



# THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

## Victoria Branch

### Patrons

Worldwide: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II  
Victoria: Her Excellency The Honourable Linda Dessau AC Governor  
of Victoria

## Commonwealth News

*We will take a leading role in achieving a fairer world for Commonwealth citizens by connecting, convening and equipping people to advance the values of the Commonwealth.*

### COVID-19 Response

Dear Fellows, Members and Friends,

As you are all aware, our community is experiencing an unparalleled challenge with the onset of the COVID-19 Virus in Australia. Your Council has met to discuss the very real effects of this Virus and what this may mean over coming months. In the interests of our Members and Guests, we have decided to cancel a number of our events.

The Dinner on the 9<sup>th</sup> April and also the next Luncheon on the 28<sup>th</sup> May have been cancelled. As more information and advice comes to hand, we will be able to make further decisions and update you accordingly. Whilst we realise this may be a little premature especially regarding the Luncheon, we took a safety first attitude towards cancelling, taking into consideration some of the ages of our members, guests, and the medical advice currently being promoted. Further cancellations may occur and we will continue to provide updates.

On a personal nature, if you are, or you become aware any of our Fellows and Members who are, in need of assistance during this trying time please do not hesitate to contact us. The Council will endeavour to assist or find solutions in any way possible. The Office phone will be periodically manned, however my mobile number is 0412337744 if you are in need of response sooner. Please stay safe and well during this time.

Lloyd Byrne  
President  
RCS Victoria Branch

## APRIL 2020

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*We want to improve the lives and  
prospects of all Commonwealth citizens*

## A history in common, a future in progress

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and high-level advocacy, the Society champions the importance of literacy, equality and inclusion, the environment and connected communities across the Commonwealth's 53 member nations. The Society's unique position within the

Commonwealth family allows it to play a pivotal role in convening and connecting the Commonwealth's political and diplomatic representatives, as well as industry, civil society, academic and business leaders, on a wide range of issues. Founded in 1868, the RCS is non-partisan, independent of governments and relies on public generosity to achieve its mission.

## Women's Group News for March 2020

It is with regret that the Women's Group Committee, in keeping with the directive of the RCS Council and the Government, have cancelled the May luncheon and are unable to undertake any fund raising activities until further notice. Aware that money is in short supply at present, however, should anyone wish to give to the RCS charitable fund, which the Women's Group supports, please send donations to: CBA, BSB no: 063 - 301 Acc no: 10486533 or by cheque to PO Box 31 Caulfield East Victoria 3145.

The Women's Group Committee trusts all members are

well and safe and are able to purchase the necessary food etc you require. If anyone has questions, requires assistance or advice, or just wants to make contact with someone while isolated, you may contact me, Elisabeth, by email: [elisabeth\\_mn@hotmail.com](mailto:elisabeth_mn@hotmail.com) Alternatively contact the RCS. Once the crisis is over we look forward to welcoming you all back to the Gables. Stay well and safe.

Elisabeth Newman AM  
Women's Group Convener

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## Commonwealth Day Dinner



The RCS Victoria Branch in partnership with the CBCS recently celebrated Commonwealth Day. We were delighted to welcome our guest and friend Catriona Boyd the newly-appointed Deputy Consul-General at the British Consulate General in Melbourne.

Our evening started with attendees being able to make for the first time or to reaffirm their commitment to the Commonwealth. We were then treated to a reading of the Queens Commonwealth Day message. The theme of the message focused on the connectivity of people from diverse backgrounds coming together for a better future.

Later in the evening were heard from Catriona Boyd about her focus on ensuring the maximum benefit is realised from the UK industrial strategy in Australia across industry, civil society and

government. Catriona shared her thoughts and ideas about what opportunities come from the UK exiting the European Union. There was time for questions that enabled guests to hear more about some of the specific aspects of the UK - Australia relationship as we enter a new and exciting time.

We thank Catriona for her work and wish her all the best for her appointment in Australia.

As usual we held a raffle and a silent auction. There were a generous range of items and prizes that included antique books and hampers. Over \$300 was raised for use through the RCS Victoria Charitable fund.



"Such a blend of traditions serves to make us stronger, individually and collectively, by providing the ingredients needed for social, political and economic resilience"

Her Majesty The Queen

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# Commonwealth concern for the needs of older people

20 March 2020

**Statement by:** Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Scotland

At this time of global crisis resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, our Commonwealth focus turns – as it always does – to the most vulnerable and least resilient. This means redoubling our collective efforts in support of member countries that are most in need. It must also elevate our concern and our action to support older people, who are most at risk from COVID-19, and who are also particularly susceptible during this time of increased economic strain and social isolation.

In many of our member countries, changing living and working patterns deprive ageing people of the networks of support from family and close community which have sustained and supported them in the past. This increases vulnerability and adds to loneliness. These factors add to anxiety at a time when healthcare systems and other provision to which they might turn for assistance are already overloaded. We must therefore act to fill gaps and to mobilise mechanisms for ensuring that the needs of all older people are met.

The majority of older people globally live in lower and middle income countries, which is how many of our Commonwealth member countries are categorised. Indeed, research by the Commonwealth Association for the Ageing – CommonAge – and the Oxford Institute of Population Aging indicates that in the majority of Commonwealth countries the absolute size of the older population will increase by at least 100% over the next 25 years – a far greater rise than is generally the case globally. To be true to our inclusive approach and ethos, the Commonwealth has a special responsibility to show the way and to take a lead in upholding the importance attending to the needs and concerns of older people, particularly where they live in countries or communities which lack human, financial and technical resources – and especially at a time such as this of unprecedented global crisis.

Our Commonwealth cooperation over recent years has included special focus on resources for universal health coverage and on tackling non-communicable as well as communicable diseases. These priorities relate directly to the needs of aged people, who are disproportionately affected by the factors which combine to affect very directly to the ability of member countries to address vulnerability and which impair or improve the wellbeing of older people.

As in some countries of the Commonwealth we prepare to mark Mothering Sunday, and Mother's Day in others in weeks to come, and then Father's Day, it is particularly important for us to focus on the need for intergenerational connection and mutual support. Our Commonwealth understanding is that all can give and all can gain. This is true of countries and communities; it is also true of people of whatever age or background. So we must be alert and respond to the needs of each person, and confront attitudes or approaches which tend to discriminate on grounds of age, wherever and whenever they occur.

So let us all commit - as part of our Commonwealth identity - to making sure that, alongside the current needs for social distancing, and for caution in making physical contact, we keep at the forefront of our consciousness and concern ways in which we can serve and respond to the continuing needs of the very young, of youth, of middle aged and older people, of our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents, aunts and uncles, and – perhaps most of all – those with no close family at all to care for them. We will do this best through personal commitment, and by ensuring that in our countries and communities, and collectively in the Commonwealth, we make it a priority to implement comprehensive, well managed and properly resourced healthcare provision, with equitable and inclusive access to care and closer attention to social inclusion.

[Secretary-General Patricia Scotland](#)



# Letter from the Commonwealth Foundation

Dear colleagues, partners and friends of the Commonwealth Foundation,

To write that we are living in strange and extraordinary times would have felt like hyperbole even a week ago. No longer. I hope and trust that you and your families are keeping well in mind, body and spirit. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to those who are especially vulnerable, and whose lives and livelihoods have been so terribly affected. Above all, we must unite to ensure that the pandemic is kept away from the countries and communities that do not enjoy the protection of strong health and welfare systems.

The Foundation's team has been working remotely for the past week, and Marlborough House is closed until further notice. Despite these challenges – and the need to cancel several scheduled activities – we are seeking to operate with a 'business as usual' mindset. This means, for example, that our grants programme is continuing apace: applications received during our most recent call are being reviewed as planned; the schedule for the 2020-2021 round will remain unchanged; and all grant payments will be processed as normal. (Grant partners with specific issues and requirements are encouraged to reach out to their assigned Grants Officer). Our Commonwealth Short Story Prize is also operating on schedule, with the 2020 shortlist due to be announced shortly. With regard to the Commonwealth People's Forum I refer you to our website where regular updates will be posted. In the next few weeks, we will launch a platform for our partners to share their stories and insights on the pandemic. Please keep an eye on our website for this as well.

We will have time to reflect, over the coming weeks and months, on what COVID-19 has revealed to us – about ourselves, our world, and our relationships with each other. Undoubtedly this will lead to some hard questions. For example, have our civil society structures and networks proved sufficiently resilient to sustain our countries and communities through these difficult times? Have our governments provided the courageous leadership that we have a right to expect? And have we, as individuals, demonstrated the compassion, generosity and gratitude that we would want to receive from others?

I am not alone in expressing the belief that we will emerge from adversity into a better, fairer world. The political and cultural polarisation that we have all become used to over recent years could well be a thing of the past, as our differences fade away before a common threat. Our assumed dominion over the planet will have received another sharp wake-up call, breathing new energy into a global commitment to address widespread degradation of our natural environment. The unevenness of the virus's economic impact may also cause us to finally question the way in which 'work' has been reshaped in the service of profits – and the insecurity and indignity that has accompanied this sustained, worldwide trend. And we have good reason to hope that once the worst is over, hyper-individualism will give way to an acceptance that adequate investment in society and public goods – including health and social services – is the true hallmark of a decent, inclusive society.

Perhaps most importantly, it will be the many acts of human empathy, altruism and love we are witnessing and hearing about that will help repair the damage – not least by reaffirming our faith in community and our belief in a shared humanity.

I wish you all well.

Anne T. Gallagher AO  
Director-General

## CONTACT DETAILS



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Victoria Branch

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## Banking details

### General and function banking

CBA, BSB no: 063 -301 Acc  
no: 10483586

### Donations and charitable giving

CBA, BSB no: 063 -301 Acc  
no: 10486533

EFTPOS is now available at  
all functions