

AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL EXCHANGE COUNCIL

INDIVIDUAL STUDY TOUR TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Executive Summary

The ability to participate in the 2013 Australian Political Exchange Council (the Council) Individual Study Tour to the United States of America (US) was a very unique and thoroughly informative experience.

Focus for visit

My focus was on food security in the US and more specifically innovation in agriculture and sustaining regional populations, with a view to potential application in an Australian context.

Since the Second World War and then Prime Minister John Curtin's famous and well documented 'call to America,' Australia and the US have shared a closely interlinked history. As a result many of the challenges, experiences and also successes have been shared by both nations.

It is widely recognised that food security and agricultural capacity is and will continue to become a significant growth industry of the 21st century. Australia is well positioned to capitalise on the so-coined 'Asian Century.' With three billion people in the broader Asia-Pacific region, immense economic potential exists on Australia's immediate geographical doorstep.

Notwithstanding the potential that exists in Asia, the fact remains the US is Australia's largest market for direct investment abroad whilst also being the largest foreign investor in Australia. The US is also Australia's 4th largest market for the export of goods and services.

An individual study tour provided a chance to gain a rare insight into the political process and operation of another nation. My individual study tour allowed a visit to Washington DC and South West Kansas. I was focusing on examples of innovation in agriculture and challenges around retaining regional populations.

The agricultural sector remains one of the more significant to the Australian economy, with rural exports consisting 11.6 per cent of the nation's total exports in 2012.

Approach to visit

The US was the location for the study tour to assess the similarities in produce and agricultural production techniques and commercialisation to Australia. What is the US doing differently to Australia? How are farmers and regional areas supported in the US? Can Australia learn lessons from the US example?

Many of these questions were all or partly answered during the visit. The willingness of senior members of both the US Federal Government and private enterprises to make themselves available to meet is testament to the ongoing success of the program. My study tour confirmed that there is a clear understanding of the value the program brings to both participants and relevant stakeholders.

My approach was to firstly meet with senior members of the US Department of Agriculture which provided the best possible insight and overview of the US agricultural structure. This was followed with a visit to South West Kansas and Dodge City which provided an opportunity to drill down and see firsthand how policies rolled out by the US Federal Government were being implemented on the ground and which challenges remained.

South West Kansas was chosen due to its similarities to Western Australia. The Western Australian State Government is currently implementing its \$300 million 'Vision for Agriculture' which includes looking at better utilising ground water resources for agriculture.

The Ogallala Aquifer is a vast shallow aquifer which lies beneath the Great Plains region of the US. The aquifer covers a region of 450,000 square kilometres and intersects eight states. This water resource has been accessed for many years for both human consumption and agricultural purposes.

The aquifer is also utilised for the growth and ultimate use at feed lotting operations to service the beef sector. This is the major industry of South West Kansas and is the region's major employer. South West Kansas is responsible for the slaughter and distribution to the US domestic market of approximately 90,000 head of cattle each week.

Visiting this part of the US and seeing the magnitude of beef operations suggested that through better utilisation of ground water resources in Western Australia a similar ilk beef industry could be established. Many of the climatic, environmental and social challenges which South West Kansas grapple with mirror regional Western Australia.

Dodge City

Although many rural regions of the US are experiencing stagnate population growth and higher than trend unemployment, Dodge City is progressing through a period of strong population and economic growth. Dodge City has an unemployment rate of 4.8 per cent opposed to the national average of 7.3 per cent. Dodge City also has population growth which is higher than the Kansas state average, albeit still slightly below the national average.

It was evident from my time in Dodge City that the local community has recognised the need to attract more skilled staff to meet the skills shortage which exists if Dodge City is going to continue to grow. This has resulted in a strong focus on improving the social infrastructure and amenity in the local community. Many of the challenges faced by the agriculture sector and rural communities remain consistent between both countries however the approach to solve these challenges varies.

Key points observed

- Water access and security is crucial to agricultural success;
- Tax incentives are effective in retaining regional populations;
- Innovation in agriculture is required to remain competitive; and
- Promotion of agriculture as a career is essential for future success.

Report

INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

The Hon. Kim Beazley AC, Australian Ambassador to United States of America

While I was in Washington DC, I was honoured to meet the current Australian Ambassador to the United States of America the Hon. Kim Beazley AC.

Mr Beazley has made a significant contribution to Australian public life, through numerous prominent roles as a Member of the House of Representatives for 27 years.

Mr Beazley was Minister for Defence, Education and Transport and many other portfolios at different times. Mr Beazley led the Australian Labor Party to both the 1998 and 2001 Federal Elections. The opportunity to meet Mr Beazley and discuss the US-Australian relationship with an individual of this magnitude was personally thrilling and instructive. In a broad discussion covering the topics of my study tour, Mr Beazley provided me with interesting anecdotes which outlined the significance of the bilateral relationship.

Dr Chris Parker, Minister-Counsellor for Agriculture, also made himself available to meet during my time at the Australian Embassy. Mr Parker's insight into the US Agriculture industry and rural development, in conjunction with a personal history in rural Queensland, made him well versed in the similarities and differences in the agriculture sector between our two nations.

From a rural population and development perspective, it was rightly observed that the population exodus pressures which Australia deals with are not reflected to the same extent in the US as there are 300 million people in the US opposed to 23 million in Australia whilst the land areas are comparable in size.

Key point:

The level of Government support afforded to the agriculture sector and the strong focus on the domestic market are the two largest variations between the US and Australia.

Mr Kent Lanclos, Director Strategic Data Acquisition and Analysis. Risk Management Agency, US Department of Agriculture

An operational Multi-Peril Crop Insurance (MPCI) has been an issue of ongoing discussion within Australian agricultural circles for many years. The opportunity to discuss how the MPCI program operates in the US was highly beneficial.

Mr Kent Lanclos was available to meet and his experience and expertise in the risk management area was appreciated.

Some level of a MPCI has operated in the US since the 1930s when the heavy droughts caused the 'dust bowl' era through much of the Mid-West region. The program remained relatively small until a resurgence in the 1980s.

The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation is a statutory organisation. Management is vested in a board of directors with ultimate supervision coming from the Department of Agriculture and the Risk Management Agency.

In 2012 over \$120 billion of commodities was insured. The total premiums paid for the program in the US is close to \$11 billion, with \$4.5 billion coming from grower contributions and the US Government

meeting the shortfall. The Government also covers the insurer's operational costs of administering the program which is \$1.4 billion.

The MPCl program in the US has seen 85 per cent of major crops insured.

Key point:

The Government support for a MPCl program in the US is possible due to the level of population and cross subsidisation which can occur.

Senator Pat Roberts, Republican Senator for Kansas and Mr Wayne Stotskopf, Legislative Assistant

While in Washington DC, I was able to coordinate a meeting with Republican Senator for Kansas, Pat Roberts. Senator Roberts has been representing the people of Kansas in the US Senate since 1997. Senator Roberts was previously a six term congressman.

While I was undertaking the study tour, the US was debating the 'Farm Bill'. The US 'Farm Bill' refers to four Acts which authorises, extends and repeals many different aspects of agricultural policy in the US. The 'Farm Bill' is debated and renegotiated every five years.

The ability to engage with Mr Stotskopf allowed much to be learnt about the impacts of the pending Farm Bill decision on Kansas. Insight was provided on the agricultural challenges of South West Kansas, the impacts on the industry and communities by the ongoing drought and an increased focus on water rights as both an inter and intrastate issue.

Key point:

Kansas is dealing with population flight issues as populations centralise to larger centres. Both levels of US Government are looking at avenues including major tax incentives to encourage development in regional settings.

Dodge City Kansas - Case Study

Dodge City Kansas is synonymous with the 'wild west' narrative which defined the frontier west of the continental US during the 1870s and 1880s. Through the start of the 20th century, Dodge City transformed from a cattle droving town into an agricultural and meat processing hub.

Dodge City provides an insight into a unique window of history in the US, which is well celebrated and supported by the Boot Hill Museum. The museum has over 60,000 objects and dates from 1870 to the 1920s.

Dodge City has a population of over 27,000 and is situated in Ford County. Primary employers are National Beef and Cargill Meat Solutions. South West Kansas is the beef capital of the US.

The beef industry directly and indirectly (through associated agricultural enterprises) is the major employer in the Ford County and broader South West Kansas region. Many areas of rural US are working through a period of high unemployment. Dodge City however has low level unemployment at 4.2 per cent.

The Ogallala aquifer and the irrigation that it facilitates has been the driving force behind the strong meat processing hub Dodge City has become. Agriculture is one of the most reliable and prosperous components of the Kansas economy. Kansas' 1st Congressional District generates the most farming income nationwide, and it relies on the High Plains Ogallala Aquifer, which stretches from Texas to South Dakota, for irrigation water. A recent Kansas State University study articulates that if the Ogallala is 30 per cent pumped out, the aquifer will probably be 70 per cent empty by 2060.

There are many difficulties in attracting skilled staff to the region. Salaries are lower than metropolitan areas, compounded by the relative isolation of South West Kansas from large metropolitan cities. Kansas City is the nearest major city almost 600 kilometres away.

Key point:

Irrigation via the Ogallala aquifer is crucial to Dodge City's economic success. Retaining populations and skilled staff remains a challenge.

A special mention must go to Mr Schenkein - the willingness of the Dodge City Area Chamber of Commerce to accommodate me whilst on the exchange and visiting their town was outstanding. The ability to meet with relevant stakeholders from across Government and the private sector provided me with an insight into the operation of the agricultural sector in South West Kansas to a level which is rare to individuals outside avenues like the Council's program.

Mr Don A Woodburn, President Dodge City Community College

Dodge City is home to a two year Community College which has over 2,000 students. The Community College system in the US is very similar to the technical college system in Australia. The ability to tour the local college and meet with faculty heads and representatives reinforced that many of the educational challenges and focuses in South West Kansas mirror those of regional Australia.

Enrolment numbers have remained stable at the Dodge City Community College in recent years. College focuses include technical skills and agriculture based courses. Similar to Australia, the attraction of students into tertiary courses related to agricultural sciences is difficult.

While in Dodge City I provided a brief lecture to students about the role of agriculture to the Western Australian economy and the renewed focus on regional development by the State Government in recent years.

Key point:

Since the Global Financial Crisis there has been increased interest in agriculture by students in South West Kansas as agriculture has remained a stable industry over this period and job prospects and industry growth potential remain strong.

Mr Brian R Winter, Winter Livestock - Owner Operator

Mr Brian Winter is the owner and operator of Winter Livestock, a cattle auction and feed lotting business which was established in 1936. The business now has four locations in Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

As feed lotting is a large industry in Dodge City and South West Kansas there is regular churn of stock between producers and feed lotting enterprises prior to ultimate sale to processing plants. Meeting with Mr Winter and his family was a great honour and allowed me an insight into the size, scope and vital importance the cattle industry has to the past, present and future of Dodge City and South West Kansas.

Deketa S Schuckman, Owner Nicholson Ventures

Nicholson Ventures is a family run business with feed lotting operations and production of feeds for larger feed lots through centre pivot irrigation techniques. Nicholson Ventures is unique as the property uses treated waste water from Dodge City residents for agricultural pursuits. The opportunity to see the water recycling project at the Nicholson Ventures property outlined the economic potential which exists from effective management and use of both traditional and non-traditional water resources.

The quality of operations at Nicholson Ventures was outstanding and the ability to learn from which crops work well in which conditions is helpful for similar irrigated agriculture ambitions in northern Western Australia.

To maximise production output of centre pivot operations, satellite imaging is taken to determine how crops are progressing in their growth. It can also be used to control the level of water and nutrient output so that certain areas within a single centre pivot can be expertly managed and different sub areas can grow different crops and at different levels of growth development.

Mr Fred Vocasek, Director Servi-Tech Laboratories

Servi-Tech is a crop consulting and agronomist business based in Dodge City which began in the 1970s and was born out of the centre pivot expansion which occurred around that time. The company has now evolved and Servi-Tech provides crop consulting services to approximately 1700 farmers in seven states and 140 counties. The Crop Service Division has over one million acres under contract. Corn, alfalfa and soybeans represent 59 per cent, 15 per cent and 2.2 per cent of contracted acres, respectively. Servi-Tech also employs 190 staff in 70 different communities.

Agronomists in Dodge City are taking samples from across the US and from international markets as far as Ukraine.

Mr Dwight Koops, President Crop Quest- Agronomist Services

Crop Quest is an employee owned crop consultancy company. Due to the location and significance of agriculture to Dodge City agronomist services, which service High Plains region from Texas to Nebraska and Colorado to Missouri, they are based in the city.

Crop Quest is responsible for consulting on 1.4 million acres over nine states.

Key point:

Technical expertise and access to capital is becoming increasingly important in agriculture. Geographical borders and boundaries are no longer prohibitive to market expansion and business opportunities.

Mr Jerry King, Director of Marketing and Communications- The Victory Electric Cooperative

I was lucky enough to meet with Mr Jerry King, senior staff and board members of the Victory Electric Cooperative.

Victory Electric is a member owned cooperative, headquartered in Dodge City. The cooperative has 92 employees and provides service to 19,506 metres with 2,769.31 miles of transmission and distribution line in southwest Kansas.

Valuable insight was gained into the power distribution network in Kansas and the operating models pursued. Smaller scale energy cooperatives are common in rural US.

Mr King is also a Ford County Commissioner.

Mr Mike Hiderband, President ROTO-MIX

ROTO-MIX is an agricultural implement manufacturer specialising in livestock mixing and feeding equipment. The company was founded in Dodge City in 1984 and in that time has grown to be an exporter to 35 international markets including Australia.

ROTO-MIX is a prime example of the type of service industry potential that exists once a major economic driver is established. Secondly the ability for ROTO-MIX to continue to grow exemplifies the type of innovation that is required for rural based operations to remain competitive.

Key point:

The ability to attract skilled staff is a major challenge in regional population retention.

REGIONAL POPULATION RETENTION

Australian rural and regional communities are currently being challenged to firstly retain then grow regional populations. There is a prevailing global trend for continued centralisation of populations away from rural areas toward larger regional hubs and then capital cities.

My individual study tour provided an opportunity to see if the challenges of population retention in Australia were reflected to the same extent in the US and if so, how was the issue being addressed.

Although similarities exist, it must be mentioned that the continental US is approximately equal in land mass to Australia. Yet the population variation is more than 285 million. Australia has a population density of three persons per square kilometre and the US population density is 34 persons per square kilometre. Thus any similarities must be considered in this context.

Mr Ed Fendley, US Office of Sustainable Communities, US Environmental Protection Authority

Mr Fendley is responsible for the 'Smart Growth' program which is administered through the US Environmental Protection Authority.

The Smart Growth program aids communities across the US in using strategies to develop ways that preserve natural lands and critical environmental areas, protect water and air quality, and reuse and reinvest in land existing infrastructure and historic buildings.

Smart Growth focuses on revitalising Central Business Districts of both metropolitan and rural areas. There has been consensus that a focus on improving the amenity of rural areas is an important step in retaining rural populations. The program has been successful as it has been driven from the local level. Similar to Australia during the 1950s and 1960s there was rapid development of suburban areas in cities and regional centres in the US. In the American context there was not significant investment in the CBD's over time which reduced the attractiveness of living 'downtown'.

Smart Growth has been primarily an urban phenomenon in the US. Interestingly in Western Australia, through the State Government Royalties for Regions program, each regional local government was eligible for funding for local infrastructure and town building projects. Through this funding stream there was a focus on improving town centre vibrancy and amenity. These revitalisations have helped to improve the perceptions of community members and also perspective community members about what it means to live in a regional community. This principal remains consistent with the Smart Growth program.

The movement of populations back to 'down towns' in the US is being led by retirees and 'millenniums' a term used to define the upcoming skilled 20-30 year old professionals. Asheville in South Carolina is a prominent example of the 'Smart Growth' program operating effectively in the US.

Key point:

The success of 'Smart Growth' reflects the similar success in Australia revitalising town centres and focusing on infrastructure streetscapes and amenity as an important means of improving confidence in regional communities.

Mrs Carol Meyer, Kansas Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce stimulates business through the development of business grants, operates as a conduit between different funding opportunities and aims to help support the establishment of new business enterprises in regional areas.

Regional US was relatively isolated from the worst impacts of the Global Financial Crisis. Rural America is home to numerous localised smaller banks which were relatively isolated from the toxic debt issues which crippled the major banking institutions across the US.

Mrs Meyer interacts and helps to build avenues of business development for 26 counties across South West Kansas. The role aims to provide information services, funding opportunities and industry growth potential for local small business.

The role played by Mrs Meyer in the Department of Commerce is similar to Small Business Centres which operate in regional areas of Western Australia and similar structures exist in other Australian jurisdictions. The 'Buy Local' approach in Kansas is not legislated to the same extent as some jurisdictions in Australia. The buy local provision can be a two or five per cent local preference. In some regions there is no price preference established, rather it is just a policy to support the principle.

Key point:

Providing education and support avenues goes a long way to build the confidence and resilience of regional businesses. Buy local is one element to helping regional business remain competitive.

Mr Chris Boys, Ford County Commissioner

The County Commission system in the US is similar to the Shire Council system in Australia. Ford County's population is 35,000 centred around Dodge City. Ford County is represented by three elected Commissioners. During my time in Dodge City I was able to meet all three Ford County Commissioners. Mr Chris Boys is a Ford County Commissioner for the second district and his willingness to meet and share knowledge was greatly appreciated. Mr Boys is a young dynamic leader within the Dodge City community, who also runs a successful insurance company. As a County Commissioner and local community leader, Mr Boys is at the coal face dealing with the regional issues of significance to Ford County.

Mr Boys outlined education and health services as the two most important issues to families in Ford County.

The County Commissioner role is an elected position. The election of County Commissioners is a party political process.

Mr Sean Ponder, Senior Coach, Dodge City Law

The Dodge City Law is a professional indoor American Football team. The ability for Dodge City, a community of less than 30,000 to attract and establish a professional sporting organisation, emphasises the importance of the community as both an economic and social hub to South West Kansas.

Sport is an important social conduit and helps to build the social amenity within a community. The hosting of events in Dodge City like professional indoor football complemented by a new indoor sport arena which was constructed in 2000, is another attractive proposition which makes the Dodge City community more desirable for current residents to remain and to attract new residents.

Mr Ponder is a former NFL player with the Dallas Cowboys. His extensive playing and coaching experience will provide the local community with a highly valuable asset to help inspire and develop junior sporting opportunities.

Ms Danielle Crouch, Manager Western State Bank Expo Centre

The chance to tour the Dodge City Expo Centre provided insight into an important piece of tourism and event infrastructure in the Dodge City region. Ms Danielle Crouch who manages the facility was highly motivated, skilled and a passionate advocate for this facility and the broader Dodge City community.

The Expo Centre is a large convention style complex of 8,300 square metres which has an enormous 92,000 square metre outdoor exhibit area perfect for vehicle or equipment display; a prime location for agricultural shows and other major events. The construction of this facility has seen Dodge City attract major events from other regions of Kansas and neighbouring states.

The variation within the facility expands the ability to attract events and tourists.

The availability of major event infrastructure in Dodge City in conjunction with major tourism attractions and sporting teams helps position Dodge City as an attractive tourism proposition and lifestyle choice. This is underwritten by strong job prospects and is reflected in the low unemployment levels and strong housing demand in Dodge City and the broader Ford County.

Key point:

The success of the Expo Centre in Dodge City outlines how good social infrastructure can drive economic development in rural communities, when there is both 'buy in' from the community and there are quality driven staff continually striving to deliver the best outcomes for the community.

Mr Chris Beck, Senior Policy Advisor, US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development

Meeting Mr Chris Beck was of great value as he is a highly experienced and knowledgeable individual. US Rural Development has been referred to as the World Bank for rural America. Rural Development manages \$25 billion in loans, which are offered to rural communities at subsidised rates over long periods.

Rural America encompasses four fifths of the nation's land area and is home to about one fifth of the population. The goal of USDA Rural Development is to work to create new opportunities for these 40 million or so rural Americans.

The assistance of Rural Development ensures that more rural residents are able to live, prosper and have the opportunities which exist in metropolitan areas. Rural Development works with local cities, counties and towns to fund critical hard and soft infrastructure projects such as water and sewer systems, emergency equipment for fire and ambulance service and stimulate business development to help ensure the availability of jobs in our rural areas.

This support is aimed at the stabilisation, revitalisation and survival of rural communities.

Key point:

Rural areas of the US are following the global trend of larger broad acre farming practices. This results in more efficient technologies and the need to continue to move towards economies of scale to remain viable. Population decline and a reduction of services is an unfortunate by-product of this current trend.

Mrs Patty Clark, State Director Kansas, US Department of Agriculture Rural Development

USDA Rural Development Kansas ensured over \$475 million was reinvested back into Kansas in 2012. Funding that assisted rural communities and individuals in a variety of ways to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technological infrastructures.

Throughout my study tour there was common recognition that internet and reliable fast telecommunications is a priority for business development throughout the US and even to a greater extent in rural areas. Acknowledging that a sense of connectedness is vital not only for business but all community members who are based in rural communities.

There was an appreciation after comprehending the vastly populated nature and size of Australia, of the importance and magnitude of quality broadband to Australia.

After discussing rural development with senior staff in Washington DC it was clear that the Regional Development Australia (RDA) model equates to the ambitions and goals of the US Rural Development model.

Conclusion

Although on the other side of the world, the challenges and issues being dealt with by rural communities in the US and the broader agricultural sector remain consistent with those experienced in Australia. Dodge City, like many rural communities in the US, remained relatively isolated from the most severe impacts of the Global Financial Crisis. This is reflective of the stability and resilience of rural communities, including rural Australian communities.

Australia does not have the capacity to establish the agricultural economies of scale to the same level of the US, but Australia's history of high quality disease free produce positions Australia to target the top end segment of export markets, which brings strong economic potential.

Linked to population retention is the ability to improve the leadership and innovation capacity of regional areas. My study tour has shown that in Kansas agriculture is a key economic driver. Innovation in the sector has a marked impact on the broader community and has helped Dodge City and South West Kansas remain resilient and competitive in an increasingly globalised food supply chain. This success is reflected in strong rates of economic and population growth.

The Ogallala aquifer has been the catalyst for massive expansions in agriculture development in South West Kansas. Viewing what has developed as a result of this resource shows the clear potential that exists in northern Australia if current mine dewatering was focused toward agricultural pursuits. Interestingly, my time in the US coincided with debate on the US 'Farm Bill' which governs US agriculture policy and is renegotiated every five years. It was evident through this process that the cross-subsidisation of agriculture in the US was under increased scrutiny from non-agriculture sections of the US population. The tight economic conditions which surrounded the discussion have contributed to this increased scrutiny.

This view was reiterated on numerous occasions when the passage of the 'Farm Bill' was raised during my time in the US, reinforced by the fact that the Farm Bill is currently nine months overdue and has been in a level of stalemate as it progresses through the US legislative process. The drawn out process around the 'Farm Bill' reflects the importance and contention around this bill to the US community and economy.

Australia's track record of innovation and ingenuity in agriculture, and ability to remain globally competitive in tough natural and economic conditions and free from subsidies, ideally positions Australia to capitalise on opportunities that exist as a result of a rapidly developing Asia-Pacific region.

Conversely, the protectionism and subsidisation of agriculture that exists in the US in conjunction with a domestic market focus shows that Australia's agricultural efficiency and export market focus positions Australia at a clear competitive advantage as a major market player in an export market context. Rural communities in both Australia and the US are facing a challenging future as they grapple with the universal trend of centralising populations and fluid global supply chains.

Dodge City Kansas is an example of a proactive community who has positioned itself as a globally renowned meat processing hub, while stimulating steady long term growth in associated industries of agricultural science and manufacturing. In the process, Dodge City is diversifying its economic base and weathering economic fluctuations.

The innovation and resilience which Dodge City and South West Kansas has prided itself on over a long and colourful history will be drawn upon as these communities deal with the changing future of the Ogallala aquifer.

Post script

This study tour has provided a once in a lifetime opportunity to view a sector of keen personal interest and economic significance to Australia.

On a personal note I would like to finish by thanking all those community members of Dodge City who made my visit so memorable, especially Dan Schenkien and the Dodge City Area Chamber of Commerce. Secondly I extend my appreciation to all involved with the Australian Political Exchange Council. The exchange was a highly rewarding experience, which provided an opportunity to see parts of the US at a depth which is rare. The lessons learnt through this exchange and the contacts made and friendships formed will stay with me for many years to come.

I strongly encourage the Council Members and the Principals of the Council to ensure this program can continue well into the future. I recommend an individual study tour to anyone who is motivated and passionate about a specific issue to investigate opportunities through the Australian Political Exchange Council. This truly is a once in a lifetime opportunity.