

Lavish UN trip to New York for the battlers' MP

JADE GAILBERGER

ALMOST \$100,000 of taxpayer money was spent sending two federal MPs, including Labor's Nick Champion, to a United Nations delegation for three months last year.

The weekly bill for Mr Champion's trip alone was more than five times the average weekly wage of voters in Elizabeth, in the heart of his electorate.

But the member for Spence in Adelaide's northern suburbs said Australia's diplomatic presence in the world was now more important than ever due to climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are a middle power and we have to turn up otherwise our interests are not represented," Mr Champion, pictured, said.

The UN General Assembly posting in New York with the Liberal Party's Ross Vasta cost taxpayers up to \$94,000.

Parliamentary expense



records for the December quarter show Mr Champion's meals and accommodation from September to December totalled more than \$40,000.

He said the accommodation was organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Mr Champion, who is deputy chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade said it was "a great honour" to represent Australia at diplomatic meetings.

Former SA senator Cory Bernardi attended the delegation in 2016.

Expense records show Trade Minister Simon Birmingham accrued \$20,200 in overseas travel costs from three trips to Thailand and one to China in the same period.

Mr Birmingham said countries from across the Indo-Pacific had agreed to finalise a landmark regional trade deal which will boost export opportunities for Australian businesses and create local jobs.

Families and Social Services Minister Anne Ruston racked up the highest domestic travel bill at \$20,463.

She said it was vital to "get out on the ground and meet directly with people being supported by the social security system across the country".

Taxpayers also paid about \$2200 for members of Mr Bernardi's family to attend parliament as he bid farewell to a 13-year political career.

The expense records reveal Boothby MP Nicolle Flint spent \$72,000 in printing and communications.

Ms Flint said she was determined to let residents in "the most populous electorate in the nation" know about the work she was doing and how to contact her.



CREATIVE: Flinders University's Peng Su with artist Niki Sperou.

Picture: KERYN STEVENS

Seaweed for fantastic plastic

CLARE PEDDIE

ART and science mix in the meeting of minds at Flinders University's Centre for Marine Bioproducts, where a unique collaboration is making new types of biodegradable plastic.

Artist Niki Sperou won a 2020 Australian Network for Art and Technology Synapse Residency to pursue her "Green Plastic, Blue Ocean" project with scientist Peng Su.

Together they are exploring how seaweed could be used to

replace plastic in new products for industry and medicine.

"Peng knows the science and I know how I want it to feel and look," Ms Sperou said.

"Also, once you understand the science, you can then work together and say, 'What if we add a bit more of this, or a bit more of that?' so lines become blurred between who is the scientist and who is the artist."

Biotechnologist Mr Su said the project was going well, with multiple applications.

"Niki sees things differently,

that is the most important thing," he said. "I've been working in the lab for years so I have tunnel vision, whereas she gets excited and expressive and sees in a more human (less scientific) way."

Based in Adelaide, ANAT has awarded two residencies this year with \$30,000 from the Copyright Agency, one in SA and another in the ACT.

Since it was established in 2004, the Synapse Residency program has supported more than 100 artists and scientists.

How do bonus earbuds with your news subscription sound?

Stay connected, informed and entertained with the latest news, entertainment and more.



12 months full digital access

+



Sennheiser MOMENTUM True Wireless earbuds (RRP \$499)

OVER \$750 OF VALUE

\$7 per week for the first 12 months. Min. cost \$364.*

1800 053 012 | advertiser.com.au/headphones

The Advertiser | Sunday Mail | We're for you

*Digital Membership 12 Month Plan + Sennheiser MOMENTUM True Wireless earbuds subscription offer to be billed as follows: \$28 billed approximately 4 weekly for the first 12 months, min. cost \$364. At the end of the initial 12 month plan period, subscriptions will automatically renew as \$28 billed approximately 4 weekly. No cancellations during the first 12 months. Then, renewals occur unless cancelled in accordance with the full Terms and Conditions. A valid active email address and Australian mobile phone number are required for account set up. Offer includes a pair of Sennheiser MOMENTUM True Wireless earbuds and cannot be exchanged (unless faulty), nor redeemed for cash. Only one pair of earbuds per email address and per person. Once your subscription is active, we will supply your contact details to Harvey Norman Technology for Business, who will deliver the Sennheiser MOMENTUM True Wireless earbuds only to your Australian address registered with us for your subscription and will email you with dispatch details. The earbuds will only be delivered to an Australian street address and not a PO Box address, delivery will require a signature. Allow between approximately 2-15 working days to receive your Sennheiser MOMENTUM True Wireless earbuds. Available for a limited time. Not in conjunction with any other offer and new customers only. Not available to any person who has previously breached any of our subscription terms and conditions. Prices after the first 12 months may be varied in line with full terms and conditions - see www.advertiser.com.au/subscriptionterms for full details. Total Sennheiser MOMENTUM True Wireless earbuds RRP value of \$499 calculated at 15/04/20.