as a safe and desirable destination – but the lack of knowledge of South Australia as a ‘first’ destination was limited.

Increasingly I found the United States operators and travellers were wanting to know about the heritage and culture of their destination, the need for soft adventure and safety.

The British and European markets understand more about the range of destinations in Australia – although I found more interest in our reputation as a safe destination than I had previously experienced. Food and wine although important appeared to be just a ‘part of the mix’ of the interest in us as a destination. Our native flora and fauna, our ‘space’ and the possibility of soft adventure continue to have significant appeal.

Our reputation as an impressive destination for conventions and conferences reinforced my belief in the investment of the Adelaide Convention Centre, and the international importance and standing of the ACC’s Chief Executive Pieter Van der Hoeven, and the role he has had, and continues to have on the world scene of the conference and convention industry.

Several aspects of the tourism industry internationally continues to concern me as a South Australian – firstly, the seeming lack of recognition by Governments and sections of the community of the importance of tourism as an important economic sector for both investment and employment. Secondly my concern that our lack of language skills – particularly Asian languages could in the future be a problem.

Throughout many parts of Europe, Britain and the United States it was considered imperative that hotel ‘front desks’, that airline check-ins, that hire car companies and tour operators had a diverse range of multi-lingual staff. I believe it is an issue we should address, and at the very least, continually monitor.
Meetings with the Nevada Gaming Commission and the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling in Las Vegas confirmed the numerous complexities of this policy issue in all jurisdictions.

For example, the Director of the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) in Las Vegas, Ms Carol O’Hare heads up a service that receives more than 2000 calls from problem gamblers each year, although she believes that more than 7500 actually make the initial call. However, it is Ms O’Hare’s view that loss of courage to confront their addiction causes them to hang-up before the call is answered.

Ms O’Hare is passionate that problem gambling is an ‘addiction’ and therefore should be treated as a specific health issue, like other ‘addictions’. She is deeply concerned about the long term difficulties that will follow from teenagers being encouraged to gamble for fun. This form of gambling, while not involving money, she believes will increase the desire to gamble with money when the legal age is reached.

Evidence in Nevada clearly shows that a significant percentage of problem gamblers also possess other addiction problems mainly alcohol. The State of Nevada has no State Government funding for treating gambling ‘addicts’, therefore they move into the mental health system for treatment.

The NCPG works closely with the gambling industry in Las Vegas and in a number of specific policy initiatives they jointly believe they have achieved some success.

For a State that is recognised internationally as the ‘gambling and entertainment’ capital, I was astonished to discover that Nevada State provides no State Government funding for gambling addiction.

Currently Las Vegas is the fastest growing city in the United States; it has an enormously successful tourism industry with more than 33 million people visiting each year, more than half of whom arrive by road. This figure demonstrates a strong domestic tourism market.

Interestingly, an extensive study recently conducted found that the incidence of problem gambling in Nevada is not higher than in other American State. One conclusion from the figures suggests that perhaps this indicates the younger generation (in Nevada) is less interested in gambling, possibly because of their constant exposure.

In addition, the study reports that the tax collections from gambling (both State and Federal) at a gross rate of 6.7% were lower than other American States.

The dramatic growth and recognition of Las Vegas as a ‘gambling and
entertainment centre’ over recent decades has seen significant changes on strict monitoring and control —within the authority of the Nevada Gaming Commission (NGC).

The Commission monitors investment levels, tax issues, auditing, strict gaming license violations and control of electronic services on every gaming machine.

The issue of gaming licenses is divided into two categories less than 15 machines with no table games and the ‘large’ licenses for 15 or more machines. The ‘small’ licenses cover schools, churches, supermarkets and laundromats. As exists here in our own State, the Commission specifically prohibits machines being located in shopping malls. The issue of the ‘small’ or limited license depends on meeting the criteria to demonstrate that the executors of the license are responsible and can meet any financial obligations.

It is immediately obvious to anyone visiting Las Vegas that billions of dollars have been and continue to be invested in providing a huge variety of entertainment from the gambling tables to top international entertainers, from luxury top of the range accommodation to budget and backpacker accommodation both supported by a vibrant tourism, retail industry and service industry.

In recent years however, support infrastructure for the city itself is being stretched - power, water, public transport and services - as mentioned earlier Las Vegas is now the fastest growing city in the USA.

(g) Women in politics

The general subject of ‘women in politics’ is an issue that is a regular discussion point of interest, particularly between other women Parliamentarians. The issue of quotas, affirmative action programs and how to encourage more women to stand for Parliament is an ongoing area of concern in Parliaments in Britain, parts of Europe, Canada and the United States.

As could be expected the range of strongly held views is as diverse between women, as it is throughout the community.

Another area of discussion and concern involved the focus of media coverage – particularly on private lives.

One area of agreement that became obvious from a number of my discussions was that although progress has been made over the past century, it was far too slow!
Further information about this report is available from the Morialta Electorate Office, telephone 83654224.

JOAN HALL  
Member for Morialta