Parliamentary Study Tour
David Pisoni MP
Wellington New Zealand
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Travel Objectives

At the time of my travel I was the Shadow Minister for Employment, Education, Skills and Training and also the Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

It was my intention to study and then report on issues relating to my meetings with New Zealand Government Ministers and my attendance at the International Conference Constitutional Monarchy in the Commonwealth Realms: Opportunities in Common.

Introduction to New Zealand

Unfortunately there are no direct flights from Adelaide to Wellington so I travelled on a domestic flight to Melbourne and proceeded through customs and immigration at Melbourne Airport.

Flights into Wellington are restricted to smaller planes such as the Boeing 737-800 because of the short runway. However, the Wellington City Council plan to increase the length of the runway as part of its fifteen year master plan that will see passenger numbers double to ten million per year and deliver 21,000 jobs in the region.

The conference: Constitutional Monarchy in the Commonwealth Realms: Opportunities in Common.


The Commonwealth Realms are a group of sixteen fully independent nations, of which Australia is one, which share Queen Elizabeth II as their monarch.

These nations employ a common system of government but each has adapted it to suit their own changing needs and national character. The conference was a terrific opportunity for politicians, government officials, and academics to meet and discuss the role of the Crown in each realm, particularly in the fields of governance, constitutional structure, symbolism, culture, and identity.
Sessions at the conference included:

- The Value of the Monarchy
- Symbols of Sovereignty
- (Constitutional Monarchy as) An Evolving Institution
- Connections to the Crown
- Honours Systems

Other discussions of interest within these sessions included The Crown’s Settlements with the Maori, the Maori and the Crown, The Crown and Academic Achievement and The Exercise of the Sovereign’s Powers.

I particularly enjoyed an address and insights of the Hon Michael Kirby regarding Constitutional Monarchy as part of his address as special guest at the concluding Conference Dinner event.

Ministerial Meetings

I met with the Hon Steven Joyce, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment. We discussed the New Zealand skills funding model and the strong industry involvement and employment outcomes for young people in particular.
In recent times New Zealand has shifted the focus to broadening skills sets for students into industry categories offering more flexibility for students and employers into the future.

Minister Joyce and his advisers were also able to outline some of the differences in Industrial Relations and Occupational Health and Safety arrangements in New Zealand to Australia and the ways in which these impact on employment and the training system.

I also met with the Hon Hekia Parata, Minister for Education. We spoke about New Zealand’s plans to improve numeracy and literacy. Also the success of expanded local school management and New Zealand’s School Board system of management for local schools.

Minister Parata spoke at length about the issue of teacher quality and school leadership in New Zealand and the interesting decline in union membership, which has traditionally been high in NZ.

There are also separate unions for primary and secondary teachers.

Next year a ‘Professional Education Council’, independent of government, will be setting up as an alternative professional body to the union for teachers.
Departmental Officers New Zealand Government

In addition to meetings with the Minister for Education and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment I was able, due to the hospitality and co-operation of these Ministers, to meet with and be briefed by various departmental officials including:

Alexandra Vranyac-Wheeler, Manager ITO Investment at the Tertiary Education Commission

Eve McMahon, Manager (Quality Assurance Division) at the New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Josh Williams Chief Executive of the Industry Training Federation.

These officials were able to give me a good understanding of the interactions between school education, vocational education and the employment market in New Zealand and the current policies being pursued in these areas.

Visit to the New Zealand Parliament

I attended the 2 pm Question Time the day before the New Zealand budget was delivered.
Having never previously visited the New Zealand Parliament I found it instructive to see how their Question Time operates and the differences in management with a single chamber, no upper house and a representation system more likely to involve coalition government.

A tour of the Parliament was also instructive in terms of the history of the building and the traditions of government in New Zealand.

Tours of the NZ Parliament are very well organised and those who conduct the tours have a great depth of knowledge on all aspects of the building and system, obviously having worked within the system and parliament for many years.

My advisor Mr Grant Ker attended the conference and meetings with me.