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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.

expense

Parliamentary



talled more than \$40,000.

Trade.

He said the accommodation

Mr Champion, who is

deputy chair of the Joint

Standing Committee on For-

eign Affairs, Defence and

Trade said it was "a great hon-

our" to represent Australia at

Bernardi attended the del-

Trade Minister Simon Bir-

mingham accrued \$20,200 in

overseas travel costs from

three trips to Thailand and one

to China in the same period.

Former SA senator Cory

Expense records show

diplomatic meetings.

egation in 2016.

was organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and

December to-

quarter cific had agreed to finalise a landmark regional trade deal Mr which will boost export opportunities for Australian businesses and create local jobs. from Families and Social Services

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

Mr Birmingham said countries from across the Indo-Pa-

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 13year 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

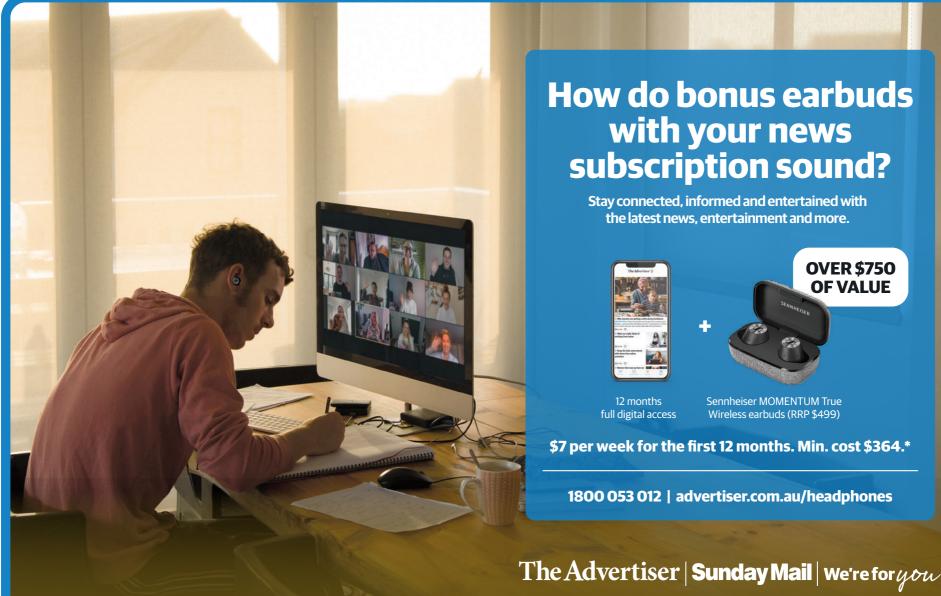
the science, you can then work together and say, 'What if we add a bit more of this, or a bit more of that?' so lines become blurred between who is the

scientist and who is the artist." Biotecthologist 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.



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