



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
Australian Capital Territory Branch

E-NEWS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH

E-Newsletter May-June 2023

Branch Patron: H.E. General the Hon. David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) Governor-General of Australia



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITS CANBERRA

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland KC, made a short, official visit to Canberra in April, during which she met with the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, attended the ANZAC Dawn Service, and gave a keynote address to the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) co-hosted by the Royal Commonwealth Society and Commonwealth Round Table in Australia.



The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland speaking at the AIIA in Canberra in April.

The subject of her address* was the Commonwealth, its principles, its strengths and its challenges, also its current attraction to countries not necessarily with a link to Britain through former colonial or other relationships (*see report below*).

Humanity, she said, is facing its greatest challenge, requiring a level of international political and economic cooperation, unprecedented in this century. What defines our present predicament as unique, is the lack of single causes and single fixes.

'The world feels as though it is fracturing, increasingly polarised, with people anxious about the capacity of governments and international institutions to provide the leadership and action required,' she said.

'It is exactly the time that the Commonwealth can mobilise its greatest qualities.'

**For the full address see www.rcsact.org*

FORMER FRENCH COLONIES— AND THE 'ALLURE OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CLUB'

The 'allure of the English-Speaking club' is providing a strong draw for former French colonies in Africa interested in joining the Commonwealth.

This is the view of Paul Melly, a Consulting Fellow in the Africa Programme at Chatham House, London. For Gabon and Togo, admitted at the 2022 Rwanda CHOGM, it was seen a wish 'to strengthen their diplomatic armoury and reduce their reliance on France', particularly when the relationship between Africa and France has become 'so contentious'. It also suggests that they see the Commonwealth as a useful network of diplomatic and cultural influence and like its exercise of 'soft power' on the world stage.

The admission of Gabon and Togo also recognises the importance of English as a language of

business, science and international politics, and a means of building a range of connections to support economic development and 'get diplomatic messages heard'.

The first Commonwealth member with no previous links to Britain was Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, in 1995. Rwanda, formerly administered by Belgium, was admitted in 2009.

It is not a one-way street, however. There is also a steady expansion of 88 member states and governments of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF). Ghana, already an associate member, is set to become a full member, and one of a growing number of both the Commonwealth and the *Francophonie*, for what Paul Melly describes as 'solid diplomatic and practical reasons'.

CELEBRATIONS IN CANBERRA TO MARK CORONATION OF KING CHARLES

An array of celebrations took place in Canberra during the months of May and June to mark the Coronation of King Charles III on 5 May. Among those involving members of the RCS ACT Branch were a Coronation Eve Cocktail Party hosted by Dr John Sutton and Mrs Ann Sutton at their home in Kingston.



Guests (above) at the Coronation Eve Cocktail Party included (l to r) Ms Caroline Ross-Smith, Mr Greg Cornwell, and Mrs Ann Sutton and Dr John Sutton, who hosted the event at their Kingston home.

Among those (right) at the Government House barbecue in May were Dr Hugh Craft (left) Mr Charles Koker, Dr Sunita Dhindsa, Mrs Sue Gage and Mr Colin Milner. Dr Craft and Mr Milner are former Branch presidents, Dr Dhindsa is Treasurer and Mrs Gage is a Council Member.

This event was attended by both Australia-Britain and RCS members, a number of whom belong to both societies. Our RCS ACT Branch Patron, the Governor-General, HE General the Hon. David Hurley and Mrs Hurley, who attended the Coronation in London, gave a barbecue lunch at Government House the following week for representatives from some of their patronages and for some local school students. Our annual RCS ACT Branch King's Birthday Dinner was co-hosted by the RCS and the Australia-Britain Society at the Commonwealth Club on 15 June.



Mrs Angela Neuhaus (above) at the Government House barbecue, in front of the Coronation Cake—guarded on the right of the photo by Paddington Bear and the sword for cutting it in the foreground.

A few days later, the British High Commissioner, H.E Vicki Treadell, was host at a celebratory dinner at the Commission's Chancery, where guests were welcomed by bagpipes. As guests enjoyed their entrée of Coronation Quiche, music recorded at the Coronation Concert was played.

The guests speaker at the King's Birthday Dinner was Mr Matthew Anderson, Director of the Australian War Memorial, who spoke about progress on the extensions to the building which would accommodate the memorial's growing collection of material.

The Canberra Memorial, with its inscription *Never Again*, was the first to be built as a reminder of the 62,000 Australians who died in World War I. An additional 156,000 were gassed, wounded or taken prisoner. At that time, Australia's population was under five million.

When it opened on Armistice Day 1941, Australia was already engaged in World War II. Since then, Australian troops have been involved in the Korean War, Vietnam, Afghanistan, two conflicts involving Iraq, and in various peace-keeping operations.

The new extension will house the Memorial's extensive archives and create additional exhibition space. The building will be known as the CEW Bean Building in honour of Charles Bean, Australian war correspondent and official historian of World War I.

When the new galleries open in 2028, they will include an historical account of the Frontier Wars during European settlement in Australia. It is expected that a record of the involvement of Australian troops in the Boxer Rebellion (China) and the Second Boer War (South Africa), in support of the British Empire, and for which the Memorial hold records, will also be included.

These latter conflicts straddled the years between what were then British colonies in Australia and Federation in January 2001. In the case of the Second Boer War, these were the years October 1899 to May 1932. The Boxer Rebellion, from May 1899 to September 2001, involved 600 men from NSW, Victoria and South Australia.



The Director of the Australian War Memorial, Mr Matthew Anderson (third from left), at the King's Birthday Dinner with (l to r) Hon. Professor Matthew Neuhaus (left), President, RCS ACT Branch, Mrs Angela Neuhaus, Mrs Ann Sutton, Dr Malcolm Beazley and Dr John Sutton.

PALACE SUPPORTS STUDY ON ITS LINKS WITH THE SLAVE TRADE

Buckingham Palace will cooperate with an independent study exploring the relationship between the British monarchy and the trans-Atlantic slave trade during the 17th and 18th centuries.

In a statement issued a few days after the Coronation, the Palace said the King takes the issue of slavery 'profoundly seriously'. Full access to the Royal Archives and the Royal Collection will be made available for the study by the University of Manchester historian, Camilla de Koning.

The announcement follows statements of intention to review their positions as constitutional monarchies by political leaders in Commonwealth Caribbean nations where King Charles is Head of State— the Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Both King Charles and the Prince of Wales have previously expressed their 'personal sorrow' at the suffering caused by the slave trade.

The study is expected to be completed by 2026.

SAMOA TO HOST 2024 CHOGM

Prime Ministers, Presidents and officials from the Commonwealth's 56 member nations will attend the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Apia, Samoa, beginning on 21 October 2024. Included in the Agenda will be the appointment of a new Secretary-General.

Samoa, the first Pacific Small Island Developing State to host a CHOGM, was selected as the incoming Chair-in-Office at the 2022 Rwanda CHOGM.

The Commonwealth Secretariat said in June that leaders 'would deliberate on global economic, environmental and security challenges, and discuss how the contemporary Commonwealth can work together to build resilience, boost trade, innovation, growth, and empower the Commonwealth's 1.5 billion young people to build a more peaceful, sustainable future'.

Running parallel to the Samoa meeting will be a range of forums and events involving young people, civil society, women, business leaders and international institutions.

VALE TONY EGGLETON, A MAN OF HONESTY, INTEGRITY AND LOYALTY

When Tony Eggleton AO CVO died in Canberra on 20 May, Australia lost a major national figure and the Commonwealth a true friend.

Tony was a Life Member of the RCS ACT Branch, and he and his late wife, Mary, were well-known in the Branch. Our condolences and sympathies have been expressed to his family.

Arriving from the UK as a teenager in 1950, his first job as a journalist in Bendigo was the beg-



Inning of a long and eminent career in the service of the public, becoming press secretary and adviser to three Prime Ministers (Menzies, Holt and Gorton) and a confidante to every subsequent Liberal PM (Fraser, Howard and Abbott).

For 15 years, he was Federal Director of the Liberal Party and later held senior executive positions with Care International and Care Australia.

Tony's involvement with the Commonwealth is less well-known. His appointment as first Director of Public Affairs at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London in 1971, working with the first Secretary-General, Arnold Smith, helped establish the high standing of the Commonwealth as an effective international organisation.

In Canberra, he and former ANU Vice Chancellor, the late Professor Anthony Low, headed up two auxiliary arms of the RCS Branch—the Commonwealth Round Table in Australia and the Commonwealth Day Celebration Committee.

Tony lived a remarkable life. Above all, he was known as a decent man, of absolute honesty and integrity, loyal to family, friends and country.

HUGH CRAFT

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

RCS Winter Lunch at Rama's Fiji-Indian Restaurant, Pearce

Sunday 27 August 2023 at 12 noon

Guest Speaker: H.E. Jean de Dieu Uwihanye, High Commissioner for Rwanda
Commonwealth Chair-in-Office

Cost: \$55

Inquiries kantijinna@gmail.com

See attached Notice for details

NEW MEMBERS

The RCS ACT Branch welcomes new Youth Members Mr Abishai Easow, Mr William Comley and Mr Johan Jacob, and Mr Jacob Vadakkedathu.

E-NEWS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH is an official publication of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Australian Capital Territory Branch, for Members and Friends of the Commonwealth. It is published regularly throughout the year and replaces the quarterly printed newsletter *Commonwealth News*.

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